Alexander von Humboldt
Stiftung/Foundation

Rules of good scientific practice, procedures, and penalties in the event of malpractice

1. Rules of good scientific practice

1.1. Those sponsored by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation are obligated to inform themselves about and comply with the rules of good scientific practice that are in effect at their host institution.

1.2. Moreover, those sponsored are to pledge themselves, and the staff they employ in the framework of Alexander von Humboldt Foundation funding, to observe the rules of good scientific practice below. Violations of these rules or scientific or other malpractice (see paragraphs 2 and 3) may result in the penalties described in paragraph 4.

1.3. The following principles constitute the rules of good scientific practice, both in general and specified to the individual disciplines as necessary:

- **General principles of scientific work**
  - to work in accordance with the accepted standards of the discipline;
  - to observe the rules specific to the respective discipline with regard to the attaining, selecting, using, documenting, and long-term securing of data and other findings;
  - to challenge consistently all one's own findings;
  - to maintain strict honesty with regard to the contributions of partners, competitors, and predecessors.
- **Cooperation and supervisory responsibility in working groups**
  - to assure cooperation and supervisory responsibility in working groups; in particular, to take organisational measures to ensure that the tasks of leadership, supervision, conflict management, and quality assurance are clearly assigned and actually fulfilled;
  - not to compromise research activities of others.
- **Supervision of junior researchers**
  - to ensure appropriate supervision for graduates, doctoral candidates, and students, in particular by providing each of them with a primary mentor in the working group. Responsibility for promoting junior researchers is a top-level management priority.
- **Scientific publications**
  - to produce and disseminate scientific publications in accordance with the accepted rules and standards of the discipline; and, in particular when new findings are to be published, to describe these findings and the applied methods completely and comprehensibly as well as account for one's own and others' preliminary work exhaustively and correctly.
  - If several participants are involved in a scientific project and its subsequent publication, only those can be named as co-authors who significantly contributed to the conceptual design, formulation, analysis and interpretation of the data or findings, and the drafting of the manuscript, and have consented to its publication; so-called 'honorary authorship' is not permissible; third-party support is to be listed under acknowledgements.

2. Scientific or other malpractice

2.1. Scientific malpractice is the misrepresentation of facts in a scientific context, either consciously or due to gross negligence, infringement of intellectual property of others, or any other encroachment upon others' research activities. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. The following, in particular, can be considered scientific malpractice:

2.1.1. Misrepresentation of facts such as

2.1.1.1. forging or distorting data, for example by selecting and rejecting undesirable results without declaring them, or by manipulating illustrations or images;

2.1.1.2. false information in an application or a funding proposal, including false information about the publication organ and publications in print.

2.1.2. **Infringement of intellectual property** concerning copyrighted work by others or significant scientific findings, hypotheses, teachings, or research approaches by others such as

2.1.2.1. unauthorised utilisation by presumption of authorship (plagiarism), exploitation of research approaches and ideas, in particular as a peer reviewer (theft of ideas);

2.1.2.2. presumption or unsubstantiated appropriation of scientific authorship or coauthorship;

2.1.2.3. misrepresentation of contents;

2.1.2.4. unauthorised publication and unauthorised granting of access to third parties prior o the publication of the work, the findings, the hypothesis, the teaching, or the research approach;

2.1.2.5. claiming authorship or co-authorship of others without their consent.

2.1.3. Sabotage of research activity, including damaging, destroying, or manipulating experimental arrangements, equipment, documents, hardware, chemicals, or other materials needed by others to conduct scientific work (including malicious displacement or abstraction of books and other documents).

2.1.4. Deletion of primary data if it infringes legal provisions or accepted principles of scientific work in the discipline.

2.2. Scientific misconduct also comprises behaviour that entails a shared responsibility for the misconduct of others, in particular by active participation, joint knowledge of misrepresentations, co-authorship of falsified publications, or gross negligence of supervisory responsibilities.

2.3. For the purpose of the present rules, other misconduct is applicable if grave circumstances are discovered that challenge the personal aptitude of the individual sponsored to be a member (multiplier) of the global Alexander von Humboldt Foundation network.

3. Penalties

In the event of grave violation of the above rules of good scientific practice, in particular scientific or other malpractice, the Humboldt Foundation can impose one or several of the following penalties, depending on the nature and gravity of the established misconduct

3.1. Written reprimand of the person concerned;

3.2. Request that the person concerned retract the discredited publication or correct the falsified data (in particular by publishing an erratum), or appropriately indicate the recall of Alexander von Humboldt Foundation sponsorship, for example in the erratum.

3.3. Temporary suspension of funding decisions pending the resolution of the issue;

3.4. Forfeiture of eligibility for Alexander von Humboldt Foundation sponsorship, permanent or temporary, depending on the gravity of the scientific malpractice;

3.5. Revocation of funding decisions (complete or partial cancellation of the grant, recall of funds granted, reclaim of funds spent), including the denial of the status of “Humboldtian“;

3.6. Exclusion from review and committee work for Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.

4. Procedures

If a violation of the rules of good scientific practice (paragraph 1) or scientific or other malpractice (paragraph 2) is suspected, the following basic procedures take effect:

4.1. If probable cause is brought to the attention of the Humboldt Foundation, the suspected person must be notified of the incriminating facts and be given the opportunity to respond in writing within four weeks. Simultaneously, the implementation of a funding decision can be suspended temporarily until the issue is resolved (see paragraph 3.3.). Without their consent, the identity of the informant and the allegedly injured party will not be disclosed to the party concerned in this phase (whistleblower-protection).

4.2. In order to clarify the issue, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation office is authorised to request oral or written statements by the concerned as well as third parties at any time.

4.3. If no response is received or if a response is examined and the suspicion persists, the Humboldt Foundation will notify the party concerned, explicitly indicating the Alexander von Humboldt Foundations penalty options as well as the right of the concerned party to remonstrate within four weeks.

4.4. If use is not made of the right to remonstrate, the Humboldt Foundation may impose one of the measures listed above in paragraph 3.

4.5. If the remonstration submitted by the party concerned fails to convince the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and in particular, fails to refute the probable cause plausibly, the Humboldt Foundation may impose one of the above-mentioned penalties. Prior to making the decision, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation may request an expert opinion on the existence of malpractice from the Ombudsman of the DFG or a comparable body affiliated with the host institution.

5. Scope of application, coming into effect, and temporary provisions

The above regulations apply to academics who receive sponsorship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation as well as applicants for funding, host institutions, alumni, members of selection committees, peer reviewers, and special reviewers of the Humboldt Foundation.

The regulations take effect on 01.08.2007. Individual Humboldt Foundation-sponsored projects that have been concluded by this date will not be affected by these regulations, but are subject to the general rule that the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation can alter or revoke its funding decisions if circumstances are brought to its attention after the fact that would have led to a different decision on the part of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.