

GFZ Code of Conduct

The GFZ Helmholtz Centre for Geosciences has adopted a Code of Conduct, which came into force on July 4, 2024. The Code of Conduct is subject to constant monitoring and can be adapted if necessary.

The Code of Conduct applies to all employees of the GFZ and to all external persons who are largely integrated into the Centre or who are not only temporarily working at the GFZ and who have contact with the employees of the GFZ. This includes interns, doctoral students and visiting scientists, provided they work at the GFZ or for the GFZ.

Our Values

The employees of the GFZ have jointly identified the following values that stand for the GFZ internally and externally:

Integrity

We carry out research in accordance with the [rules of good scientific practice](#), independently, transparently and objectively. We commit ourselves to high ethical standards in our work and act in a trustworthy and reliable manner.

Appreciation

We all assume obligation for good teamwork, as well as respectful and supportive interaction in our dealings with each other. Feedback is given in a polite, constructive and encouraging manner.

Diversity in perspectives

We facilitate freedom for independent performance, active participation, scientific topic selection and flexible working. Different perspectives enrich our everyday work. In our diversity we view ourselves as a whole. We live tolerance in the way we think and act and we actively promote diversity and equal opportunity for individual future development opportunities.

Relevance

We are committed to the understanding of our Earth and to the securing of sustainable living space on our planet. This is our contribution to solving the grand societal challenges. Through knowledge-based communication in public dialogue we fulfill our responsibility as independent experts within politics and society.

Curiosity

We are inspired and motivated by exciting research. In our dynamic environment we act creatively, we are open to "the new" and we strive for excellence and innovation.

Our Rules of Conduct

Our rules of conduct are based on our values and every employee is obliged to align his or her behaviour with them.

1. Integrity

- a. We respect the free democratic basic order and adhere to the laws, regulations and conventions that apply nationally and internationally.
- b. We are familiar with and observe the service agreements and internal regulations applicable at the GFZ as well as the contractual obligations entered into in our area of responsibility.
- c. We are committed to correct dealings with all institutions, funding bodies and authorities. This includes reporting and notification obligations as well as a cooperative working relationship.
- d. We ensure that our own interests do not conflict with those of the GFZ. We make business decisions exclusively in the interest of the GFZ. When taking up secondary employment, we must also ensure that official interests of the GFZ are not impaired by the respective secondary employment. We observe the obligation to notify of secondary employment.

If we find ourselves in a conflict of interest or in a situation that could be perceived by outsiders as a conflict of interest for us, we report this immediately to our manager.

- e. We reject any form of corruption. We do not grant or accept any improper benefits. The GFZ has set up compliance reporting channels for reporting of potential corruption. Further information is available from the Compliance Office.
- f. We comply with all export control and foreign trade legislation. For example, we make sure that devices that could possibly be used for military purposes (dual use) do not reach embargoed countries. The same applies to research results such as technologies, know-how, software or data. For queries, please contact the Export Control Officer.

2. Appreciation, respect and diversity

- a. We see ourselves as a community of our employees contributing to the diversity of the GFZ with individual personalities and entire diversity. We are committed to the Diversity Charter.
- b. We work together in a spirit of trust and mutual appreciation with each other and with our entire work environment. We maintain an atmosphere of respect and fairness, appreciation and belonging, security and openness. We use the funds, equipment and resources entrusted to us together responsibly, taking into account and weighing up the interests of all.
- c. We are committed to a tolerant and non-discriminatory interaction at the GFZ and with our partners and contact persons from research, business, administration, civil society, politics and the public. We do not tolerate any form of direct or indirect discrimination. This includes unjustified discrimination based on age, education, origin, gender, sexual identity or orientation, skin colour, culture, disability, physical ability, religion, ideology or other personal characteristics such as marital status, professional experience or membership of a department or work group.
- d. We are committed to a harassment-free workplace. We strictly reject humiliating, defamatory, intimidating, threatening, or offensive acts and behaviour (including, but not limited to, verbal or physical harassment, sexual assault, stalking). If we witness inappropriate behaviour by others, we take action and/or bring it to the attention of a manager.

