

Guidelines for Ethical Principles of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)

Version dated October 17, 2016

The following guidelines for ethical principles were adopted by the Senate of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) on October 17, 2016.

Preamble

As the Research University in the Helmholtz Association, KIT fully exploits its synergy potential in research, higher education, and innovation, which results from combining the tasks of a national research center with those of a university of the state of Baden-Württemberg.

The present ethical principles address every member of KIT¹. Together with the superordinate legal order and the Joint Statutes of KIT, these guidelines define yardsticks and obligations for the ethically responsible acting of KIT, its bodies, and its members. They also are the basis of cooperation and communication with society and all partners of KIT. If applicable, these ethical guidelines can only be detailed and further developed in open dialog and partnership.

1. Ethical Principles

Within the framework of the freedom of arts, sciences, research, and teaching as outlined in Article 5, par. 3 of the German Constitution, we, the members and bodies of KIT, are

¹ According to Article 9, Law of Baden-Württemberg on Universities and Colleges and Article 1 of the Joint Statutes of KIT.

aware of the influence our work and its results have on societal, technical, economic, and ecological systems.

We assume responsibility for our acting and for the consequences of our actions. Our work shall serve the gaining of knowledge, the sustainable benefit of mankind, and the protection of the environment and shall pursue peaceful purposes.

We commit to dealing with each other in partnership, truthfulness, and trust irrespective of our position, origin, religious denomination, gender, and other forms of diversity.

We undertake to observe the present ethical principles in word and deed.

2. Principles of Acting

Compliance with the legal order, Joint Statutes, the Rules for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice, the Rules for Compliance of KIT, and all other internal regulations shall be a major element of ethical acting.

While pursuing our activities, we, the members and bodies of KIT, shall be obliged in particular:

- To create knowledge, to foster education, and to contribute to mastering the challenges facing society,
- to carry out research, education, and innovation for the benefit of mankind and the protection of the natural basis of life,
- to act in accordance with and to convey these ethical principles and a sense of responsibility in teaching, education, and advanced training and to promote critical reflection; in particular, this means to generate awareness for responsible use of safety-relevant research and dual use,
- to always consider and weigh potential applications, including opportunities, hazards, and risks of misuse, of our work and to make an accompanying technology assessment, if applicable,

- to reconcile potential consequences of publication of safety-relevant research results² with the principle of transparency and, if necessary, to restrict or refrain from publication, if the latter may entail concrete hazards or damage to the public,
- to minimize hazards and the risk of misuse by an adequate selection of our means, methods, customers, and cooperation partners as well as by an appropriate dissemination of information,
- to keep in mind the problem of frequently unforeseeable applications of our research results (e.g. dual use) and to keep this sensitivity alive throughout the complete research process,
- to ultimately abstain from research activities that are associated with risks that cannot be restricted,
- to make the results and findings obtained accessible to the scientific community and the society in general within a reasonable period of time and in compliance with the legislation and contractual regulations after careful consideration of potential risks and to exclusively support by activities and the supply of resources research that meets these requirements,
- to participate in public discourse and in particular in the further development of societal framework conditions for science and engineering, e.g. by the co-development of standards and laws as experts, members of commissions, or as advisers of politics,
- to use our competences and to make generally understandable contributions for the information of society in dialog,
- to responsibly use the personal, temporal, financial, and material resources available, and
- to pursue the development of science and engineering in the own realm and in neighboring disciplines for the continuous update and further development of our expertise.

² In the sense of the recommendations of DFG and the Leopoldina National Academy of Sciences relating to safety-relevant research dated May 28, 2014.

Mutual cooperation in partnership and trust as a basis of the KIT culture shall be achieved by

- honesty, truthfulness, and truth in dealing with each other,
- respect, recognition of equality, and tolerance irrespective of the position, origin, religious denomination, gender, and other forms of diversity,
- promotion of personal and professional development of all members of KIT for present and future tasks within and outside of KIT, and by
- participation of students and employees in decision-making and organization processes at KIT.

We are aware of disputes and conflicts being part of our life and work together. As the ranking of values is not the same for all KIT members, conflicts of values cannot be excluded from the very beginning. If these cannot be resolved by the parties concerned, they shall be discussed in the presence of an arbitrator with a view to find solutions or a compromise.

3. Responsibilities

In a first step, every member of KIT is requested to align his/her daily acting to the present ethical principles and principles of acting derived from them to his/her best knowledge and belief. All persons fulfilling staff management tasks act as role models and have a special responsibility for compliance with these ethical principles in their areas of competence.

