



University of St.Gallen

HSG Ethics Code



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The number seven is ascribed special significance in many cultures, particularly in our part of the world, where this is reflected in the calendar. However, the seven principles of the HSG Code are not an answer to the seven mortal sins or a counterpart to the seven biblical virtues. Rather, they make clear how we, as members of our University, would like to encounter and deal with each other – regardless of our individual roles and positions.

This Code is not a code of law. Values like academic freedom and integrity strike us as a matter of course at first sight and normally do not require any clarification. Yet as we only avail ourselves of a compass when we are threatening to drift off course, the HSG Code provides us with bearings and serves to correct our course in cases of doubt. However, the seven principles should not only guide us in an emergency but encourage us to scrutinise our actions at all times.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Ehrenzeller', written in a cursive style.

Prof. Dr. Bernhard Ehrenzeller, Rector

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Why a HSG Ethics Code?

The HSG Ethics Code addresses all members of the University of St.Gallen (HSG) – students, faculty and staff – (administrative, research, technical, etc.). The Code has been prepared as a necessary complement to the vision, mission and goals of the University.

The Code supports the University in conducting its activities and sets out the core values of the HSG community. At the same time, we aim to live by these values. Through its guidelines, the Code promotes a shared understanding of how we go about our work, how we shape life on campus and how we, as a community, interact with each other.

The University of St.Gallen is embedded within the statutory framework of the Federal Government and the Canton of St.Gallen. We are thus bound by numerous external requirements and internal regulations. Anchored in a normative realm which antedates the law, the HSG Ethics Code serves as a bridge to the relevant sets of rules, yet without reiterating these.

What is it based on?

It is not part of the HSG's self-image to rely on specific rules for regulating our behaviour. What we expect instead is that the members of the HSG community act self-responsibly, in accordance with those values and principles which are of central importance to us.

1. Intellectual freedom.
2. Responsibility.
3. Integrity.
4. Professionalism.
5. Collegiality.
6. Sustainability.
7. Transparency.

We realise that these core values and principles may at times overlap or conflict with each other. For instance, principles such as professionalism or collegiality may seem to require treating information in strict confidence, whereas it ought to be made available to a wider circle of people in accordance with the principle of transparency. Which requirement should take precedence? – We must face up to such contradictions.

Against this background, we promote a culture of values, but also a culture of fallibility, which underpins and supports our work. To err is human. We recognise our errors and learn from them. The University President's Board, our alumni and students ensure that our normative framework remains subject to ongoing discussion, that it is disseminated and anchored across the University, and that it is critically examined and revised at regular intervals.

Our seven principles

While values and principles may serve as starting points and orientation, they do not provide specific guidance for decision making. The guidelines below illustrate how our values and principles might best apply in practice. The Senate is adopting them fully convinced that compliance is a self-evident virtue for most members of the University. Sustained effort ought to make observance become a matter of course for all members of the HSG community.

1 Intellectual freedom

We exercise and protect intellectual freedom.

- Teaching and learning, creativity and innovation presuppose freedom. We protect dissent, friction and deviation.
- We refuse to accept any internal or external curtailment of intellectual freedom – and at the same time acknowledge that our freedom is not unlimited.
- We contribute to the public interest chiefly through our teaching and research.

“On the one hand, academic freedom is the privilege to be able to quench our thirst for knowledge in our professional capacity (almost) unreservedly, but on the other hand, it puts us under an obligation to create added value for everyone rather than indulging in the ‘exploration of the immortality of ladybirds.’”

Prof. Dr. Nils H. Jent, Adjunct Professor of Diversity Management



2 Responsibility

Our responsibility is individual and concrete.

- As students, we are aware of both the rights and the duties arising from our socially privileged position. We endeavour to critically reflect on the consequences of our actions.
- As faculty members, we ensure that our students, assistants and junior researchers are carefully supervised and promoted.
- As administrators, we take the University's duties as an employer seriously. Specifically, we give fair and honest assessments of our employees and communicate in a timely manner.
- We are able to account for the actions that we take in our professional capacity at all times.

“For me, responsibility means assuming leadership, working for the common good and sharing social principles.”

Line Cottier, undergraduate, International Affairs





“Responsibility is individual and specific. A gram of good example beats tonnes of words.”

Prof. Dr. Christoph Frei, Associate Professor of Political Science with special focus on International Relations

3 Integrity

Integrity is key to what we do.

- We act with integrity in the workplace, whether as students, teaching staff, researchers or otherwise.
- We know the legal regulations and relevant guidelines which apply to our activities and functions, and we adhere to them.
- We do not abuse our privileged position for personal gain.
- We withstand unreasonable attempts to influence us.
- We either avoid or disclose conflicts of interest.
- We do not consider intimate relationships between faculty members and students to be compatible with teaching, supervision or mentoring.
- We do not give preferential treatment to anyone. When filling positions, when awarding contracts, scholarships and grants, and when reviewing examination papers, we base our decisions on objective and comprehensible criteria.