- e. We encourage all employees to address ideas and concerns openly and directly. We resolve conflicts as early as possible in a spirit of trust and mutual respect in a fair and objective manner. Where this is not possible, the GFZ has appointed trusted persons who help to mediate conflicts.

3. Management Responsibility

- a. Our managers have a special responsibility to credibly embody our values and exemplify our centre's culture. All managers are required to be aware of the laws, regulations and internal regulations relevant to their area of responsibility and to take consistent action against behaviour that is not in line with this or with the values of our centre.
- b. All managers promote an open communication culture in which praise and recognition are expressed and heard as well as concerns and criticism. All managers should communicate goals, tasks and feedback clearly and regularly to their employees.
- c. In the spirit of equal opportunity, we make achievements and innovations visible, as well as contributions to the work process, and our managers take responsibility for ensuring that contributors receive appropriate recognition.
- d. The GFZ Management Guidelines provide our managers with a more far-reaching framework for action. The GFZ provides managers with concrete personnel development and management tools to fulfil their management tasks.

4. Research and academic freedom

- a. The objectives of our research and teaching are based on the Centre's strategy, the research policy framework of our budget-financing funding bodies of the Federal Government and the State of Brandenburg and the Helmholtz Association, as well as the Centre's own guidelines such as this Code of Conduct and the Code of Ethics. The freedom of research and teaching and the independence of the GFZ from other third-party interests must be guaranteed.
- b. Our research and publication activities comply with the GFZ guidelines for safeguarding good scientific practice in accordance with the codex of the German Research Foundation. The ombudspersons for good scientific practice are available to answer any questions about this.
- c. We support our early career scientists by providing responsible supervision.
- d. We handle research data openly and transparently in accordance with the FAIR principles (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable). Every employee as well as the managers are obliged to observe the discipline-specific rules for the acquisition and selection of data, the reliable backup and storage of primary data, and the clear and comprehensible documentation of all important results.
- e. In accordance with the Helmholtz Open Science Policy (2022), research data as well as other scientific results are to be made open and reusable according to the principle of "intelligent openness", i.e. "as open as possible and as closed as necessary". It is important to ensure that data protection provisions, legal frameworks and transfer aspects in accordance with the GFZ guideline for the exploitation and licensing of research software and the GFZ guideline on the Handling of Intellectual Property (IP Policy).

5. Social responsibility

- a. In line with the mission of the Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres, we as a Helmholtz Centre contribute to solving the major challenges facing science, society and industry.
- b. As a Helmholtz Centre dedicated to geoscientific research and transformative sustainability research, we have a special responsibility for the preservation of natural resources, ensuring humane living conditions for all people worldwide, sustainable use of resources and protection against natural hazards.
- c. We aim to reconcile excellent research with sustainable and equitable development, including climate protection. With our research activities, we contribute to global sustainability goals. And in our daily work, we are committed to further principles of sustainable action in ecological, social and economic terms. The GFZ advocates sustainable consumption and use of resources, also in everyday work. The GFZ understands sustainability as a process that is constantly evolving, and we have set ourselves ambitious goals with the sustainability strategy. The GFZ has appointed a Sustainability Manager who is available to answer questions and make suggestions.
- d. We are committed to making our knowledge usable for business, politics and society. In addition to the publication of research results in the standard scientific formats, this includes the transfer of scientific findings and information, as well as science communication and outreach activities in various formats, including dialogue and participation formats.
- e. We are committed to fully respecting, promoting and complying with internationally recognised human rights in all aspects of our activities. We recognise that human rights are universal, indivisible and inalienable and are committed to ensuring that they are respected in all areas of our influence, including our collaborators, business partners and suppliers.
- f. We are committed to the international labour and social standards of the United Nations (International Labour Organisation ILO) and expect our employees, cooperation and business partners to observe and promote these standards in their cooperation and business activities. We strictly reject any form of child or forced labour.

