

## Code of Conduct

This code of conduct represents the values the Department of Science and Technology Studies sees as central to the interaction of its members and affiliates. It is to be read in the context of the [code of conduct](#) and the [statutes](#) of the University of Vienna, the bylaws of the University of Vienna, its [regulations of good scientific practice](#), and its guidelines for [policy advice](#).

Our department is constituted by a community of people striving to learn about and research the relations between science, technology and society, as well as to support this research and learning. The department aims to provide the best possible conditions for the production of new knowledge as well as for the intellectual, personal and professional development of all the members of the department community.

This code of conduct addresses department staff and students as well as academic visitors and affiliates. It is understood as complementing other existing rules and regulations specific to particular groups.

A central tenet of our work and our field is that knowledge is always produced in social environments, and that the form and quality of knowledge and learning depends on the quality of these environments. In particular, a diversity of backgrounds, identities, and opinions as well as the possibility to express these in open and respectful discourse is crucial to that endeavour.

Our aim is to create a professional, sensitive, and supportive environment, free of abuse, discrimination, or harassment of others.

No forms of discrimination are tolerated at our department. Discrimination can concern among others race, sex, gender, sexuality, age, (dis)ability, language, religion, political opinion, appearance, national, ethnic or social origin, class, birth or other status.

Though different in their backgrounds, identities and institutional positions, all members of the department community are equal in their fundamental rights, including to be a respected and valued part of this community and to contribute to its collective shaping in relation to their different roles.

Academia is a hierarchical environment and often frames the relations between its members as competitive. As such, academia is particularly vulnerable to diverse forms of power abuse and hostile behavior. Our department actively works against these tendencies, in particular against sexual harassment, bullying, defamation, and

the belittling of members and affiliates of the department community. This includes offline and online spaces.

## **Inclusivity**

Our department consists of people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and ways of life. Fostering an inclusive place of work and study not only means that people of different identities, experiences and life situations are welcome to take part in our shared space, but also that everyone is allowed and encouraged to participate in shaping it.

We believe that working towards inclusivity and equity (while recognising difference) creates a more sustainable environment. As we strive towards this vision, we remain aware that hierarchies, different forms of intersectionality, differences in power and in the ability to contribute and to participate will always be present. Realizing this vision therefore demands that every member of the department community both reflects on their own perspective, positionality and privilege and acts in a way that is considerate of this and the situations of others.

We as members of the department community commit ourselves to:

- Sharing knowledge with each other;
- Accepting, acknowledging and respecting each other's individuality, needs and boundaries;
- Nourishing and celebrating diversity;
- Abstaining from racist or derogatory terms;
- Communicating information as much as possible in the department's working language, English;
- Designing and using all spaces in a way such they are as easily accessible as possible;
- Fostering inclusive spaces for communication/expression and avoiding aggressive communication styles;
- Inviting and including people to be heard in processes and decisions that affect them, through representation where direct participation isn't possible or practically feasible, by documenting and communicating relevant information in an accessible manner.

## **Respect**

We believe reciprocal respect to be the basis of a healthy and thriving work and study environment. Communicating and interacting in a respectful way is not only necessary to make everyone feel welcome and comfortable in our shared spaces, but it is also a constituent part of any working, learning and growing process.

The form of reciprocal respect we strive for is active, intentional, caring, and rooted in an appreciation of all individuals, irrespective of positionalities. It transcends power structures and hierarchies. As such it should be the baseline of all relationships at our department.

We as members of the department community commit ourselves to:

- Recognising all members of the department community as equal, while keeping necessary differences and constraints with regard to institutional positions, positionalities and other organizational aspects in mind;
- Listening to and taking each other seriously;
- Making each other feel welcome and appreciated;
- Taking commitments to other members of the community seriously;
- Respecting the time and the efforts of others;
- Giving critique and feedback with the intention of being constructive and productive, and offering them as an opportunity for improvement;
- Standing up against disrespectful behavior and show solidarity and support.

## **Reflexivity and care**

At our department, and in academia in general, people often inhabit multiple roles that come along with varying expectations, responsibilities, and affordances. A person can simultaneously be a student and a teacher, an employee and a co-author, and so on. These configurations and mixed positionalities demand careful handling. This entails a commitment to institutional reflexivity about our shared culture and norms as well as academia as a teaching and working environment.

The care we put into being and working together relies on the values and actions of individuals, but it also needs to be enacted in formal and institutional structures.

We as members of the department community commit ourselves to:

- Creating and maintaining institutional structures and opportunities to reflect on the shared department culture;
- Being transparent and care-ful when it comes to our responsibilities towards each other and the department and making them explicit in work relations (where care involves a commitment to nurturing shared forms of life; Tronto 1998);
- Making tacit and implicit knowledge as transparent as possible, e.g., by having clear documentation of structures and procedures;

- Being considerate and careful in our expectations towards others and ourselves;
- Creating an environment where people feel able to set clear boundaries and be mindful of those of others;
- Fostering a culture of acknowledging and making visible each other's work (including care work); this also implies explicit attention to good authorship practices;
- Remaining sensitive to our own and others' mental and physical health;
- Enabling and supporting the kinds of work needed to make and maintain spaces for positive, enjoyable and constructive interactions.

## **Context and continued efforts**

This code of conduct was drafted in a participatory process by the department community. In a moderated process in spring 2023, which was triggered by #metoo debates in our field, members of the department expressed what they see as crucial for a positive working and learning space. Based on these inputs, a working group composed of students and department staff in different positions drafted the first iteration of this document in September 2023. It was commented on by members of the department council, discussed by the department council on 14.03.2024, and adopted by the department leadership. It was last updated in June 2025 after renewed discussion in the department council. It will be updated when necessary to reflect the evolution of our commitment to a responsible, inclusive, reflexive, respectful and caring department.

This code of conduct is accessible to all community members through the departmental webpage. It will also be proactively shared (e.g. by handing it out to new students and staff).

The code of conduct is revisited once a year by the department council in a summer semester meeting. Likewise, the STS student council has committed itself to enable all students to be part of a student revision process which will offer feedback to the department. Smaller changes to wordings can be made by department council and leadership in this meeting. If the department council and leadership see major changes of the code of conduct as necessary, a meeting for all department members will be announced in a timely and inclusive fashion to discuss these changes.

It is recognized that the code of conduct outlines values and aims rather than concrete actions. As a living document, it is intended to be the basis for further initiatives that translate these values and aims into concrete action.