



Universität
Münster

How can I deal with conflicts and remain true to good scientific practice?

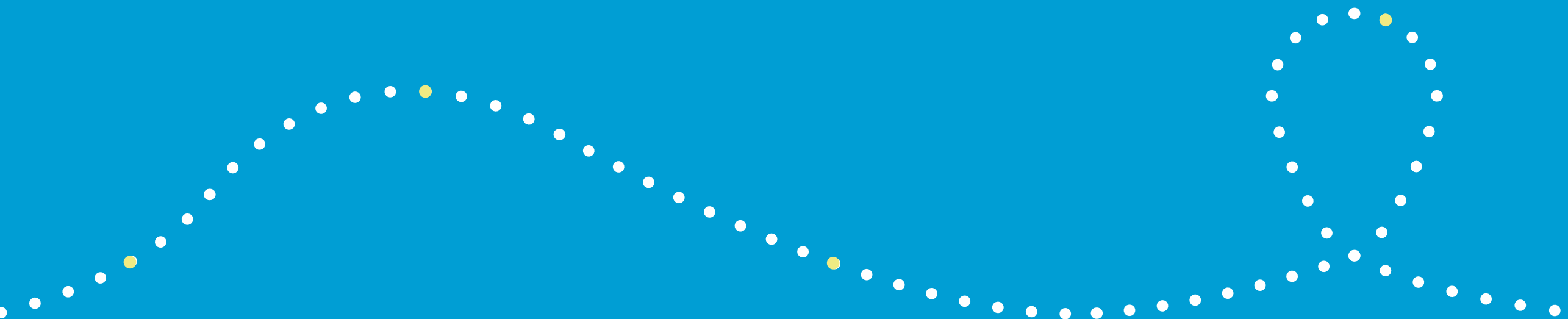
A guide for doctoral researchers at
the University of Münster

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How can I deal with conflicts and remain true to good scientific practice?

A guide for doctoral researchers at the University of Münster

Initiated by the Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers (CERes) at the University of Münster



When you have the impression that something is not right

Do you have the feeling that something in your research environment is going wrong, and you don't know what to do about it? You might be involved in a conflict which is putting the success of your research project at risk. Or you experience something which contravenes the principles of good scientific practice and makes your research activities more difficult. This brochure, which was drawn up with seven advisory services at the University of Münster working together, shows you how you can draw up a solution to such a problem with help from one of these advisory services. There are many such services at the University which can provide you with professional assistance to find a solution. You have a free choice as regards which advisory service you wish to contact.

This brochure is intended for **all doctoral researchers at Münster University** who are faced with conflicts or dilemmas when applying good scientific practice and who wish to find a suitable advisory service. We particularly want to address international doctoral researchers, as there may be different approaches taken in other countries in the case of such conflicts, or a different standard of scientific practice may be the norm there.

The following pages will show you why it is worth your while to read this brochure! There is a brief introduction to each advisory service, along with six case studies which explain how

to proceed in the case of a conflict and how to maintain good scientific practice in a variety of contexts. Based on these case studies, we show you what happens in a consultation and how exactly the advisory services can support you.

If you would like to know what a conflict actually is, or what exactly the principles of good scientific practice are, the website of the Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers (CERes) – uni.ms/k17vi – has some useful links.

We hope you find this brochure useful. If you have any questions, please ask us!

Your advisory services at Münster University

- › Academic Staff Council
- › Compliance Office
- › Equal Opportunity Office
- › IVV Natural Sciences
- › Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers (CERes)
- › Ombudsperson
- › Service Center for Data Management

..... GSP
..... Good scientific practice (GSP)
..... Conflicts
.....
..... Brief introduction to advisory services
..... Case studies
.....

Three reasons why reading this brochure is worth your while...

1
...

After reading it, you will have a **better overview of who you might wish to contact** at the University if you have any questions relating to **conflict management and good scientific practice**.

