

Academic Code of Conduct of the University of Bern

Adopted by the Executive Board of the University of Bern on 31 March 2026

This Academic Code of Conduct is a public commitment to a set of values that should guide all members (students, academics and staff) of the University of Bern. The University of Bern is home to approximately 20`000 students and 8`000 employees. The core tasks of the University are teaching and research. As a comprehensive university, teaching and research occur across a variety of disciplines and employ a broad range of methods. Each member of the university community has a unique background, yet all ought to be committed to advancing science and teaching. The University of Bern views itself as a discourse community, both internally within its eight faculties and externally with society through dialogue and knowledge transfer. The University is committed to transparency, respect, and fairness, and its internal processes and services are regularly reviewed.

This Academic Code of Conduct has been developed in response to the politically disruptive times facing academia. Universities are under pressure from various quarters, and the university leadership recognises the need to resist this pressure. By introducing this Code of Conduct, the University of Bern is making a public statement about the values it stands for, and it ought to serve as a guide for the university community. As a higher education institution, the University of Bern benefits from the diversity among staff and students. Academic freedom is the basis for unbiased, critical, and innovative teaching and research. This academic freedom is defended by the university's leadership. The leadership of the University of Bern refrains from taking an official stance on political issues, except for questions related to the context of science and science policy, as these concern the proper functioning of the university as a higher education institution. This implies that the leadership of the University of Bern does not accept being instrumentalized in relation to broader political and societal issues.

The following values are based on the university's existing policies and guidelines.

Academic freedom of teaching and research

Academic freedom is the right of academics to teach, study, pursue, and disseminate knowledge and research without external interference. As a higher education institution, the University of Bern is committed to respecting this freedom. Academic freedom also means that the members of the University of Bern should strive for a differentiated, balanced, and evidence-based discussion of academic topics, including social and political issues. Academic freedom comes with obligations and responsibilities, and is exercised in compliance with laws, study regulations, assigned duties, and competencies.

Mission to educate and to engage

Knowledge creation, development, and transmission, as well as skill transfer, are core elements of the university's mission. The University of Bern is committed to training and supporting students and early-career



scholars, as well as informing a broader public. The university is part of society and interacts with a diversity of societal actors. Thus, we are committed to engaging with social issues and current events in teaching and research, and conversely, to contributing our knowledge and expertise to public debates.

Academic integrity, accountability, and responsibility

Academics have a responsibility to conduct their work in accordance with the principles of scientific integrity. These principles include reliability, honesty, respect, and accountability. Good scientific practice varies across disciplines and adheres to the specific standards of rigor established in each field. The University of Bern is committed to fostering a supportive and fair research culture, which is essential for generating unbiased knowledge. The duty of academics is to critically evaluate claims and perspectives that are factually inaccurate, unjustified, or harmful.

Respectful and supportive environment

The University of Bern actively promotes the principle of equal opportunity and fosters a responsible, open, and fair environment. Everybody has the right to have their personal integrity protected at work and during their studies. The university rejects all forms of hatred, violence, and discrimination and expects all members of the community to treat one another in a manner that is professional, respectful, and non-exploitative. Academic leaders should lead with empathy, responsibility, and fairness.

Collection of resources to University of Bern guidelines and documents

[Strategy 2030](#)

[Annual Report](#)

[Advisory service guide](#)

Personal Integrity: [Procedure for Submitting Reports \(web\)](#)

Personal Integrity: [Procedure for submitting reports of Personal Integrity breaches \(pdf\)](#)

[Appeal Committee, Ombuds Office and Integrity Officers](#)

Legal Collection of the University of Bern: [Scientific integrity](#)

[Research Compliance and Good Research Practice](#)

[Portal for Junior Academics](#)

[Legal Collection of the University of Bern](#)

Other resources

Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences: [Code of conduct for scientific integrity](#)

[Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research](#)