6. Protection of GFZ property, confidential information and personal data

- a. We handle the funds and equipment entrusted to us responsibly. We use the physical property of the GFZ (assets such as the GFZ infrastructure, e.g. laboratory facilities, workplace equipment and working materials) properly and only for the intended purposes of the centre. We protect it from loss or theft. We only grant authorised persons access to IT infrastructure, offices, laboratory facilities and warehouses.
- b. We also protect the intellectual property of the GFZ (such as patents, trademarks, designs, databases, copyrights to know-how and software) against loss, theft or misuse. This also means that our protected know-how, such as software and patents, may only be used on the basis of licensing agreements and may only be passed on or transferred to third parties outside the GFZ after consultation with the responsible departments (Transfer and Innovation, Legal Department, etc.)
- c. We keep confidential information, business documents and trade secrets, including those of our business or cooperation partners, secret and protect them in an appropriate manner. Confidential information in general business transactions as well as confidential knowledge in the context of research projects and scientific collaborations are not intended for internal dissemination or public disclosure – outside the circle of entitled parties.

- d. Personal data is only collected or processed if it is strictly necessary for the performance of the corresponding work tasks or if it is required by law. With high technical standards, we guarantee the protection of the data against unauthorised access. The Data Protection Team will answer questions about this.

7. Equal opportunities, work and family

- a. Achieving diversity, equality, and inclusion is central to us.
- b. Our centre stands for a welcoming culture that enables new employees to experience a positive onboarding, structured orientation, cultural integration. Our Welcome Centre offers comprehensive advice and support for international researchers before and during their stay at the GFZ.
- c. We promote equal opportunities and equal rights for all people throughout the GFZ at all levels. The GFZ has appointed an Equal Opportunities Commissioner with a team and promotes equality between men and women on the basis of an equality plan. We pay attention to equality-oriented personnel recruitment and development.
- d. Our postdocs are supported by the Career Centre in their career planning and development.
- e. The GFZ is committed to the compatibility of work, family and private life. We promote a family-friendly working atmosphere.
- f. Our managers have a special responsibility to create or maintain optimal framework conditions for equal opportunities and the compatibility of work, family and private life.

8. Occupational safety, health protection

- a. We are committed to taking all necessary measures to ensure the health and well-being of our employees. This includes providing a safe and healthy working environment and promoting a conscious approach to health risks. This includes regular risk assessments, training and awareness-raising measures for all employees, the provision of a company doctor, the establishment of a first aid system and information on occupational health management.
- b. All employees are required to behave prudently at all times in order to avoid situations that pose a risk to safety and to actively contribute to the promotion of health protection. This includes complying with safety regulations, wearing personal protective equipment where necessary, reporting potential hazards, and actively participating in training, annual safety briefings, and local lab briefings.
- c. As part of the transfer of entrepreneurial duties, managers are responsible for the safety and health of their employees.
- d. On the subject of occupational safety and health protection, the Occupational Safety and Health Protection team is the point of contact for questions and further information. Furthermore, the GFZ provides employees with a service partner for occupational health management services and trustworthy support in challenging life situations.

9. Media contacts and communication to the public

- a. We communicate transparently and credibly with the public. The GFZ conducts its public relations work and knowledge transfer according to the "Guidelines for Good Science PR".
- b. The Communication & Media Team and the Press & Communications Team at RIFS are responsible for communicating the services, concerns and values of the GFZ to the public, the media, politics, civil society and economy. They ensure that the centre has a professional and uniform appearance.

- c. Public appearances or interviews with the media may only take place after information and a corresponding briefing by the Communications & Media or Press & Communications team. Only appropriately authorised persons may speak on behalf of the GFZ:
 - Special political or strategic topics are communicated on behalf of the GFZ by the Executive Board or by scientists or speakers appointed by the Executive Board;
 - All technical questions are answered by the respective scientists on their own responsibility as GFZ experts in their field; the response to media inquiries in the event of a natural disaster is coordinated by the Communication & Media team.
 - Other persons may be appointed as contact persons for the media and the public after a decision by the Executive Board.
- d. Other statements relating to our work must always be marked as private statements.
- e. All communication measures must comply with confidentiality, data protection and the requirements of the Communication & Media or Press & Communications team, including the Social Media Guidelines.