Do you know what advisory services actually exist at Münster University, and what issues you can contact them about? First of all, though, we want to assure you that there will be people who can help you, no matter which service you approach! In our experience, there is rarely a situation which can be clearly allocated to just one area. If we cannot answer your question directly, we will be happy to let you know who can.

2
...

You will see the many **benefits** that an **informal talk with advisors** can have for you.

Perhaps you feel powerless, and you think that having a talk with someone at an advisory service is not worthwhile because of various systemic and institutional factors (e.g. dependencies on various people). In our case studies we want to show you that – despite such challenges – we can assist anyone seeking advice, helping them to find individual, satisfactory solutions. It's worth talking to us: you are not alone, and, with our help, you can become a more informed and contented person and better able to deal with conflicts!

The advice we offer is informal and involves no commitment on your part. Of course, there are also formal processes which are sometimes strenuous – such as complaints processes – which, if the person seeking advice so wishes, can be set in motion. This is not a ‘must’, though, because we see ourselves primarily as acting in an advisory capacity! “I just want to get some information,” you say. We’re happy to be here to help you, and we offer our advisory services in both German and English.

3
...

You'll see that any conversation you have with us will be **in confidence**, and that you can come to us **without any fear** – no one will know that you came to talk to us or what we talked about.

In this brochure you will find fictional case studies which were drawn up on the basis of real enquiries and advisory sessions. They are designed to show you how exactly we can help. Any solution arrived at can be an anonymous – i.e. confidential – one or not, depending what you would like. In other words, you needn't have any concerns that confidential information will leave the room in which the advisory session is held and that, as a result, you might have to fear negative consequences. We are committed to confidentiality, independence, neutrality and impartiality – and we take this commitment very seriously!



Who **we** are, and what we can **do for you**

Contents

- 10 Equal Opportunity Office
- 12 Ombudsperson
- 14 Academic Staff Council
- 18 Service Center for
Data Management
- 20 IVW Natural Sciences
- 22 Compliance Office
- 23 Münster Centre for
Emerging Researchers
(CERes)

› Equal Opportunity Office



The Equal Opportunity Office at the University of Münster is responsible for matters relating to equality between women and men. The work which the Office does is based on the statutory mandate provided by the Equal Treatment Act effective in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), as well as on the NRW Higher Education Act. The Equal Opportunity Office is involved in promoting women’s interests by means of a variety of projects and programmes for all status groups, and it supports both women and men in helping them to achieve a balance between family and career. The Office, the Equal Opportunity Officer, and her deputies from among the technical and administrative staff and the student body, also provide advice and support. They do so for all members and staff of Münster University on the cross-cutting issue of equal treatment, as well as in cases of discrimination experienced on the basis of gender.

Themes

.....
Unequal treatment

Discrimination

Compatibility

Harassment
.....

Case study

.....

Catherine contacts the Equal Opportunity Officer, saying,

“I’d like to discuss an unpleasant experience and I don’t know how to act.”

When they talk, the Equal Opportunity Officer asks Catherine to explain the situation, and she also asks her what exactly she would like: whether Catherine would perhaps simply **like to talk** or to **get concrete help**; or whether she would like the Equal Opportunity Office to **take up her case**. Catherine says that she is involved in a collaborative doctoral project. She has a feeling that her doctoral supervisor has a

preference for male doctoral researchers when conferences and publications are being funded. She also has the impression that her supervisor touches her (and only her) on the shoulder and that she feels very uncomfortable with the situation. She would like to have support in her efforts to achieve more **financial independence**, as well as **advice** on how she can deal with such unpleasant situations.

The Equal Opportunity Officer **informs** her about the opportunities provided by the gender equality funding pool in individual faculties, and about independent funds for travelling to conferences and attending lectures. She **advises** Catherine to contact the General Equal Treatment Act (GETA) Complaints Office if she would like to make a complaint. Otherwise, the Equal Opportunity Office would speak to the doctoral supervisor if Catherine so wished, possibly also bringing in the local Equal Opportunity Officer and/or someone from the Dean’s Office. In the discussion, Catherine learns that she too can contact the local Equal Opportunity Officer, the Dean of Studies and the Dean.

