



## Code of Conduct of the Department of Astrophysics

### Who is the Department

The Department of Astrophysics (“Department” henceforth) is an institute of the University of Vienna, representing the sciences of astronomy, astrophysics and associated sciences in research, teaching, and public outreach.

The Department engages in theoretical, numerical, and observational astrophysics and supports large, mostly international infrastructure such as ground-based observatories, space missions, and high-performance computing clusters. The Department also uses and reaches out to various related sciences, such as the diverse disciplines of physics, chemistry, mathematics, data science, software engineering, and others, thus engaging in a variety of interdisciplinary approaches.

The Department abides by the University of Vienna’s Code of Conduct ([link](#)). In addition, it adheres to a specific set of guidelines, collectively defining the Department’s internal Code of Conduct, to fulfil its mission toward scientific advancement and collaboration in astrophysics. In case of uncertainty, the University of Vienna’s Code of Conduct takes priority.

### People expected to follow the Department’s Code of Conduct

- Department members, as listed below. Department membership is not based on an employment contract<sup>1</sup>.
  - General personnel, including administrative staff and IT experts,
  - Scientific personnel at all academic levels: PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, Senior Scientists, Tenure Track professors, and full professors,
  - Retired professors who are still scientifically active, external lecturers, and international guests.
- Students enrolled in astronomy courses, bachelor and master students currently writing their thesis, and student assistants.

### Values of the Department

Our values define who we are as a Department. They characterise who we are to each other, the Faculty, the University, and the broader community. They represent our departmental culture, guide us as we interact professionally, influence how we make decisions, and frame a vision for our future.

The Department of Astrophysics strives to:

- Be world-class in their research accomplishments and expertise, and work across the public sphere to advance access to, and dissemination of, knowledge.
- Work as a community to help each other and the Department succeed. Science is a team effort requiring collaboration, reliability, scientific exchange, discussion, mutual support,

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<sup>1</sup> An up-to-date list of current Department members and associates can be found at:  
<https://astro.univie.ac.at/en/about-us/staff/>

and debate, including disagreement. The Department encourages respectful and supportive interactions on such occasions.

- Act with integrity in research, teaching and third-mission activities.
- Mentor students and early career staff for current and future success.
- Treat stakeholders and each other with collegiality, openness and mutual respect.
- Create an inclusive, diverse, and welcoming environment for all, by fostering diversity in terms of gender, nationality, sexual orientation, disability, language, ethnicity, religion, and cultural background.
- Support collaborations within the institute, the faculty, and the university, with industry, with other national and international institutes, and with professional national and international organizations.

## Guidelines

- The Department acknowledges that people have different backgrounds regarding gender, nationality, sexual orientation, disability, language, ethnicity, religion, and cultural background and treats all Department members and students with the same appropriate respect and understanding, regardless of career stage or experience.
- Derogatory comments to, and ridicule of, Department members and students are unacceptable.
- Differences in opinions, strategies, and actions taken are welcome for discussion with mutual respect.
- The Department does not accept hidden, silent, or organised damaging actions against individuals.
- Bullying of all kinds (e.g., bossing, mobbing, staffing), including repetitive and undeclared exclusion, isolation, discouragement, defamation, maligning, ridicule, excessive and unusual supervision and control are not tolerated.
- Harassment of any kind, aggression, and unexplained and/or unfounded accusations toward Department members and students are not tolerated.
- Department members and students respect individual personal boundaries and acknowledge that these may be different for different people.
- Every Department member and student has the right to choose their pronouns and chosen names to identify themselves; every institute member and student respects pronouns and chosen names of others to the best of their knowledge.
- The Department is aware of power differentials between academic stages. No one at the Department misuses their power of status to discourage, disadvantage, or suppress any Department member or student. This in particular concerns non-scientific personnel and the youngest, earliest-stage members of the Department, but it also concerns the misuse of power against a minority.
- Criticism of any kind is communicated in a polite, constructive, and professional way, and aims for a positive outcome. Criticism should only be applied after verifying that the difference in opinions is not arising due to a misunderstanding. Criticise ideas, not people.
- During discussions in groups, all opinions will be heard, acknowledged, and discussed. Any participant in such discussions has the opportunity to express their opinion in full. Interrupting another person's presentation is inappropriate; raising hands is an appropriate signal to ask for speaking time.

- The Department encourages a friendly community, but emphasizes the importance of separating professional and personal communications. In particular, the Department advises the use of the appropriate communication channels (e.g., university email, e-learning platforms, etc.) for professional topics (including research coordination, supervision, teaching activities, administrative tasks, and institutional decision-making). Personal topics should be approached on personal platforms (e.g., personal phones, messaging services, etc.). Maintaining healthy boundaries between work and personal life is important to foster a safe work environment.

## Remediation

- Conflicts should be resolved by mediated discussion in a respectful environment.
- A Department member or student who experiences a violation of these internal guidelines or those of the University Code of Conduct can report to relevant contact points (not sequential):
  - A trusted colleague
  - [Department Code of Conduct Awareness Team](#)
  - [Management Team of the Department](#)
  - [Equal Opportunities Working Party \(AKGleich\)](#)
  - [Sexual Harassment & Bullying Counselling Office of the Human Resources and Gender Equality unit](#)
- The Department Code of Conduct Awareness Team has two roles:
  - It maintains an up-to-date version of the Department's Code of Conduct and explains it to Department members and students whenever needed; the Team also makes sure that a version of this document is always available on the Department webpage.
  - The members of this Team will help the involved parties to bring problems regarding conflicts with the guidelines of this Code of Conduct to the attention of the relevant university authorities.
- The Department's measures do not supersede the University of Vienna's regulations but complement them; superiors who observe bullying or harassment are obliged to report them to the University in any case.

## Useful links

- [Code of Conduct of the University of Vienna](#)
- [u:respect website](#)
- [Possibilities for intervention and counselling](#)

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