“For me, integrity means remaining true to my values and treating others as I would like to be treated myself.”

Prof. Dr. Gudrun Sander, Adjunct Professor of Business Administration with special focus on Diversity Management



4 Professionalism

We do what we do professionally.

- We perform our duties and responsibilities competently and on time. Beyond our professional expertise, we treat others with dignity and respect.
- We do what we say we will do. At all levels, we are prepared to acquire the skills and competencies needed to perform our duties and responsibilities. If we lack the required skills and competencies, we say so and abstain.
- We document the methods, data, work processes and results of our research truthfully and completely. We clearly distinguish our achievements from those of others and correctly identify all our sources.
- We aim to educate qualified persons in all domains, to integrate them into our community, to arouse their enthusiasm and to advance their careers.
- We deal with conflicts in a fair, objective and solution-oriented manner.

“I conceive of professionalism as a coherent and judicious mode of action which is not primarily guided by someone’s own interests. The consequences of actions for individuals, society and the environment should also be borne in mind.”

Christoph Matter, student reading for a Master in Law and Economics



5 Collegiality

We value collegiality.

- We practise an inclusive, integrative culture of cooperation across formal hierarchical levels. We treat each other as equals.
- Both within and beyond the University, we approach others with courtesy and respect. We strive to use inclusive language.
- We regard each other with equal dignity and respect – regardless of age, status, gender, origin, orientation and identity, and regardless of health needs or impairments.
- We do not tolerate arbitrariness or disparagement, nor discrimination and bullying, nor sexist or racist language, nor threatening or violent behaviour. Whenever we witness or become aware of such behaviour, we do not look away, but take decisive action – even if we are not affected ourselves.

“For me, collegiality means conscientious cooperation within the team and in all areas of the University.”

Annemarie Fitzi, member of staff, Janitorial Services





“I experience collegiality in a positive and varied exchange with my colleagues. And that the focus always remains on people despite bureaucratic administration.”

Timon Huber, Application Manager, Career & Corporate Services

6 Sustainability

We embrace sustainability.

- For us, sustainability means considering the long-term consequences of our activities, and being accountable to future generations.
- Sustainability begins on a small scale and in everyday life. We are committed to treating social, economic and natural resources with care and respect.
- Our degree courses and executive education are not designed to deliver short-term learning success, but rather to ensure sustainable learning processes by embracing a holistic cognitive approach.

“For me, sustainability means smart action in relations with people, nature and animals. Dealing responsibly with natural resources and integrating judicious consumer behaviour into everyday life.”

Andrea Zumbach, branding and marketing specialist, Brand Department





“For me, sustainability means thinking and acting in a network with the future in my sights – that is, satisfying today’s requirements without adversely affecting the future.”

Tanja Widemann, Programme Director CGN-HSG, Executive School

7 Transparency

We act transparently.

- We inform others about what we are doing. As holders of executive positions, we provide timely, clear and comprehensive information.
 - Wherever permissible, we decide and act openly and transparently. We consider to be public whatever is not confidential or secret.
 - We respect official secrets and observe the statutory guidelines applying to personal privacy, data protection and copyright.
- We do not pass on confidential information to unauthorised third parties, neither within nor beyond the University. We protect the data which we process ourselves or have processed by others.

“I particularly experience the principle of transparency in communication with internal and external stakeholders in that we cultivate open and, above all, honest relations with them.”

Catherine Kha, Business Developer, Career & Corporate Services



How do I proceed?

All members of the University of St.Gallen are equally responsible for implementing these guidelines. In case of doubt, looking into the matter, asking questions and expressing concern is more appropriate than looking the other way. In doubtful or uncertain situations, the following three steps might prove helpful.

1 Self-reflection.

Am I acting appropriately? How would I explain my actions to someone close to me if I had to account for myself? Would or could I demand of others (e.g. a peer, a colleague or an employee) that they do what I am about to do? Is my conscience clear if supervisory authorities held me to account or if the media reported on my actions?

2 Ask others.

If I remain unsure, I consult personal acquaintances, colleagues, superiors or in-house experts, or even, if needed, specific ethics or expert committees at the University. If I am uncertain about who might be able to help me, I seek information and advice from the *advisory services at the HSG*.

3 Report or intervene.

If I am unable to raise my concerns with someone at the University, or if my attempt to do so proves unsuccessful, I can report misconduct or reasons for suspicions. Anything brought to the attention of the *University's counselling centre* will be treated as strictly confidential. With immediate effect, University members may also contact the *Whistleblowing Office*. The Office is completely independent of the University.

Advisory services

These steps would be incomplete without a clear commitment: If we witness or know that the HSG Ethics Code has been violated, we do not remain silent, but take action.

This commitment is binding for the University community in general and for its executive bodies and officers in particular.

Advisory services
at the HSG



Ombudsman's
Office



Whistleblowing
Office



Imprint

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