-
- Advisee describing their personal situation
 - Informing about different funding opportunities
 - Setting out possible courses of action
-

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An important point to note

Early career researchers either with or without an employment contract can contact the Equal Opportunity Office. The GETA Complaints Office acts in the case of complaints from people who are employed at the University.

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Contact

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Equal Opportunity Office

Georgskommende 26
48143 Münster
Tel: +49 251 83-297 08
www.uni-muenster.de/Gleichstellung/en/index.html

› Ombudsperson

The Ombudsperson gives independent and confidential advice in conflicts relating to good scientific practice, as well as in cases in which scientific misconduct is suspected. All members and staff of Münster University are eligible to seek advice from the Ombudsperson, including anyone who sees themselves as being suspected of scientific misconduct. In the case of any substantial suspicion of scientific misconduct, the Ombudsperson brings in a Commission of Enquiry for the Investigation of Scientific Misconduct.

Themes

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- Conflicts relating to good scientific practice
- Suspicious of scientific misconduct
- Uncertainty in a relationship of dependency
-

Case study

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Lena is working on a dissertation project for which she receives support in the form of a grant. The supervisor of her dissertation organises an international symposium on Lena’s project. In preparing this symposium he gives her a series of organisational tasks, and she is happy to take them on because, after all, in this way she can make personal contacts with specialists in her subject, which would be highly interesting for her own work. Discussions with these specialists are very stimulating for her project, and she can also gather practical experience in preparing and conducting conferences – which she sees as being useful and helpful in her later academic career. So Lena works hard at the tasks given to her and carries them out in such an outstanding manner that her supervisor entrusts to her the preparation of two more symposia – which do not, however, have anything to do with the subject of Lena’s own doctoral dissertation. Lena is sceptical, because the preparation work would be very time-consuming – depriving her of the time which she had actually planned for her doctorate.

However, she is uncertain as to whether she can simply turn these new tasks down.

She is, after all, to a certain extent **dependent** on her supervisor. In addition, she feels she **ought to be grateful** because she did actually benefit from the symposium for her own research project.

Lena contacts the Ombudsperson for questions of good scientific practice. In their conversation, the exact facts and circumstances are clarified, and Lena’s **own feelings, misgivings and considerations are explored**. On this basis, Lena and the Ombudsperson discuss the options for proceeding further: Lena can be **encouraged** to talk to the supervisor of her dissertation. This conversation can be facilitated or accompanied by the Ombudsperson. At the end, the Ombudsperson can examine whether any scientific misconduct might exist on the part of the supervisor. If any suspicions are substantiated, the Ombudsperson contacts the supervisor regarding the matter and, if appropriate, passes the suspicion on to the Commission of Enquiry for the Investigation of Scientific Misconduct.

-
- Clarifying exact facts and circumstances
- Discussing different options for proceeding further
- Accompanying the advisee in talks
- Examining suspicions of scientific misconduct
- Involvement of Commission of Enquiry for the Investigation of Scientific Misconduct
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Contact

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Ombudsperson

Prof. Dr. Reinhard Hoeps
 Am Braaken 24
 48161 Münster
 Tel: +49 2533 58 93 09
www.uni-muenster.de/Senat/en/kodex.html

› Academic Staff Council

- Themes
-
- Recruitment
- Changes to contracts
- Dismissals
- Salary-grade classifications
- Volume of employment
- Holidays
- Other measures
-

The Academic Staff Council represents the interests of the approximately 6,700 academic staff employed at the University of Münster, doing so on the basis of the Employee Representation Act for North Rhine-Westphalia. The academic staff includes academic employees covered by TV-L (the collective labour agreement for public employees in the German federal states), civil servants, research assistants, student assistants with a bachelor’s degree, teaching staff with special tasks, and lecturers teaching at least four hours a week during semesters. The Academic Staff Council is involved in employee-related issues such as recruitment, dismissals, salary-grade classification, changes to contracts, transfers within the University, any changes to a volume of employment (increase or reduction), fundamental problems relating to holidays, as well as many other measures connected with the management of the University. The Staff Council offers independent, confidential advice in the case of any complaints, problems and questions arising from employees’ contractual relationships. This can also concern conflicts which arise specifically between doctoral researchers and their supervisors. If necessary, the Staff Council puts you in touch with the relevant people to contact within the University.

