

Guidelines for safeguarding good artistic and academic research practice at the Hamburg University of Fine Arts

From September 16, 2024

Preamble

The Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg (HFBK) is a center for artistic and academic research into contemporary issues. It sees itself as a discursive and self-reflective space in which research processes unfold and new forms, languages and methodologies are experimented with.

These statutes serve as a guideline for all members and affiliates of the HFBK. It is based on principles that are universally valid. It is both an ethical norm and the basis for the rules of professionalism and freedom of the arts and sciences, which vary from discipline to discipline.

Observance of the principles of good artistic and scientific research practice is an indispensable prerequisite for scientific and artistic work. One of the core tasks of the university is to safeguard these principles and to communicate their validity for practice to students and the next generation of artists and academics.

The following refers to good artistic and scientific research practice, although artistic, creative and design work differs from scientific work to varying degrees and in different ways.

The principles consider the respective subject culture and the associated discipline-specific principles, legal standards and professional freedoms. Academic and artistic practice must be considered specifically and against the background of fundamental academic and artistic freedom.

The following regulations are based on the “Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice” of the German Research Foundation (DFG) in the version of September 2019, taking into account the special conditions of artistic research. They guide the actions of all persons working in the field of art, research or research support at the university.

A: Principles of good artistic and scientific research practice

Guideline 1: Commitment to the general principles

The HFBK Hamburg lays down rules for good artistic and academic research practice, makes them known to its members and associates and obliges them - taking into account the specifics of the relevant subject area - to comply with them.

Guideline 2: Professionalism and ethos

Scientists and artists are personally responsible for implementing the fundamental values and standards of scientific and artistic work in their actions and for standing up for them. They actively take measures to ensure and further develop good artistic and scientific research practice and therefore regularly update their knowledge of the applicable standards, regardless of their career level. Teaching the fundamentals of good artistic practice begins as early as possible in academic teaching and artistic training.

Guideline 3: Organizational responsibility of the management of academic institutions

The HFBK management creates the framework conditions for artistic and academic research by establishing an appropriate institutional organizational structure. It guarantees the prerequisites for academics and artists to be able to comply with legal and ethical standards.

Guideline 4: Responsibility of the management

Management responsibility includes, in particular, guaranteeing appropriate individual support for young artists. This also includes the promotion of professionalization for this target group and for the supporting administrative and technical staff [→ [Professionalization program of HFBK](#)]. Abuse of power and the exploitation of dependency relationships must be prevented by means of suitable precautions at all levels and protection against discrimination [→ [Anti-Discrimination Policy of HFBK](#)] must be consistently implemented.

Guideline 5: Performance dimensions and assessment criteria

A multidimensional approach is required to assess the performance of academics and artists. Originality and quality always take precedence over quantity as performance and assessment criteria for examinations and project work, for the awarding of academic degrees, for recruitment, appointments, promotions and funding allocations. Discipline-specific criteria must be included. In addition to academic and artistic performance, other aspects may be taken into account, which must be made transparent. Where voluntarily stated, individual specificities in CVs are also given appropriate consideration. This refers, among other things, to personal, family or health-related periods of absence or extended training or qualification periods, alternative career paths or comparable circumstances.

Guideline 6: Ombudspersons

The ombudspersons are contact persons for members and affiliates of the HFBK in questions regarding artistic and scientific research practice or in cases of suspected scientific or artistic misconduct. As neutral persons of trust, the ombudspersons are bound to confidentiality and can be called upon to advise, mediate and moderate disputes as required. All inquiries are treated confidentially. In accordance with § 99 HmbHG, the ombudsperson is elected by the University Senate from the group of professors for a period of two years. The member of the student body is appointed for one year at a time by the General Student

Committee of the HFBK student body; repeated election and appointment are permitted.

[See <https://www.hfbk-hamburg.de/en/hochschule/gremien/ombudsperson/>]

The ombudsperson examines the allegations of suspected academic or artistic misconduct, weighing up all the facts as to their truthfulness and significance, possible motives and with regard to possibilities for resolving the allegations.

The ombudsperson and their deputy may not be a member of the university management while exercising this office.

The university management shall ensure that the ombudsperson and their deputy are made known by publishing their names and contact details on the university website.

