

**ROUND TABLE**  
**ORGANIZED BY THE GAFP JUNIOR MEMBERS**

*'How can one take action against  
the abuse of power in science?'*

On Monday, May 26th 2025, 18 – 20 pm  
JGU Campus, ReWi II, HS VII

# PROGRAM

## Welcome

Ekaterina Esenkova & Lea Voigt

*Junior Members of the GAFP*

## Inputs

Katharina Kleinlein

*h&z Management Consulting & former member of a Max-Planck-Institute*

Prof. Dr. Alfred Hornung

*Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies & Ombudsperson of the JGU*

Tina Rotzal

*Head of the competence center for academic integrity*

## Plenary Discussion

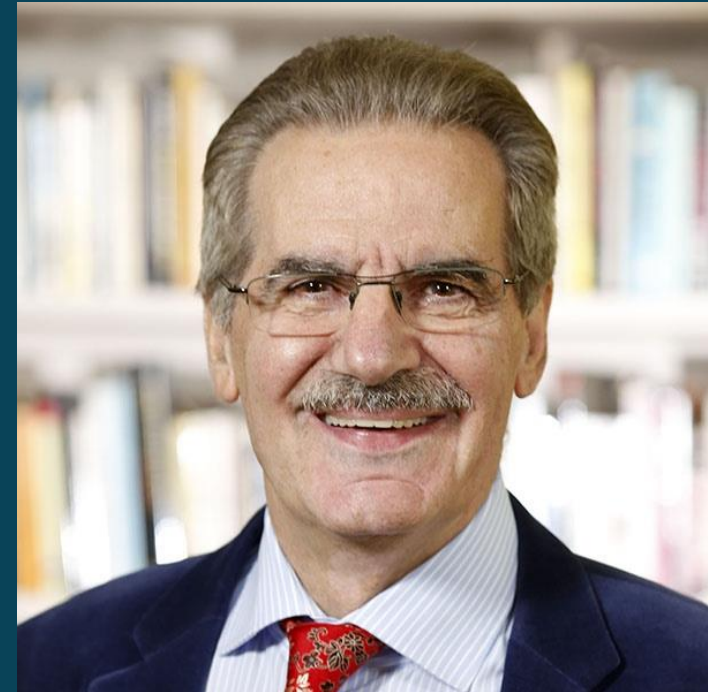


*"Max Planck Institute: Abuse of Power among Elite Scientists in Germany."* Deutsche Welle, 7 May 2024, <https://www.dw.com/en/max-planck-institute-abuse-of-power-elite-scientists-germany-v2/video-71904207>.

# INPUTS

# Prof. Dr. Alfred Hornung

- Research Professor of American Studies and Director of the Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies
- held guest-professorships at various European, American, Canadian and Chinese Universities
- has served as editor of American Studies journals and is the editor in chief of the Journal of Transnational American Studies
- Deputy since 2015 and first ombudsperson since 2019

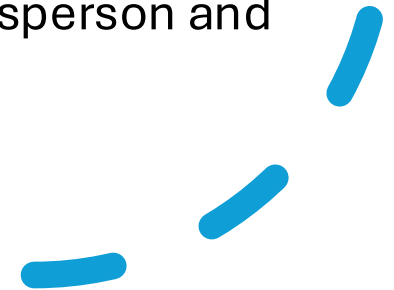


*Academic  
Misconduct  
and Abuse of  
Power in  
Higher  
Education*

Alfred Hornung  
Ombudsperson JGU  
Research Professor and Director  
Obama Institute for Transnational American  
Studies

Gutenberg Academy  
26 May 2025

Informational Material by the Ombudsperson and  
the Task Force “Abuse of Power”

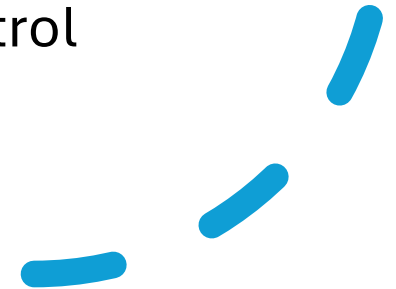


# Abuse of Power – Definition & Range

- "Abuse of power refers to the exploitation of dependency relationships in academic supervision or employment settings."
- Key Characteristics:
  - Self-serving use of authority
  - Long-term, illegitimate harm to others
  - Often invisible due to hierarchical norms
- Manifestation in various forms
  - scientific misconduct
  - discrimination
  - sexualized violence
  - coercive behavior
  - physical or psychological violence

# Forms of Academic Power Abuse

- Humiliation, bullying, threats
- Withholding resources or information
- Unpaid overwork, weekend duties, non-academic tasks
- Favoritism or discrimination
- Appropriation of others' research
- (Threatened) reputation damage
- Corruption and excessive control



# Examples of Complaints & Grievances

- Biased grading of student papers or dissertations
- Unauthorized presentation of student work
- Exclusion from data access or networks
- Lack of transparency in faculty appointments
- Gender-based discrimination and structural inequity
- Dependence on supervisors for career progress



