

Ethics Commission of the Faculties of Psychotherapy Sciences, Psychology, and Law of Sigmund Freud University

STATUTES and ORDINANCES

According to Section 10, Paragraph 8, clause o) of the 29. July.2020 Statutes of Sigmund Freud Private University (SFU), the Senate establishes a cross-faculty Ethics Commission for the Faculties of Psychotherapy Science, Psychology, and Law.

REGULATION

I. STATUS, LEGAL GROUNDS, DUTIES

§ 1

The Psychotherapy Science, Psychology, and Law cross-faculty Ethics Commission is a Senate's collegiate body with decision-making powers. The Commission and its members are independent and unbiased in the exercise of their functions, and are required to report to the Senate. Following the regulations applicable to the protection of personal data and of business and trade secrets, the Commission members are bound to secrecy about information in their possession in the exercise of their functions.

§ 2

(1) Upon request, the Ethics Commission will evaluate the following research projects:

- a) Research projects on or with human subjects: Studies that may affect the physical or psychological integrity, the right to privacy, other subjective rights, or the participants' primary interests.
- b) Research projects on animals involving more than mere observation: The Ethics Commission is also responsible for ensuring the safety and welfare of animals and the compliance with the provisions of animal protection laws.

(2) For research projects that are part of the diploma, master's thesis, or dissertations, the student must solicit the Ethics Commission's opinion, if a) or b) apply.

(3) The Ethics Commission is not responsible for ensuring that the students' practical work complies with a code of ethics unless part of the research project.

Good scientific practice § 3

(1) The Ethics Commission is responsible for ensuring good scientific practice. For this purpose, Sigmund Freud Private University follows the current guidelines of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (OeAWI – <https://oeawi.at/en/>).

The Austrian Private Universities Conference (ÖPUK) is an associated member of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity.

(2) A representative appointed by the Senate can be contacted anonymously. Despite no obligation to report potential violations, the representative must report to the Faculty Senate.

Data Protection Regulation § 4

(1) It is mandatory to abide by the GDPR requirements in their latest version when processing personal data for scientific work (empirical thesis, research projects).

(2) The regulations developed by the Vice-Rector for Research in cooperation with the Data Protection Officer (forms, technical specifications for audio recordings, students' participation in research, etc.) are binding. Any deviations must be justified and require the Ethics Commission's authorization.

(3) The research project manager must ensure that:

- Data are protected against accidental destruction, loss, and unlawful use;
- Data are protected against unauthorized access;
- Data are pseudonymized. Any information relating directly to a person must be encrypted promptly;
- Any personal reference is completely removed as soon as it is no longer necessary for research or statistical work;
- Data are only, anonymously, accessible to the processor (e.g., for commissioned statistical evaluation or recordings transcription);
- The transfer of personal data (e.g., for research cooperation or to external processors) is notified to the Ethics Commission with reasons;
- Following the SFU's data protection guidelines, data remain anonymous after the conclusion of the research project. Please note that interviewers are subject to the duty of confidentiality.

(4) The supervisor is responsible for checking the quality and reliability of the data collected for the student's thesis. The student's responsibility is to ensure data protection. The supervisor is ultimately liable.

II. COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

§ 5

(1) The Ethics Commission is composed of the Chairperson, the Deputy, and one other member of the academic staff of the faculties of Psychotherapy Sciences, Psychology, and Law.

(2) A corresponding proportion of women (Section 20a UG) must be ensured.

III. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS

§ 6

(1) The Faculty Senate elects the Chairperson and his / her deputies by a simple majority on the Rector's proposal.

(2) According to Section 5, Paragraph 1, members are elected by a simple majority on the Chairperson's proposal.

(3) According to Section 3, Paragraph 1, for each member, at least one qualified representative must be elected as a substitute, with the same voting requirement.

IV. TERM OF OFFICE

§ 7

(1) The term of office is five years. Re-election of members of the Ethics Commission is allowed. Following Section 6, if a member or a substitute leaves before the end of term, the vacant position must be filled.

V. RESIGNATION AND DISMISSAL

§ 8

(1) A member can resign before the end of the term of office, notifying such intent to the Faculty Senate.

(2) Weighty reasons must endorse the Commission's request to the Faculty Senate to dismiss the Chairperson and / or their representatives.

The dismissal requires a two-thirds majority of the votes cast; voice vote is not permitted. A member's dismissal is also possible, with substantial reasons, by the Senate's resolution upon the Chairperson's request.

(3) If the Chairperson is dismissed or resigns before the end of the term, the oldest representative takes over the functions and requests the appointment of a new Chairperson to the Senate. The election is made on the proposal of the Rector (Section 6, Paragraph 1).

(4) If all of the Chairperson's representatives are dismissed or resign before the end of the term, the Faculty Senate must open new representatives' elections.

(5) If both the Chairperson and the representatives resign at the same time, the oldest member of the Commission of the SFU faculties of Psychotherapy Sciences, Psychology, and Law takes over the functions until the new Chairperson is instated.

VI. SUBMISSIONS

§ 9

(1) Submissions to the Ethics Commission are possible via the online submission system exclusively.

(2) According to Section 2, Paragraph 1, clauses a) and b), research projects can be submitted either by the project manager or the students who are carrying out said study as part of their thesis or independent research within SFU.

(3) Submission to the Ethics Commission must be justified (e.g., request from a sponsor or a publishing body). According to Section 2, Paragraph 1 clauses a) and b), for University funded projects, the Rectorate or the Head of the correspondent scientific department can request an opinion from the Ethics Commission.

(4) The submission must come with a research plan and documentation of the research project, the scientists' qualifications, the aim of the study, the methods, and funding details. Also relevant, according to Section 2, Paragraph 1 clauses a) and b), are all elements of ethical significance, id est the potential risks for the test subjects. Disclosing potential conflicts of interest among participating scientists is mandatory. Additionally, the submission must always state the norms concerning the suspension or the termination of the research project before its conclusion, the expense allowances for test subjects, and the protection of personal data as in the GDPR's current version. The Ethics Commission can further inquire about the research project.

Membership bias § 10

Each member of the Ethics Commission must refrain from exercising their functions if biased, notably if involved in a project, in which case a substitute will take their place.

VII. RESOLUTIONS AND EXPERTS' OPINIONS

§ 11

(1) The members of the Ethics Commission record all submissions, interventions, and requests in a dedicated database.

(2) The member's votes are also stored in the database.

(3) The Ethics Commission's judgments on a project's compliance with the ethical principles of research require consensus.

§ 12

(1) Members of the Ethics Commission have the right to consult SFU, or another university, academics with expertise in the topic of a pending research submission. If necessary, external experts' opinions can be solicited for the decision-making process.

(2) The Ethics Commission must assess whether, according to Section 2, Paragraph 1 clauses a) and b), the research project guarantees the study subjects' rights, safety, and welfare and complies with the animal welfare legislation.

(3) The Ethics Commission's vote is valid for three years. A term extension requires a written request by the first submitter.

(4) The submitter will be notified of the verdict by email and will receive the expert's evaluation. Each submission is filed in the system and is accessible to the Ethics Commission.

VIII. CONFIDENTIALITY

§ 13

Members of the Ethics Commission, experts, and respondents are bound to secrecy about all information in their possession within the exercise of their functions.