B: Scientific and artistic research process

Guideline 7: Cross-phase quality assurance

Each individual artistic-research and creative work is the result of self-critical responsibility. The methodology, own prerequisites and procedures must be disclosed and made accessible to interested parties. The permanent possibility for critical discussion and appreciation of the work and its methodology must be guaranteed. The origin of data, materials, media and aids used in the research process must be identified and their subsequent use documented; the sources must be traceable and cited. The development process must be comprehensively documented.

Guideline 8: Legal and ethical framework conditions, rights of use

Scientists deal responsibly with the constitutionally granted freedom of research and artists with artistic freedom. They include rights and obligations, in particular those resulting from legal requirements, but also from contracts with third parties, and obtain and submit authorizations where necessary. With regard to artistic research projects, the consequences should be assessed and the respective ethical aspects evaluated. The legal framework of a research project also includes documented agreements on the rights of use of the resulting research data and other research results.

Guideline 9: Methods and standards

Researchers and artists use comprehensible methods to develop, process and answer research questions. The application of a method usually requires specific skills on the part of the scientists and artists involved. In science, the establishment of standards for methods, the use of software, the collection of research data and the description and evaluation of research results is an essential prerequisite for the comparability and transferability of research results. In artistic-research contexts, too, there is an obligation to reflect comprehensively on existing standards and subject-specific criteria. It is also necessary to include criteria of sustainability [→ [HFBK sustainability report](#)] and inclusion.

Guideline 10: Documentation

Researchers and artists must document all information relevant to the completion of a research project in a way that is necessary and appropriate for the respective subject and project. If the documentation does not meet these requirements, the limitations and the reasons for them must be clearly explained. Documentation and research results must not be manipulated; they must be protected against manipulation as far as possible.

Guideline 11: Publication of artistic work and accessibility of research results

As a matter of principle, scientists contribute all their findings to the scientific discourse. Artistic-research work is generally visible in public presentations and is thus part of the debate on social and aesthetic discourse. Artists are responsible for deciding whether, how and where they make their results publicly accessible, considering the conventions of the discipline concerned. Each publication must be fully and comprehensibly described and documented. In accordance with the principles of open data, the HFBK strives to ensure free access to and long-term preservation of research data and documentation.

Guideline 12: Authorship

The designation of a so-called “authorship” for a scientific and artistic achievement is indispensable. An author is someone who has made a genuine, significant and comprehensible contribution to an artistic work and/or the content of a scientific publication. All authors agree to the final version of the work to be exhibited and/or published. They bear joint responsibility for the exhibition and/or publication, unless explicitly stated otherwise. The order and type of naming of the authors is agreed on the basis of comprehensible criteria, taking into account the conventions of each subject area. The consent of the authors or their legal representatives must be obtained prior to any publication. All rights and obligations in connection with the exhibition, publication, reproduction and use of works are governed by copyright law.

Guideline 13: Publication medium

Authors carefully select the publication medium, taking into account its quality and visibility in the respective field of discourse. In its open access policy, the HFBK is committed to the principles of open access publishing. It advocates free and unrestricted access to scientific and artistic findings and recommends publishing in open access publications.

C Non-compliance with good scientific and artistic practice, procedures

Guideline 14: Basic principles for dealing with artistic and academic misconduct

All departments at the HFBK that investigate suspected artistic or academic misconduct within the scope of their responsibilities are committed to protecting both the whistleblower and the person affected by the allegations in an appropriate manner. The competent bodies are aware that the conduct of proceedings and the final, possible imposition of sanctions can constitute a considerable encroachment on the legal interests of the accused. The investigation of allegations of scientific or artistic misconduct must be conducted at all times in accordance with the principles of the rule of law, fairly and with the presumption of innocence. The investigation must also be confidential. Investigations are conducted without regard to the person, and decisions are made without regard to the person. The principle of the presumption of innocence is taken into account. Neither the whistleblower nor the person affected by the allegations should suffer any disadvantages for their own academic, artistic or professional advancement as a result of the report. For the person concerned, this applies in any case until formal proof of academic or artistic misconduct is provided. Reports by whistleblowers must be made in good faith. Whistleblowers must have objective evidence that standards of good scientific practice may have been violated.