Case study

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A doctoral candidate asks the Academic Staff Council for an appointment to discuss a certain issue. “I’m doing my doctorate at the Institute of General Academic Studies, in a part-time job covered by TV-L which is financed from third-party funding. However, the subject of my dissertation has nothing to do with this externally funded project. Unfortunately, I am usually **working at full stretch**, undertaking other tasks which my doctoral supervisor assigns to me such as teaching and doing input work for the Chair.

For this reason,
 he **expects me to be present at the Chair all day and tells me exactly when I’m allowed to take holiday...**

so that there is minimum impact on my work there. Right now he has once again forbidden me to take a holiday which I really do urgently need,” he says.

In a conversation with the Academic Staff Council, the doctoral candidate is asked to describe the situation in detail so that the advisor can find out what exactly the problem is for the student. He for his part would like to know how to deal both with the demand for him to be constantly present full-time, and with the **holiday ban** imposed on him by his doctoral supervisor. **“What rights do I have as an employee, and how can I uphold my rights vis-à-vis my supervisor?”** he asks. He learns that the supervisor has no right to demand compulsory presence for 40 hours a week – only for the proportion of time defined by the contractual relationship for the external project. Moreover, it should of course be in the supervisor’s own interest to grant the student sufficient time to work on his dissertation so that he, the student, can complete it in a reasonable period of time – if the supervisor is not himself able

to provide additional financial support for it. The question here is also whether any agreement to supervise the dissertation was signed in which the rights and the duties of a supervisor are defined in writing – and which the student could then refer to. As regards the question of holiday, the student is an employee covered by TV-L and, as such, has the right to apply for, and take, holiday for a period of his own choosing. The supervisor can only refuse this application if there are urgent work reasons which argue against it. In such a case, the supervisor must provide an objective and plausible justification for his refusal; this does not include his own feeling of being inconvenienced or irritated by the student’s absence. Moreover, any refusal of a holiday application is subject to the principle of co-determination on the part of the Academic Staff Council (§72, section 4, subsection 4).

The Academic Staff Council points out two possible solutions: firstly, **without the direct involvement** of the Staff Council, the student himself seeks to **clarify the issue in a face-to-face talk** with his supervisor. The student points out to his supervisor both the workload he has as a result of the additional tasks assigned to him and the lack of time he therefore has for working on his dissertation. Possibly the supervisor is not at all aware of the student’s situation? If necessary, the student can then also point out to his supervisor the binding legal basis mentioned above. If there is a willingness to compromise, this should be entered into during the course of the discussion. A second solution is the option of conducting this discussion **with the involvement of, and accompanied by,** a member of the Academic Staff Council. This can lend **more authority** to the subject of the discussion – but it can also lead to the supervisor being distinctly irritated because, as a result, his mistakes or wrongdoing will obviously become outwardly apparent.

-
- Advisee describing their personal situation
- Informing of employees’ rights
- Pointing out possible solutions
- Helping the advisee to prepare for a face-to-face talk with the supervisor
-

After the advisory session, the doctoral candidate alone decides on how he wishes to proceed.

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An important point to note

The Academic Staff Council is only responsible for doctoral researchers who have an employment contract. If you do not have an employment contract, the Academic Staff Council recommends contacting the Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers (CERes) or the representative body for doctoral researchers at the AStA (General Students’ Committee).