# Publication- Related Misconduct



- Disputes over authorship and credit
- Misuse of interview data from students or participants
- Definition of Author (§ 10 Regulations JGU)
  - Publications in the natural sciences and medicine, or in research consortia
  - Author collective – consortium solution of *Nature*
- Post-submission alteration of author order
- Use of junior researchers' findings without consent
- Duplicate publication or data theft
- Vague or missing publication policies in contracts

# Allegations and Complaints from Outside

- Anonymous whistleblowers
  - Hinweisgeberschutzgesetz (July 2023) - Whistleblower Protection Act
- Retired and emeritus researchers
- Non Academic Associations
- Commercialization of academic research as a conflict factor
- Universities in Germany and abroad (Sweden, USA, Austria, UK, Belgium, Uzbekistan)
- Reports to other bodies of scientific organizations
- Leibniz Association

Institutions and Positions to handle misconduct and power abuse at JGU  
Regulations for Ensuring Good Research Practice and for Dealing with Research Misconduct (2023)

- Ombudspersons
  - Prof. Dr. Alfred Hornung, Research Professor and Director, Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies
  - Prof. Dr. Wolfram Ruf, Alexander von Humboldt Professor and Director, Center for Thrombosis and Hemostasis (CTH), University Medicine
- Representative for Students with Disabilities or Chronic Illnesses
  - Prof. Dr. Norbert Paul, Ethics and History of Medicine
- Representative for Equity and Diversity
  - Prof. Dr. Sylvia Thiele, Romance Literatures
- Team Academic Integrity (UB)
  - Esther Reineke
  - Tina Rotzal



Psychologische Beratung

Personalbereich

Institut für Lehrentwicklung und  
Medienbildung (Abt. 4)

Personalakte /  
Prüfungsausschuss

Rechtsabteilung / Rechtsreferat

Interne Revision und  
Organisationseinheit

Gleichstellung und Diversität

Psychological Council

Human Resources Department

Institute for Learning  
Development and Media  
Education (Division 4)

Personnel File / Examination  
Committee

Legal Affairs Department

Internal Audit and Organizational  
Unit

Office for Equality and Diversity



# Ombudsman für die Wissenschaft (Berlin)

## Ombuds Committee for Research Integrity

---

- Committee established in 1999 by DFG
- Professional staff
- Frequent reports from anonymous whistleblowers regarding the guidelines of large research consortia
- Deliberate choice of this body – direct influence on the approval and funding of projects
- Possibility to report suspected cases related to specific research projects
- Regular reports on meetings and, in cases of confirmed violations, on the measures taken by the DFG

# Sanctions for Scientific Misconduct

- Withdrawal of research funding
- Exclusion from research funding applications (e.g. 2 years)
- Regular reporting on disciplinary outcomes
- Growing pressure for compliance and institutional transparency
- Loss of academic titles and positions

## Tina Rotzal, M.A.

- Head of the Academic Integrity Competence Center at the University Library of Mainz
- Certified Good Research Practice Trainer
- Co-coordinator of the UniWiND network „Conveying Good Research Practice – Network for Trainers“
- Studied German Studies, English Studies, and Cultural Anthropology in Mainz
- currently pursuing a doctorate in Medieval German Studies



GAFP Roundtable, 26.05.2025

# At least I know I was right

## Power Abuse in Academia

Tina Rotzal,  
Competence Centre of Academic Integrity





- 1. What Is Power Abuse?**
- 2. Codes of Conduct and Other Regulations**
- 3. Prevention and Support**



# What Is Power Abuse?

„Specific examples of abuse of power at universities include the **unauthorised appropriation of a dependent person's intellectual property** and **problematic research practices**. The abuse of power at universities also takes forms that are familiar to other organisations and employers, from **unlawful demands for overtime** to **discrimination, humiliation** and **degradation** or **sexual or sexualised or verbal harassment**.“

*Source: German Rectors' Conference (2024): „Power and Responsibility. Recommendation of the 38th General Assembly of the HRK“*



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# What Is Power Abuse?

Members of the Network Against Power Abuse in Academia (MaWi) also report cases of

- “racist discrimination,
- mobbing (harassment),
- obstruction or prevention of contract extensions,
- coercion to falsify data,
- demands for unpaid overtime,
- suppression,
- and exclusion of international students and researchers”.

*Source: Hohmann, Sophie; Keige-Huge, Annah: „Machtmissbrauch in der Wissenschaft“. In: Berliner Bildungszeitschrift, September/Oktober 2024, p. 10. <https://www.netzwerk-mawi.de/fileadmin/media/team/PDFs/bbz-Hohmann-Keige-Huge.pdf> (last accessed: 23.05.2025, translated with ki-chat.uni-mainz.de)*



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# What Is Power Abuse?

„Abuse of power can take place, often by exploiting social role perceptions, both between hierarchical levels and between members of the same hierarchical level. **All members of universities can be affected** by abuse of power: employees in technology and administration, professors, students or academic staff.”