Guideline 15: Procedure in the event of suspected artistic or scientific misconduct

Whistleblowers should contact the ombudsperson or a deputy in accordance with Guideline 6 with a report of suspected misconduct. The report of suspected misconduct should be made in writing, stating the incriminating facts and evidence. It may be made verbally; in this case, a transcript must be prepared by the receiving office. If whistleblowers report their suspicions to other university offices, the report will be forwarded to the responsible ombudsperson for the purpose of determining responsibility. The responsible ombudsperson or deputy will examine confidentially whether there are sufficiently concrete indications that a person has engaged in misconduct that can be prosecuted. The ombudsperson may conduct preliminary investigations in this context.

The person affected by the suspicion of misconduct must be informed immediately of the incriminating facts and evidence; the name of the informant will only be disclosed to the person affected if the informant has given their prior consent. The ombudsperson examines options for resolving the conflict and may consult with the complainant. If the conflict is resolved, the persons involved will be informed. If the ombudsperson comes to the conclusion that there are sufficiently concrete grounds for suspicion, they will initiate a preliminary investigation.

Preliminary examination

The person concerned is requested to submit a written statement. The deadline for the statement is usually three weeks and six weeks during the semester break.

As part of the preliminary examination, the ombudsperson may conduct the necessary investigations to clarify the facts of the case, insofar as these are permitted by higher-ranking law. For example, it may request, obtain and inspect documents, obtain and secure other evidence, obtain opinions or - if necessary - obtain external expert opinions. All persons involved must be requested to treat the request confidentially.

After completing the relevant investigations and evaluating all relevant evidence, including the statement of the accused person, the competent ombudsperson shall decide without delay on the further progress of the proceedings. The decision shall be based on whether, on the basis of the facts, a finding of artistic and scientific misconduct by the investigating commission appears more likely than a discontinuation of the proceedings (sufficient suspicion). If there is no sufficient suspicion of actionable artistic-academic misconduct, the ombudsperson shall discontinue the proceedings. If there is sufficient suspicion, the ombudsperson will forward the case to the Executive Board of the HFBK with a recommendation on how to proceed.

Guideline 16: Ad hoc committee for ethics and quality in scientific and artistic practice

Based on the recommendation of the ombudsperson, the Executive Board decides on how to proceed and appoints an Ad Hoc Commission for Ethics and Quality in Academic and Artistic Practice (in short: Investigation Commission) for a formal investigation. The Commission is responsible for formal proceedings in cases of suspected scientific or artistic misconduct and for dealing with related ethical issues.

The commission consists of four members with voting rights:

- Two full-time professors from different artistic fields of study and one from the Theory and History department
- One student/resp. doctoral candidate depending on the qualification level of the persons affected by the allegation of a violation.

The commission elects a professor from among its members as chairperson and a deputy chairperson. The meetings are not open to the public. The committee is quorate if at least three members with voting rights are present. It may be possible to hold meetings digitally. Resolutions are passed by simple majority. Minutes must be taken of the meetings, which record the main results of the meeting. The members are obliged to maintain confidentiality. The investigation committee may invite other persons with special expertise in the matter to be assessed to its meetings in an advisory capacity.

Formal investigation procedure

If a formal investigation procedure is initiated, the convened investigation committee is entitled to obtain the information and opinions required to clarify the facts of the case and, in individual cases, to consult experts from the specialist field concerned as well as other experts. The Commission shall examine whether scientific or artistic misconduct has occurred on the basis of a free assessment of evidence. The person concerned is provided with all information and is given the opportunity to make a written and oral statement. The person providing the information and the person concerned will be informed. If the Commission considers the scientific or artistic misconduct to be proven, it reports to the Executive Board and proposes how the procedure should be continued. The commission summarizes the main reasons that led to the termination or forwarding of the proceedings to the Executive Board in an investigation report. The files of the formal investigation procedure are kept in the university archives for 30 years.

During the entire procedure, the name of the person providing the information will not be disclosed at their request. An exception to this is the legal obligation to disclose. The Presidential Board decides on the sanctions for artistic or academic misconduct on the basis of the investigation report and the recommendation of the commission.

Final provisions

The Guidelines for Artistic and Academic Research Practice at the HFBK enter into force on the day after their publication. They replace the Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Scientific and Artistic Practice of April 19, 2012.