

TU Berlin Principles of Ethical Research

“Act in such a way that the effects of your actions are compatible with the permanence of real human life on Earth.”
(Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*)

Preamble

Technische Universität Berlin is dedicated to excellent research in all of its disciplines with the aim of making socially relevant contributions. Fully aware of the University’s historical responsibility, the members of TU Berlin pursue research for peaceful purposes only. The University pursues its aim of humanistic education by supporting students on the path to becoming responsible members of society (<https://www.tu.berlin/ueber-die-tu-berlin/profil/leitbild-fuer-die-lehre/>). Researchers at TU Berlin assume responsibility for their actions towards society and the scientific community. In doing so, they consider the preconditions, contexts, and impacts of their work and are driven neither by an unreflecting approach to technology and progress nor purely economic considerations. By adopting these principles, they commit to a scientific ethos which goes beyond the mere observation of legal requirements and includes consideration of the ethical values and objectives of their research. TU Berlin supports its members by providing the appropriate institutional framework conditions and further training measures which reflect the following values and aims:

Good academic practice

The members of TU Berlin value outstanding professional expertise and are committed to conducting research on the basis of the current state of science and technology, within the existing legal framework, and in accordance with the principles for ensuring good academic practice (<https://www.tu.berlin/arbeiten/wichtige-dokumente/richtlinien-leitlinien/grundsaeetze-zur-sicherung-guter-wissenschaftlicher-praxis>).

Productive interdisciplinary collaboration and the inclusion of lay stakeholders are key to achieving research objectives in interdisciplinary disciplines. Current research topics are consistently integrated into teaching.

Diversity and anti-discrimination measures

The members of TU Berlin work towards dismantling institutional and structural discrimination at all levels and are dedicated to recognizing and promoting diversity. They cultivate respectful and non-discriminatory relationships with each other at all levels and in all member groups as well as with external parties. By promoting a culture of social diversity, they foster equality of opportunity. All members of TU Berlin are committed to acting without discrimination when assuming management responsibilities, offices, and committee work as well as when acting on behalf of the scientific community and public.

Freedom of research and teaching

The freedom of research and teaching, which is guaranteed by the Basic Law, is a fundamental ethical value. However, it is in inherent conflict with other values. The members of TU Berlin regard this freedom as a commitment to personal responsibility within their teaching and research as well as the publication, exploitation, and public communication of research findings. This responsibility encompasses all foreseeable impacts and effects of their actions.

Social responsibility and the common good

Research serves to increase general knowledge and understanding and practically implement this. The members of TU Berlin regard their social responsibility as an ethical commitment to applying their scientific skills to solve current social problems and thus significantly contribute to the common good. They support the development of society and a global community and use science communication and public relations to promote public awareness of the ethical implications of technological and social change.

Sustainability

In keeping with TU Berlin's mission statement (<https://www.tu.berlin/ueber-die-tu-berlin/profil/leitbild/>), the members of the University are committed to sustainable development, and in particular, to using resources sparingly in all areas of work and acting sustainably. Such areas include equipping and designing work spaces and procedures, research activities as well as planning, organizing, and conducting scientific events and official travel. In addition, the members of TU Berlin are dedicated to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which also serve as the foundation of the University's 2018 Sustainability Report. The University uses its research and teaching to sustainably shape life in our society.

Responsible research

The members of TU Berlin are aware of the risk of possible misuse of research results, act responsibly when handling practical security-related research, and consider possible dual-use aspects. Its researchers are committed to the University's Civil Clause (<https://www.tu.berlin/arbeiten/wichtige-dokumente/richtlinien-leitlinien/zivilklausel>) and decline research requests for military purposes. In addition, they take into account the relevant national and international recommendations of scientific societies for handling security-relevant research. Where necessary, research projects are reviewed with regard to ethically relevant aspects by the decentralized ethics committees upon request. In cases of doubt regarding ethical permissibility, the decentralized ethics committees coordinate with the Committee for Ethics in Research (KEF) to assess the ethical aspects of research projects as detailed below.

De-centralized ethics committees

TU Berlin has de-centralized ethics committees which, upon request, review the ethical aspects of research work and research proposals and, if necessary, provide a written statement on their ethical permissibility. The de-centralized ethics committees can also advise applicants on the ethical aspects of research and proposals. The relevant de-centralized ethics committee is responsible for assessing the ethical aspects of a proposal as well as advising applicants. If it is unclear which ethics committee is responsible, the chairs of the relevant de-centralized ethics committees consult with the KEF. In cases of doubt regarding the ethical permissibility of a proposal's content, the chairs of the de-centralized ethics committees can request an evaluation from the KEF. The KEF provides a written statement explaining its decision to the applicant and the Executive Board is informed.

Open Science

The members of TU Berlin are dedicated to promoting transparency in research. They welcome the establishment of Open Science methods and instruments and strive for an open and free

exchange among researchers worldwide that contributes to the best possible use and beneficial implementation of relevant research findings. This applies to the handling of research data, source code, and computer programs as well as possibilities of open access publication and other relevant options, e.g. rejecting non-disclosure agreements for final theses.

Recognition of contributions to research

Research is a joint undertaking and relies on the participation of numerous people from different member groups. Support and contributions from technical and administrative staff members, junior scholars, and students who are involved in research tasks is appreciated by researchers in leading positions at TU Berlin and receives appropriate recognition. This may include, for example, explicit mention of their contribution in resulting publications. Research and teaching go hand in hand. University teaching should make instructors' research accessible to students and enable them to undertake their own research.

Regular evaluation of the Principles of Ethical Research

The Committee for Ethics in Research reviews and updates the Principles of Ethical Research taking into account current scientific and social developments and using suitable instruments. The KEF serves as the institutional contact regarding the practical implementation of these principles in the lived everyday work of all members of TU Berlin.