*Source: German Rectors' Conference (2024): „Power and Responsibility. Recommendation of the 38th General Assembly of the HRK“*



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## REGULATIONS

for ensuring good research practice  
and for dealing  
with research misconduct

of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz  
dated February 13, 2023



### Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice

Code of Conduct



### The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity

REVISED EDITION 2023

# Codes of Conduct and Recommendations



# Codes of Conduct and Other Recommendations

## JGU Regulations for Ensuring GRP

### § 12, section 3 (Tasks of JGU and the faculties)

"JGU establishes conditions for research and teaching that enable researchers to pursue their activities in compliance with legal and ethical standards. This includes, in particular, infrastructures for conducting crucial research in keeping with the current state of the art as well as **the promotion of employment relationships that are free of any abuse of power and counteract the exploitation of dependent relationships.**"

<https://gwp.uni-mainz.de/en/jgu-ordnung-zur-sicherung-gwp/> (last accessed: 23.05.2025)



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# Codes of Conduct and Other Recommendations

## JGU Regulations for Ensuring GRP

### § 13 (Tasks of university teachers, supervisors, and scientific managers)

1. Teaching staff, supervisors, and scientific managers must bear responsibility for the persons they supervise, conduct themselves in a scientifically exemplary manner, and actively ensure compliance with the principles of good research practice.

<https://gwp.uni-mainz.de/en/jgu-ordnung-zur-sicherung-gwp/> (last accessed: 23.05.2025)



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# Codes of Conduct and Other Recommendations

## JGU Regulations for Ensuring GRP



### § 13 (Tasks of university teachers, supervisors, and scientific managers)

2. Scientific managers also bear responsibility for the entire unit they manage and must therefore ensure that
  1. management, supervision, conflict resolution and quality assurance procedures are clearly regulated and indeed performed;
  2. **all members are aware of their roles, rights, and obligations.** Accordingly, managers must communicate regularly with all stakeholders and make adjustments if and when the focus of one or more stakeholders' work changes;
  3. undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students receive adequate supervision, are informed of the fundamental principles of good research practice, and are made aware of the signs of potential research misconduct;
  4. academic and academic-accessory staff receive appropriate support in their professional advancement;
  5. **abuse of power and exploitation of dependent relationships are prevented.**

<https://gwp.uni-mainz.de/en/jgu-ordnung-zur-sicherung-gwp/> (last accessed: 23.05.2025)



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# Codes of Conduct and Other Recommendations

## JGU Regulations for Ensuring GRP



### § 20 (Misconduct in special positions of power and leadership)

1. Leadership positions and other positions of power in science often come with special responsibilities. **The abuse of these positions must typically be considered misconduct.**

<https://gwp.uni-mainz.de/en/jgu-ordnung-zur-sicherung-gwp/> (last accessed: 23.05.2025)



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# Codes of Conduct and Other Recommendations

## DFG Code of Conduct, Guideline 4

The head of a research work unit is responsible for the entire unit. Collaboration within the unit is designed such that the group as a whole can perform its tasks, the necessary cooperation and coordination can be achieved, and all members understand their roles, rights and duties. The leadership role includes ensuring adequate individual supervision of early career researchers, integrated in the overall institutional policy, as well as career development for researchers and research support staff. Suitable organisational measures are in place at the level of the individual unit and of the leadership of the institution **to prevent the abuse of power and exploitation of dependent relationships.**

<https://wissenschaftliche-integritaet.de/en/code-of-conduct/responsibility-of-the-heads-of-research-work-units/> (last accessed: 23.05.2025)



A hand holding a vintage compass against a blurred landscape background. The hand is wearing a black watch with a perforated strap. The compass is a classic pocket compass with a brass casing and a dark face with white markings. The background shows a hazy, mountainous landscape under a bright sky.

# Prevention and Support

# Prevention and support

## Comment on GL 4, DFG Code of Conduct

„The abuse of power in academia is not commonplace, but it does happen. There are many levels at which the abuse of power can occur in academia. For this reason, a key component of good academic work is avoiding the spaces and structures that give rise to opportunities for the abuse of power, dependent relationships and (supervision) conflicts. Prevention requires **awareness-raising at all levels of the staff** of a research institution – if necessary based on a **code of conduct** – as well as organisational measures at institutional level. The latter include establishing **independent, confidential counselling bodies and competent prosecution bodies** as well as **joint supervision of doctoral researchers** (doctoral committees) and **written supervision agreements.**”

Comment on Guideline 4, DFG Code of Conduct: <https://wissenschaftliche-integritaet.de/en/comments/avoidance-of-the-abuse-of-power/> (last accessed: 23.05.2025)



# Prevention and support

## Comment on GL 4, DFG Code of Conduct

„The structural and personal dependence of early career researchers often tends to result from precarious employment relationships (the large number of fixed-term employees in the academic sector). By contrast, professors are generally tenured. Given this situation, effective means to compensate for this imbalance **include establishing a transparent feedback culture, ensuring professional preparation for leadership roles in academia and providing ongoing training** (e.g. on unconscious bias).”