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Contact

Academic Staff Council

Georgskommende 14
 48143 Münster
 Tel: +49 251 83- 248 29
www.uni-muenster.de/wwu/en/vertretungen/personal-rat-wissenschaftlich-beschaefigte/



› Service Center for Data Management

The Service Center for Data Management (SCDM) is the first instance to contact for academics at Münster University for all issues relating to the question of research data management. The SCDM provides support in the form of individual advice, workshops and training sessions – but also through technical services, e.g. the professional organisation, archiving or publication of research data.

Themes

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 Research data management (RDM) in daily scientific routines

Open Access

Technical services (e.g. organisation/archiving/publication of research data)

RDM in grant applications

Case study

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 Anna has successfully completed her Chemistry studies with a very good master's thesis. She is now interested in publishing the data and results contained in her thesis, and she would like to know whether this requires the consent of the head of the working group. She also wonders whether the ideas and results included in her thesis – as well as basic programming codes and algorithms – may continue to be used by members of the working group without her consent (e.g. as part of further research work or for use in specialist presentations).

Because she has a strained relationship with the head of her working group,

Anna has not yet discussed her questions with him.

Instead, she contacts the SCDM – which first makes an appointment for her to come and explain what precisely her misgivings are, and what conflict scenarios she fears might arise. In the discussion it is pointed out to her that her questions involve German copyright law and that specialised legal knowledge is required to answer them. As the SCDM does not offer legal advice, Anna is recommended to contact e.g. the advisory service of the state initiative openaccess.nrw, where she can be given an assessment of the legal situation in her case. She is also advised to talk to the head of her working group as soon as possible in order to ascertain his views on the matter.

-
- Advisee explaining their personal misgivings and fears
 - Informing about other possible contact persons
 - Recommending a talk with the head of the working group
-

Contact

.....
 University Library Münster
 Service Center for Data Management
 Krummer Timpen 3
 48143 Münster
 Tel: +49 251 83-24000
www.uni-muenster.de/forschungsdaten (in German)



› IVV Natural Sciences

It is not only the University-wide contact points which give advice – the IVVs do so too, e.g. specialist advice relating to research data. As part of the decentralised system of information processing at Münster University, the IVV Natural Sciences is responsible for the Faculties of Biology, Chemistry and Pharmacy, and Physics, as well as for some associated departments. It looks after a total of around **12,000 users** and approx. **6,000 networked terminals**. eScience topics such as research data management, software development and Artificial Intelligence play an important role for the IVV Natural Sciences.

Themes

Information processing

Research data management

Software development

Artificial Intelligence

Case study

Bertrand has completed a research project with the successful publication of a paper. In the course of the paper being published, he would also have liked to **make available**, as further material, **the raw data and the source code** which he wrote for analysis purposes (in the form of a Jupyter Notebook). However, **Bertrand’s doctoral supervisor expressed his concerns** that the working group might lose the leading edge they have worked so hard for in their research, and he was able to convince Bertrand of this. Now, Bertrand, as lead author, has received an enquiry from a rival research group in which they ask him to make the raw data available. Bertrand passed this enquiry on to his supervisor who, however, put it on the back burner and then afterwards replied – reluctantly and in a minimal form (“Send the raw data without any further information”). Bertrand has now completed his doctorate and will soon be leaving the working group, but at the same time he has received another enquiry from the rival working group – with a request to make the relevant Jupyter Notebook available. Bertrand’s understanding of science is that he and his supervisor are obliged to make all necessary data, source codes etc. available.

On the other hand, he has a **very good relationship with his supervisor and would like to preserve this good contact for the future.**

Bertrand discussed possible solutions in a **confidential talk** with his IVV. He **decided to address the matter directly** with his supervisor again, telling him that he sees it as his duty to pass on the source code too and that he would like his supervisor to give him permission to do so. In the process, Bertrand made it quite clear that he would not pass the code on without his supervisor’s consent as he attached great importance to maintaining a good relationship with him. The supervisor was mildly disconcerted; he too was evidently in two minds about passing all the materials on to others. Now that Bertrand had **stated his position so clearly**, the supervisor felt obliged to clarify his own position for himself – and he came to the conclusion that Bertrand should release the source code after an ‘incubation period’ of three months, so that another related project could be completed in that time. A few days later, the supervisor spoke to Bertrand again and **gave him his consent** to pass the source code on directly to the other named research group.

