

KIT Adopts Ethical Guidelines

Appeal to the Responsibility of All Employees in Research, Teaching, and Innovation against the Background of Academic Freedom – Regulations for Fair Cooperation



KIT adopted ethical guidelines yesterday. (Photo: KIT, Gabi Zachmann)

**Monika Landgraf
Press Officer**

Kaiserstraße 12
76131 Karlsruhe
Phone: +49 721 608-4 7414
Fax: +49 721 608-4 3658
E-mail: presse@kit.edu

In the course of its yesterday's meeting, the KIT Senate adopted the "Guidelines for Ethical Principles of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)". These guidelines are based on the freedom of the arts, science, research, and teaching as outlined in Article 5, paragraph 3, of the German constitution. At the same time, they appeal to the responsibility of all employees and members of KIT for their acting. As a major principle, research, teaching, and innovation at KIT are to serve the gaining of knowledge and the protection of the environment, to entail a sustainable benefit for humanity, and to pursue peaceful purposes.

As outlined in the Preamble of the Joint Statutes of KIT of March 21, 2011, KIT has committed to act in accordance with ethical principles in all fields of science, teaching, innovation, and services. For the purpose of detailing, an ethics commission appointed by the Senate drafted the guidelines for all members and employees of KIT, which were adopted yesterday by the Senate in the second reading.

"Between the first reading in February and the second reading, the Senate deliberately left a longer period of time in order to allow for

discussions at institutes, departments, in the staff council, and among students,” says KIT Vice President for Human Resources and Law, Dr. Elke Luise Barnstedt.

To account for academic freedom, the guidelines do not contain any canon of instructions or detailed prohibitions and orders. Among others, they refer to the problem of “dual use”, that is the multiple use of research results, and ask the members and employees of KIT to weigh currently unforeseeable potential applications of research results with the necessary sensitivity. As an ultimate consequence, research associated with risks that cannot be limited is to be given up.

An element of the societal obligations of research, teaching, and innovation is public accessibility of the findings. In their guidelines, the KIT members commit to making the results and findings obtained generally available to the scientific community and the society in agreement with the legislation and contractual regulations. Research that meets these requirements is to be supported by activities and resources. Participation in public discourse and in the further development of societal framework conditions, counseling of politics, and responsible use of personal, temporal, financial, and material resources are other maxims for acting. In addition, the ethical guidelines focus on the fair and trusting cooperation of KIT members as a basis of the KIT culture and on participation of students and employees in decision-making and organization processes at KIT.

For discourse, further development of the ethical guidelines, counseling of KIT members and employees, and current discussion of sensitive problems, the KIT Senate appoints two ombudspersons for ethical principles as well as an ethics commission.

The precise wording of the ethical guidelines can be found in the pdf file enclosed.

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) is a public corporation according to the legislation of the state of Baden-Württemberg. It fulfills the mission of a university and the mission of a national research center of the Helmholtz Association. KIT focuses on a knowledge triangle that links the tasks of research, teaching, and innovation.

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