*Comment on Guideline 4, DFG Code of Conduct: <https://wissenschaftliche-integritaet.de/en/comments/avoidance-of-the-abuse-of-power/> (last accessed: 23.05.2025). See also N<sup>2</sup> position paper: Power Abuse and Conflict Resolution, May 2019: [https://www.phdnet.mpg.de/n2/publications-and-press/N2\\_PowerAbuseStatement\\_English](https://www.phdnet.mpg.de/n2/publications-and-press/N2_PowerAbuseStatement_English) (last accessed: 23.05.2025)*



# Prevention and support

...at the JGU

- Ombudspersons
  - Competence Centre for Academic Integrity
  - Equality and Diversity Office
  - Conflict Counselling
- 
- Supervision Agreements
  - Dienstvereinbarung „Partnerschaftliches Verhalten am Arbeitsplatz“ (only applies to employees)  
(<https://www.personalentwicklung.uni-mainz.de/partnerschaftliches-verhalten/>)



# What else might be needed?

- Regular Interdepartmental Meetings (Ensuring ongoing dialogue with all pertinent stakeholders)
- Transparent Workflow (Clearly defined and accessible processes for all involved)
- Anonymized Reporting to the President and Vice Presidents
- Systematic Follow-Up
- Joint Supervision
- Mandatory training for supervisors
- Enhanced Publicity and Open Communication





# Thank You!

**Tina Rotzal**

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UB Mainz  
[akin@ub.uni-mainz.de](mailto:akin@ub.uni-mainz.de)  
[www.akin.uni-mainz.de](http://www.akin.uni-mainz.de)  
[www.gwp.uni-mainz.de](http://www.gwp.uni-mainz.de)



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# Katharina Kleinlein, M.Sc.

- Senior Project Manager at h&z Management Consulting, since 2016
- Studied Physics at LMU Munich
- Research student at Harvard to research Nano Photonics, at École normale supérieure in Paris and LMU Munich
- Former scientist at the Max-Planck-Institute for Quantum Optics in Garching
- Many talks about what to do against power abuse in science



# Structural Power Abuse in German Academia

Katharina Kleinlein

Gender Bias

# How a Prestigious Scientific Organization

## Cambridge University Unequality

# DER SPIEGEL



Deutsche Welle

lt sich  
Gott

In a  
Gerr  
orga  
resiq

Machtmissbrauch

### **Junge Forscher erheben Vorwürfe gegen Max-Planck-Gesellschaft**

Nachwuchsforscher berichten, sie seien an Max-Planck-Instituten beleidigt und angeschrien worden. Kaum jemand wagte, sich offiziell zu beschweren.

Von **Kristin Haug**  
13.03.2025, 09.47 Uhr • aus **DER SPIEGEL 12/2025**

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How Germany's elite research institution fails young scientists | DW Documentary

DW Documentary 5.57M subscribers

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22.02.2024

LUXEMBURG

## Mobbingvorwürfe Institut

VON JOCHEN ZENTHÖFER - AKTUALISIER

## Schikane Max-Planck der Elit

Gastbeitrag von Katharina Reisch

Von **Kristin Haug**  
14.08.2018, 08:30

# Exzellenz und Exzess

VON THOMAS THIEL - AKTUALISIERT AM 22.08.2018 - 14:30

SEXUALISIERTE GEWALT AN STUDENTINNEN

**AUF SEINEM TISCH LAG EIN  
STOCK**

*„On his desk, there was a cane“*

Source: <https://www.zeit.de/campus/2022/04/sexualisierte-gewalt-studentinnen-universitaet-goettingen-aufarbeitung>; ZEIT Campus Nr. 04/2022, Aktualisiert am 25. Juni 2022, 20:47 Uhr

# POWER

# Imagine...

**We tested the  
reporting  
system...**

# There are (least) **31**

- **Research Institute**
  - 4 **conflict counsellors**
  - 1 ombud person
  - 3 **equal opportunity officers**
  - Workers council
- **Research Society:**
  - **Solicitor law firm**
  - Central gender equality officer
  - Ombud person
  - Counselling via the Employee and Manager Assistance Program
- **University**
  - Central equal opportunity officer (+ 3 deputies)
  - Faculty equal opportunity officer + deputy
  - **Diversity vice president**
  - 2 diversity management coordinators
  - **Anti-discrimination officer** + deputy
  - 2 **ombud persons** + deputy
- **Excellence Cluster:**
  - 1 **diversity coordinator**
  - 3 equal opportunity managers

# Imagine again...

## Results?

- “Holding hands”
- Organization of training for supervisor / group
- Voluntary trainings
- Sending to the next point of contact
- Discouraging victims to act
- Encouraging victims to act

How much more equal opportunity officers does it take  
to make power abuse disappear?