- Discussing possible solutions
- Talk serving as a basis for the advisee’s personal decision to approach the supervisor directly

Contact

IVV Natural Sciences

Wilhelm-Klemm-Straße 10
48149 Münster
Tel: +49 251 83-39141
www.uni-muenster.de/NWZ/en/IVV/



› Compliance Office

The Compliance Office (CO) is the contact point for members and staff of Münster University if they have questions concerning general regulations and conflicts arising from them – also in the context of good scientific practice. The CO draws up preventive measures to increase compliance and strengthen the compliance culture at the University; it also deals with conflicts of interest. The aim is to reduce information deficits, to strengthen the individual responsibility of University members and staff so that they feel more confident to act, and to reduce the number of unwanted errors. University employees' own commitment to compliance is taken seriously, and

any breaches of the regulations which come to light are systematically investigated in transparent processes.

The Compliance Office also notes down any indications it receives of wrongdoing, as well as complaints from employees (in line with §13 of the Anti-Discrimination Act), and deals with them in **strict confidence**.

- Themes
-
 - Compliance culture
 - Orientation in a complex web of regulations
 - Assistance in cases of conflicts of interest
 - Internal Reporting Office for misconduct
 - GETA Complaints Office for employees
 -

› Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers (CERes)

The Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers (CERes) provides advice and support for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers at the University on all questions relating to academic qualification and career development, as well as in cases of conflict, and it does so independently, neutrally and in strict confidence. As regards good scientific practice, Münster CERes raises awareness of the issue itself and offers relevant training activities. Because internal partner institutions are involved – who contribute their expertise in designing, planning and carrying out such training – a whole range of aspects can be covered.

Case study

Stefan is writing his doctoral dissertation within the context of an externally funded project. For some time now, he has noticed that funds are also being used in his working group for purposes not related to the project.

He doesn't feel confident enough to mention this to his doctoral supervisor,

but his conscience will not allow him to remain quiet. Stefan contacts the Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers (CERes). **"I'd like some advice on the issue of an improper use of external funds,"** he says. As Münster CERes offers advice on general, cross-disciplinary questions, it is **well networked** with other institutions and it



- Themes
-
 - Cross-disciplinary academic qualification
 - Raising awareness of good scientific practice
 - Social aspects of academic qualification (e.g., supervisory relationship)
 - Supporting individual career development
 -
 - Listening to and addressing the advisee's personal circumstances
 - Signposting other possible sources of support and advice
 -

-
- Pointing out possible solutions
- Investigating the breach of the rules and protecting the whistleblower
- Result of the investigation and a recommendation for action to the Rectorate
-

informs Stefan of the option of contacting the University Compliance Office.

In a discussion with the Compliance Office, Stefan is offered two proposals to resolve his concern. Firstly, to **bring up the subject** in his working group and **ask** whether it is allowed to shift funds or not – after all, the group may quite possibly simply not be aware of the rules. But if there is a recognisable or suspected intent to shift funds, this provides a greater justification for initiating an **investigation** as to whether the rules are being complied with – and for protecting Stefan as a whistleblower. After giving the matter much thought, Stefan decides on the second option and asks the Compliance Office to investigate.

Contact

Compliance Office

Schlossplatz 2
48149 Münster
Tel: +49 251 83-212 02
www.uni-muenster.de/Verwaltung/en/orga/compliance-office.html

Contact

Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers (CERes)

Schlossplatz 6
48149 Münster
Tel: +49 251 83-23112
www.uni-muenster.de/CERes/en/



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