In case of questions, also of ethical character, the competent or collectively agreed upon bodies and commissioners shall be consulted first (see Annex). In addition, the KIT Senate shall appoint two “Ombudspersons for Ethical Principles” and an Ethics Commission. These ombudspersons and the members of the Ethics Commission shall be elected by the KIT Senate for a period of two years. The office period of the student members shall be one year. Re-election shall be possible. In agreement with the Presidential Committee, the Ethics Commission shall elect a chairperson.

The Ethics Commission shall consist of:

- Four persons from the group of professors and executive scientists,
- two persons from the group of academic and scientific employees,
- two students,
- two persons from the group of administration and technical staff members,
- a member of the Staff Council,
- a member of the Presidential Committee, and
- the two Ombudspersons for Ethical Principles and the KIT Commissioner for Compliance as guests having advisory votes.

The Commission shall have the right to call in external guests with advisory votes for certain topics.

The Ombudspersons for Ethical Principles shall

- advise members and bodies of KIT, arbitrate in cases of conflicts (also by calling in expert arbitrators),
- reach agreements with other ombudspersons and commissions at KIT and act, where ethical principles are concerned,
- appeal to the Ethics Commission of KIT in case of problems of fundamental character or in individual cases of conflicts that cannot be settled amicably, and
- report annually to the KIT Senate.

The Ethics Commission of KIT shall

- promote the dissemination of these ethical guidelines and their discussion,
- initiate interdisciplinary discourse in particular on new and ethically sensitive research areas,
- further develop these ethical guidelines for KIT, if necessary,
- discuss matters of fundamental importance and make final recommendations upon request by an Ombudsperson for Ethical Principles, a member of the Ethics Commission, the KIT Senate, or the Presidential Committee,

- review and assess ethical acceptability of research projects, in particular of projects involving test persons, upon invocation by the Presidential Committee, an ombudsperson, a member of the Ethics Commission, or the responsible head of the respective research project. If a new vote is required for an already positively assessed research project due to an extension of the latter, for instance, the Ethics Commission may delegate these subsequent decisions to the chairperson and the ombudspersons in principle,
- discuss safety-relevant risks of research at KIT, in particular when a research project might be associated with major risks for human dignity, life, health, freedom, property or environment or with a disturbance of peaceful coexistence. Safety-relevant risks exist in particular when scientific work is assumed to give rise to knowledge, products or technologies that may be misused directly by third parties. Upon request by the Presidential Committee, an ombudsperson, a member of the Ethics Commission or the responsible head of the respective research project, the Ethics Commission shall investigate such research projects. The Ethics Commission can actively inform itself about cases of safety-relevant research at KIT,
- make a final recommendation for the Presidential Committee in cases of individual conflicts, and
- contact the Senate in ethical matters of fundamental importance.

The Ethics Commission of KIT shall set up rules of internal procedure.

4. Entry into Force

The present Guidelines for Ethical Principles of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology shall enter into force on the day of their adoption. At the same time, the Guidelines for Ethical Principles of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology dated April 20, 2015 shall cease to be in force.

Annex:

List of Competent or Collectively Agreed upon Bodies, Ombudspersons, and Commissioners According to Section 3, Par. 2

Higher-level Commissioners and Ombudspersons

- Animal Protection Commissioner
- Biological Safety Commissioner
- Commissioner for Cases of Sexual Harassment of Men
- Commissioner for Cases of Sexual Harassment of Women
- Commissioner for Exports/Commissioner for Export Control
- Commissioner for the Needs of Handicapped Persons
- Commissioner for the Needs of Handicapped Students and Students Suffering from Chronic Illness
- Compliance and Corruption Prevention Commissioner
- Data Protection Commissioner
- Experts for Work Safety
- Fire Protection Commissioner
- Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Commissioners
- Hazardous Goods Commissioner
- Immission Control Commissioner
- IT Security Commissioner
- Ombudspersons for Doctoral Students and Supervisors
- Ombudspersons for Ethical Principles
- Ombudspersons for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice
- Radiation Protection Officer
- Risk Commissioner
- Safety Commissioner
- Safety Officer acc. to SÜG (Non-disclosure Protection Commissioner)
- Security Commissioner (Large-scale research sector)
- Waste Management Commissioner
- Water Protection Commissioner

- Works Doctors

Commissioners at the Organizational Units or for Certain Projects

- Commodities Control Commissioner
- IT Commissioners
- Laser Protection Commissioners
- Operations Commissioners in the Large-scale Research Sector
- Project Managers (Genetic Engineering)
- Quality Management Commissioners
- Radiation Protection Commissioners
- Safety Commissioners (Industrial Safety acc. to SGB VII)