*Photo by charlesdeluvio on Unsplash*

Going further up also typically won't help



Solicitor Law Firm



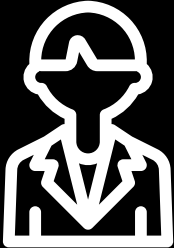
Staff Unit for Internal  
Investigation

## The impression victims reported to me

The goal of the Solicitor Law Firm, as well as the Staff Unit for Internal Investigation, seems not to be to protect victims but to assess whether they are able to press charges. If they can't - due to a supposed 'lack of evidence' - they are discouraged, silenced, and worn down

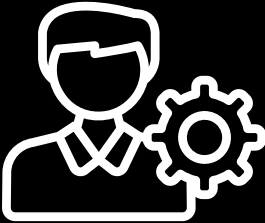
# How the system works

# Industry



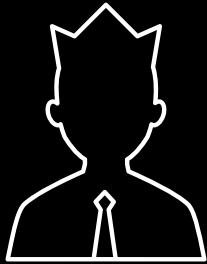
**HR**

Contracts, salary, labor law & compliance, work hours, terminations, disciplinary actions



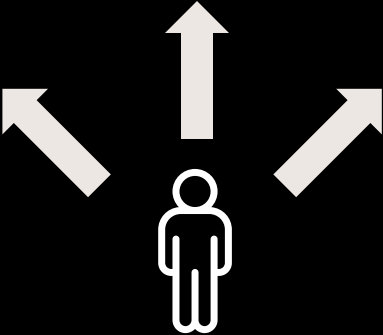
**Technical/  
functional supervisor**

Technical oversight, project assignments



**Line Manager**

Performance Mgmt, disciplinary authority, first point of contact in daily issues (e.g. approvals)



# Science

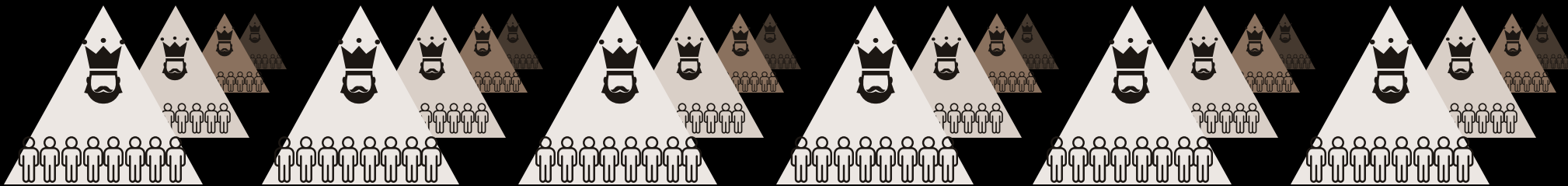


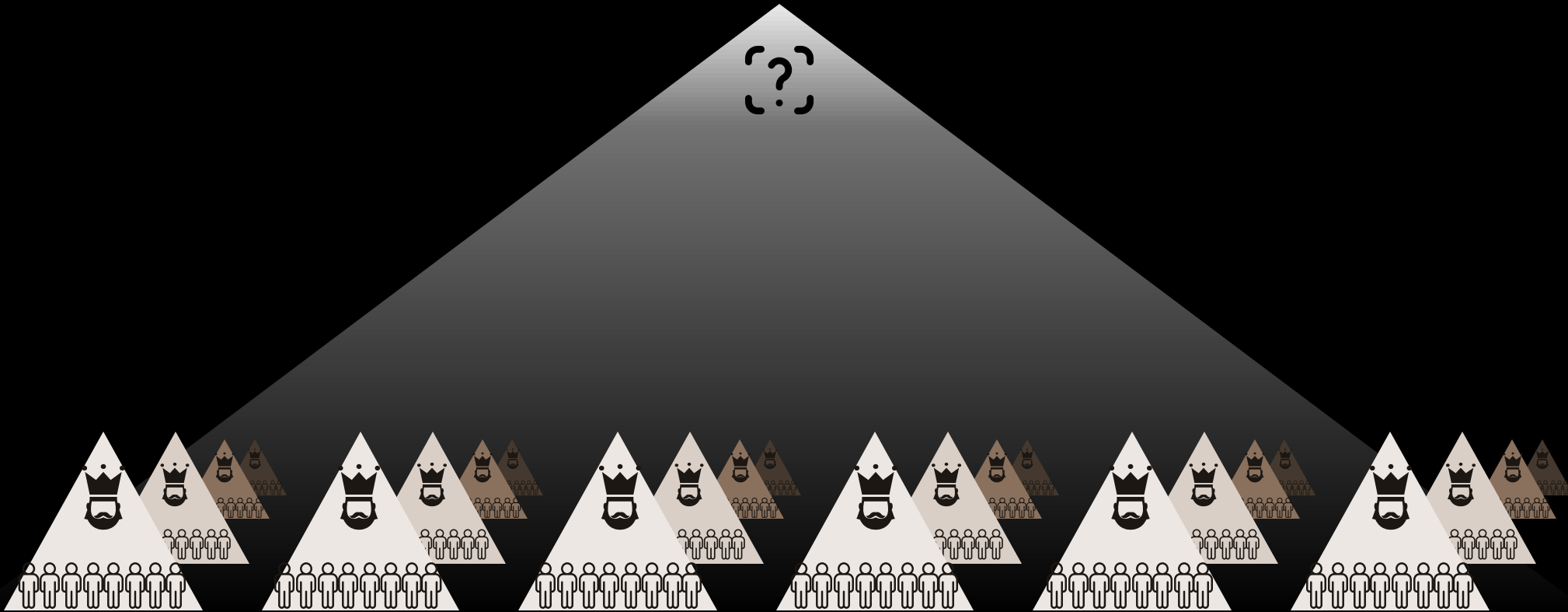
- I decide whether your contract gets renewed.
- I decide whether you can stay in the country\*.
- I supervise your thesis.
- I grade your thesis.
- I write the recommendation that decides your future.

