

Code of Conduct – Academy of Fine Arts Vienna

The Code of Conduct of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna is designed to promote and support a trustful and healthy working and learning environment based on respect for all members of the university. It summarizes the basic rules that form the binding framework for daily work and study, as well as for the freedom of academic teaching and acquisition of knowledge.

The staff and students of the Academy follow the common self-understanding defined in this Code of Conduct. By taking responsibility within their own field of action within the Academy they contribute to a culture of inclusive and non-violent discourse.

The Academy of Fine Arts Vienna's primary field of activity is teaching and research in art and science. Its members convey cultures of artistic and scientific practice and research, for which the Academy is recognized beyond the boundaries of the institution. In accordance with the University Act, the Academy also participates in public discourse, supporting social, cultural, and political engagement, and contributes to shaping democratic processes. The Academy is committed to its role as a socially responsible institution.

As an international institution, the Academy embraces a diverse community of students and staff with different backgrounds, identities, and circumstances. This diversity brings with it a wide range of experiences, including those of exploitation, exclusion, and marginalization. In this context, the Academy is developing tools that contribute to the promotion of equal opportunities, gender equality, accessibility, and diversity. Key initiatives such as the Equality Plan, the Plan for the Advancement of Women, and the Agreement on Anti-discrimination in the Workplace are binding documents for a discrimination-critical practice. Furthermore, institutionally anchored committees and contact persons, including the works councils, disability representatives, and the working group on equal opportunities (AfG) support and advise the university management in implementing policies and procedures.

1. Respectful and Appreciative Interaction

Respectful and appreciative interaction with one another is the precondition for every form of collaboration at the Academy. This principle is grounded on the trust that all members of the institution – regardless of different roles, positions, or opinions – share a common goal: the collective development of the university. Central to our communication culture is a mutual commitment to fostering diversity of opinion and engaging in respectful dialogue.

We are dedicated to actively counteracting the exploitation of power imbalances and dependency structures in all work, study, and cooperative settings at the Academy. Harassing behavior, physical, psychological, and emotional abuse, as well as any form of unfair discrimination will not be tolerated (see Anti-Discrimination Agreement § 1&2 and International Labor Organization's Protection from Violence and Harassment in the World of Work).

2. Discrimination-critical Culture of Discussion and Discourse

As an educational and research institution, the Academy values open dialogue and critical debate. In this spirit, members of the Academy are committed to a space for discussion and discourse that also allows for controversy, criticism, and dissent. Supporting objective debate is the responsibility of all university members, especially those in leading positions.

Any individual who engages in harassment, discrimination or incitements against others based on gender or ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief (in accordance with §16 (4) GSP and § 13.1 B-GIBG), socioeconomic position (§ 52 GSP), or disability (in accordance with § 5.4 BGStG) violates the fundamental principles of the Academy (see also § 16 GSP and § 1 aBV).

3. Academic Freedom and Responsibility

All members of the university contribute to the public perception of the Academy. In their research, staff and students strive for discursive verifiability through argumentation or evidence, as well as factual accuracy, and adhering to scientific standards.

They contribute to social development by initiating discourse, introducing new ways of thinking, and presenting diverse perspectives on society and culture up for discussion. This takes place within the framework of legally protected artistic and scientific freedom, guided by values of openness, curiosity, and a willingness to experiment. Central to this is the acceptance of mistakes as part of the learning process and the opportunity to grow from them.

4. Scientific and Artistic Work and Publishing

The freedom of scientific, artistic and arts-based research work is protected by law and is supported at the Academy by governing bodies such as the Rectorate, Senate, and all collegial bodies, as well as by the heads of the institutes and departments, teachers, and staff. Courses and events at the Academy are designed to allow for the representation and critical discussion of differing theoretical positions. It is essential to distinguish between criticizing ideas, methods, and arguments, and the denigration of individuals. A culture of critical exchange is crucial for academic freedom.

Adherence to professional academic and artistic-scientific standards includes respecting copyright and conveying and following basic ethical principles of research (e.g., regarding the citation of sources, arguments, and studies).

The ethical framework for academic work and study must be followed. Targeted measures are implemented to communicate and ensure these standards and are continuously developed in collaboration with other institutions.

Legal regulations must be observed when publishing content. Publishing on social media and digital platforms is subject to the same legal principles as other forms of public communication.

5. Principles of Objective Assessment and Biases

The principle of objectivity applies to the assessment of work performance and the grading of student assignments and academic papers. Only predefined criteria and objectives are used for this purpose. If assessments are made that do not align with these criteria, the relevant supervisors, department heads, or the vice-rector responsible for teaching must be notified.

Any partnerships, economic relationships, and close academic connections must be disclosed in the context of appointment and application procedures, committee appointments, evaluations, expert reviews, the awarding of teaching assignments, and work contracts. In the event of conflicts of interest, participation in the procedure may be called into question by the responsible bodies (see Section 3 of the Statutes, Equality Plan, § 60-66, and Section 7 of the Statutes, Appointment Procedures).

6. Data Protection and Confidentiality

University work involves handling confidential information, which must be treated with care and discretion. In particular, any personal information is subject to confidentiality and data protection regulations.

Members of the Academy are required to comply with applicable legal regulations, including the Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when handling data and information, both during their employment and after it concludes. Appropriate precautions and protective security measures must be taken, especially when processing information and data electronically and when accessing data via mobile devices.

7. Transparency and Compliance

In the interests of transparency and in compliance with the Informationsfreiheitsgesetz (Freedom of Information Act), processes at the Academy are designed and documented in a comprehensible manner. Staff members with relevant expertise, along with student representatives, are involved in the development of study-related processes.

As a public institution, the Academy upholds responsible financial management, and cost-conscious resource use as a matter of course at the Academy. The acquisition of external funding must be agreed upon with the relevant management bodies, including the Rectorate and, where applicable, institute or department heads.

8. Sustainability and Resources

At the Academy, addressing the effects of climate change and the sustainable design of our everyday lives is a high priority.

Both in their daily work and in the development of social perspectives, members of the Academy strive for more sustainable practices. They actively contribute to developing possibilities for a climate-conscious future and acting in a resource-efficient manner (see Sustainability Strategy). This includes, among other initiatives, climate-friendly mobility, and reducing resource consumption in artistic production and exhibition practices.

Final provisions

Compliance with this Code of Conduct is binding for all members of the Academy.

For the protection of all employees and students, violations of the legal framework will be investigated and may result in disciplinary measures. Complaints regarding violations can be addressed to the relevant bodies (direct supervisors, Rectorate, Working Group on Equal Opportunities (AfG), Works Council, ÖH, etc.) or reported anonymously via the whistleblower system. All complaints will be handled confidentially, and the identities of complainants and any individuals named in the report will be protected. The reporting committees and representatives are obligated to impartiality, objectivity, and confidentiality.

This Code of Conduct does not replace university-related legal provisions, internal guidelines, regulations, and university agreements, but summarizes them.

This Code of Conduct was developed by the Rectorate in collaboration with the Working Group on Equal Opportunities (AfG), the Works Council for General University Staff, the Works Council for Artistic and Scientific Staff, the Coordination Office for the Advancement of Women | Gender Studies | Diversity, and the Senate.