... and I am basically untouchable, having tenure

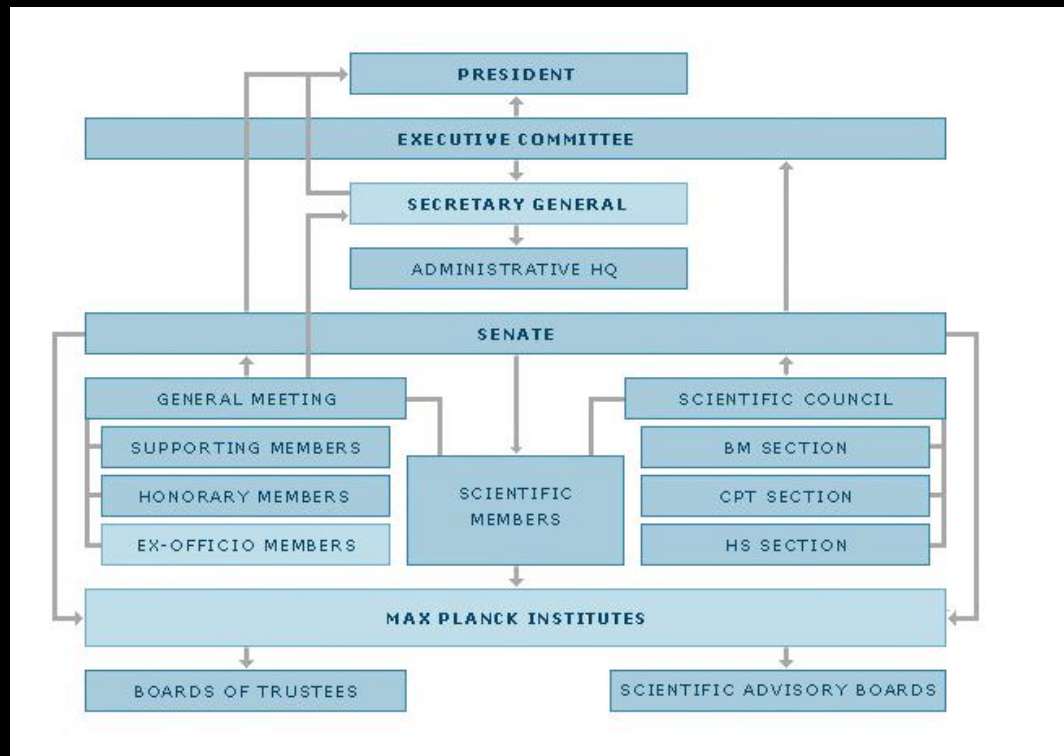


*\*For non-EU students*





# Science governance at the example of MPG



Source: MPG webpage 16.3.2025



[← zurück](#)

[weiter →](#)

[Nichtamtliches Inhaltsverzeichnis](#)

## Aktiengesetz

### § 105 Unvereinbarkeit der Zugehörigkeit zum Vorstand und zum Aufsichtsrat

(1) Ein Aufsichtsratsmitglied kann nicht zugleich Vorstandsmitglied, dauernd Stellvertreter von Vorstandsmitgliedern, Prokurist oder zum gesamten Geschäftsbetrieb ermächtigter Handlungsbevollmächtigter der Gesellschaft sein.

(2) Nur für einen im voraus begrenzten Zeitraum, höchstens für ein Jahr, kann der Aufsichtsrat einzelne seiner Mitglieder zu Stellvertretern von fehlenden oder verhinderten Vorstandsmitgliedern bestellen. Eine wiederholte Bestellung oder Verlängerung der Amtszeit ist zulässig, wenn dadurch die Amtszeit insgesamt ein Jahr nicht übersteigt. Während ihrer Amtszeit als Stellvertreter von Vorstandsmitgliedern können die Aufsichtsratsmitglieder keine Tätigkeit als Aufsichtsratsmitglied ausüben. Das Wettbewerbsverbot des § 88 gilt für sie nicht.

[zum Seitenanfang](#)

[Impressum](#)

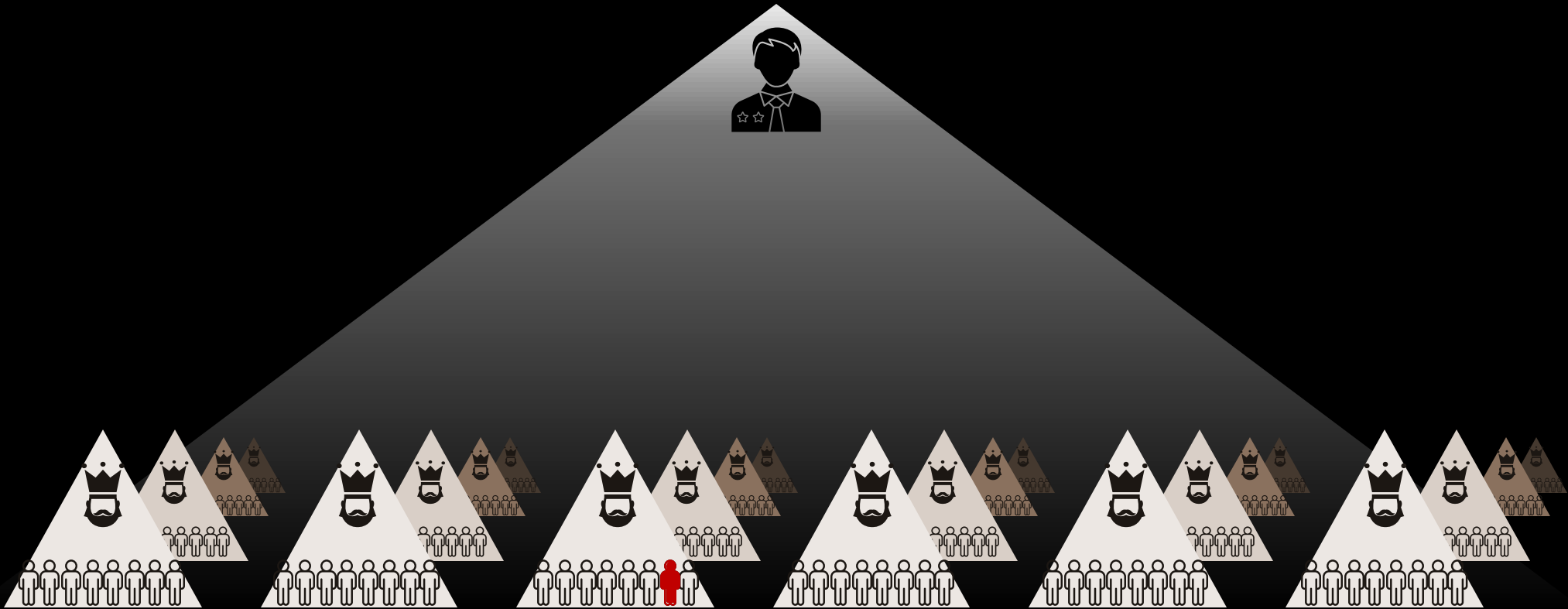
[Datenschutz](#)

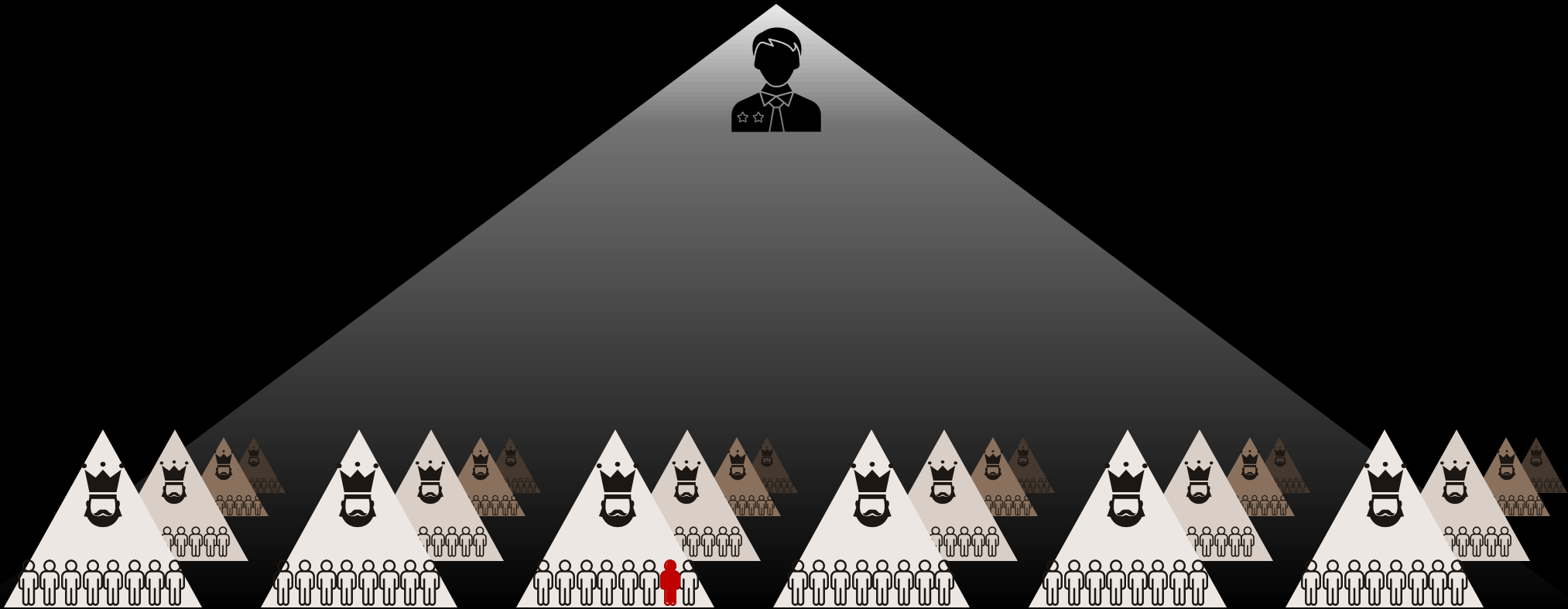
[Barrierefreiheitserklärung](#)

[Feedback-Formular](#)

[Seite ausdrucken](#)

**WHO CAN TAKE ANY DECISIONS THAT FALL INTO THE  
AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE, THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
AND THE GENERAL MEETING  
*„IF MATTERS REQUIRE IMMEDIATE ATTENTION“?***





**Is there an external governance in place?**



Bundesministerium  
für Bildung  
und Forschung

*„Das BMBF führt über die MPG keine  
Rechts- oder Fachaufsicht.“  
- ehem. Bundesministerin für Bildung und  
Forschung Stark-Watzinger, 2023*



## Abschließende Mitteilung

an das Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung  
über die Prüfung

Aufgabenwahrnehmung der vom  
Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung  
entsandten Vertreterinnen und Vertreter in den  
Gremien der aus dem Einzelplan 30  
grundfinanzierten Forschungseinrichtungen

Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften e. V.

„Faktisch beaufsichtigt der Präsident  
sein eigenes Handeln“

„Der Bund hat [...] keinen seiner  
Zuwendungshöhe angemessenen  
Einfluss und keine angemessene  
Vertretung in den Organen der MPG.“

„Die MPG verfügt über kein klassisches  
Aufsichtsgremium. Eine klare  
Aufgabentrennung [...] fehlt.“

### External oversight:

- Link research funding to compliance standards
- Establish independent external complaint offices
- External review of internal misconduct investigations
- Regular external audits of governance and power structures
- Annual transparency reports on complaints and institutional responses

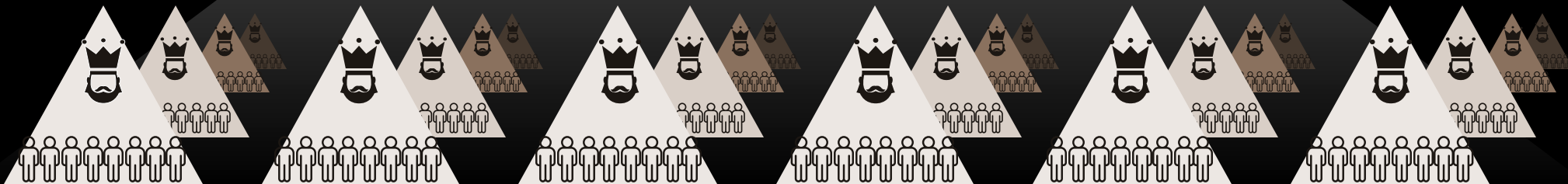


### Distribute power, break monopoly:

- Supervision by one professor
- Evaluation/grading by an independent professor
- Contracts handled by HR, not supervisors

### Implement proper governance:

- Independent oversight
- Procedural transparency
- Accountability for persons in power
- Safe, protected reporting paths
- Counteract culture of silence and institutional loyalty



There is a detailed talk with more insights available:

The screenshot shows a video player interface. At the top, the URL is [media.ccc.de](https://media.ccc.de) and the breadcrumb is [browse](#) > [conferences](#) > [easterhegg](#) > [2025](#) > [event](#). The video title is "The Silent Scandal - Power Abuse and Corruption by Design in German Research" by k8ik. The event is "Easterhegg 2025: Unhandled Egception". The video content shows a report titled "40 pages of detailed descriptions (margins & font size similar to original)" with a "Report" icon. The report is displayed as a grid of 40 page thumbnails. A video player control bar at the bottom shows the video is at 00:00 / 55:08, 1.00x speed, and includes a playlist titled "K2 Talk: Talk: Playlists: 'eh22' videos starting here / audio".



# Thank you

Feel free to reach out to me!  
[Katharina.kleinlein@posteo.de](mailto:Katharina.kleinlein@posteo.de)

## DISCUSSION

*How can one take action against  
the abuse of power in science?*

# Discussion

How can institutions better protect early-career researchers?

What models of accountability (national or international) are most effective?

How do we balance academic hierarchy with equity?

How do we navigate between different national or international systems of academic administration and research?

## Further Events on the Topic

- **05.11.** Online Talk with Prof. Daniel Leising, 4-6 pm, official invite in the summer
- **24.11. or 26.11.** Online Talk with Prof. Morteza Mahmoudi, 4-6 pm, more info soon
- Bystandertraining planned for upcoming winter term