

Code of Conduct/ Community Agreement CDC 2025

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Our Code of Conduct has the intention to gather and manifest our collectively and collaboratively defined values, expectations, accessibility, and procedures in the event of conflicts at the Centre for Digital Cultures (hereafter: CDC) at Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany. It defines how we would like to work with and among each other and represents our public positioning. We therefore understand it as a living codex that the CDC community commits to, specifically those working at the CDC, guests, fellows, invitees, and participants of events. The Code of Conduct is both, lived practice and a constant reminder for careful self-reflection and openness to review and update this document. It is also a statement against any form of discrimination. The aim of this Code of Conduct is to help create a safer space for our interactions at the CDC – both online, offline, and asynchronous - and to keep it open to critical debate.

The Code of Conduct is to be followed in spirit and practice, including in any form of representation of the CDC. Even though this is a community agreement and not a legal contract, we reserve the right to disinvite people from our programs, events, and spaces who do not respect our shared principles. The Code of Conduct is a commitment to a caring, trusting, and responsible cooperation and to each other.

The Code of Conduct was created on the shoulders and through the inspiration of many other codes of conduct. Some are noted below or cited as sources.

Values and Positionality

At the Centre for Digital Cultures, we cherish and commit to tending to each other, our community, and also our differences as caringly, respectfully, mindfully, and supportively as possible. This includes acknowledging that the CDC is not an apolitical space, but rather one which strives to actively inquire into and explore the politics of digital cultures as much as academic and scholarly cultures of research and teaching which shape it. We live in times where scholarly debates and freedom of expressions are under threat – particularly from racist, trans- and homophobic, misogynous, classist, ableist, and populist discourses and attacks. Thus, freedom of research and expression cannot be taken for granted and must be continuously fought for. This encompasses being inclusive and protecting the spaces of the CDC – regarding physical, online, and conversational spaces but also in terms of guarding the scholarly focus and interdisciplinarity – where we can make sure that it remains there for us and others who need it.

Anti-Discrimination Statement (taken and translated from the CoC by Forum Gender, ARL)

We at the CDC see it as our duty and responsibility to take action against any kind of discrimination and assaults. Any kind of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, color, immigration

status, social and economic class, educational level, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, size, family status, political belief, religion, and mental and physical ability (femEdTech, 2024) is not tolerated. This also includes verbal, sexual and/or physical abuse, inappropriate behaviour, intimidation, power play, and personal transgressions or violations of boundaries. Furthermore, Germany has an anti-discrimination law ([Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz \(AGG\), English version](#)) that protects everyone from discriminatory behaviour. Similarly, the Leuphana University has a “Guideline of the Senate for Protection against Discrimination, Violence and Sexual Harassment at Leuphana University”. The members of the CDC reserve the right to expel people who become conspicuous - or have been in the past - through such violations from common rooms and the community and to report them if necessary. If members feel unsafe, violated, discriminated against, and/or unwelcome in any way, they are encouraged and asked to contact the CDC's trusted person(s) or the representation of the complaints office §13 AGG (Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz) at any time.

The trusted person supports you to clear things and helps contacting the Leuphana personnel in charge of dealing with these matters eg. the Leuphana office of equal opportunities. This could be for example contacting the equality team of the Faculty of Cultural Studies on someone’s behalf. Additionally, Members of the university have access to the independent anti-discrimination counselling service of diversu e.V, which is Lüneburg based. Within the counselling, those affected receive support from specifically trained advisors. Counselling needs and incidents can be reported anonymously via diversu e.V.'s online reporting portal.

See also:

The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency

<https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/EN/homepage/homepage-node.html>

Ombudspersons for members of the Leuphana university

<https://www.leuphana.de/en/university/organisation/ombudsperson.html>

Support against sexual harassment <https://www.leuphana.de/en/institutions/office-for-equal-opportunities/portal-sexualized-discrimination.html>

Working Culture

The university is a place of work and is characterized by unequal labour relations. We acknowledge and are aware that the CDC is a hierarchical space and is influenced by power dynamics.

We make sure to critically and collectively remind ourselves of our differing positions regularly and consider them in working relationships, decision making processes, at community gatherings and

concerning the division of work. Although we acknowledge these power differentials exist in an institutionalised manner, our community values oppose this hierarchisation, and thus we attempt to work against unnecessary forms of hierarchisation, while making existing forms more transparent. As a collective, we will acknowledge the pressures and/or responsibilities of our different positions and will combat the misuse of power whenever there is any indication of it.

We try to be empathetic toward, and reflect on the conditions under which people work and strive, and collectively pay attention to the ways in which labour and care work for the institute is distributed at the CDC. In doing so, we commit to being particularly sensitive to the multiple demands placed on members, incl. student assistants, fellows, and guests of the CDC – both at work and beyond. This includes being aware of the care work that is done for the community, projects, fellows, and guests and making sure that this work is divided responsibly and fairly.

Overall, in the CDC, we aim to create a friendly and encouraging space to share ideas and research. We ask our members to be considerate and open-minded to the ideas and points of view coming from our colleagues. To maintain this amiable atmosphere, we must have some procedures in place to manage disorderly conduct and unprofessional behaviour.

Community Commitments

The CDC aspires to celebrate our diverse and intersectional perspectives and our interdisciplinary expertise!

We not only dedicate ourselves to actively recognize and share the many accomplishments by CDC members. We also encourage each other to find a common language, explain specific terms and positions of our trained disciplines, and be explicit even though we might think that is not necessary. Furthermore, we are dedicated to continually educate ourselves. We are open to feedback, to learning more and broadening our understanding of heterogenous discriminatory behaviour, and expect our community and guests to stay attentive, sensitive, and empathetic toward each other.

We aspire to always learn from each other and create common spaces in which we can experiment, share, and thrive together.

While working together, we want to...

- create a caring and conscious environment at our meetings and at events. That means sharing logistical and organizational tasks, agreeing on mechanisms of rotating moderations at the beginning of each term, and acknowledging the community work done by members of various employment statuses at the CDC. This also includes participating in CDC events whenever possible.

- make decision-making processes about things relevant to the whole CDC as transparent as possible; e.g., with regards to job openings and hiring processes; choosing project priorities and fellows; and finances. This also involves transparency about decision-making bodies (speaker, steering group, general assembly) and making sure these structures work as intended and stipulated in the CDC statutes.
 - be critical (e.g., through conscious moderation) of who gets to say a lot during meetings, who feels underrepresented and/or uncomfortable and/or not welcome and included. We consider it part of the trusted persons' tasks to support the moderation by being aware and sensing the general atmosphere during meetings. Should there be any issues, you are encouraged to share your concerns with the trusted person(s) and ask for mediation/support. Furthermore, we aim to reflect upon the communication culture e.g., in the last minutes of each meeting, and raise potential issues retrospectively before each meeting, reminding ourselves of our community agreements.
- We agree on signalling if we have something to say, letting everyone finish speaking, wait our turn, and respectfully listen to each other - in person as well as Online.
- jointly co-ordinate the CDC program during dedicated scheduling meetings. All colleagues will be given advance notice to fill in individual events in the schedule, allowing the meeting(s) to prioritize collective decision-making. We encourage individual research projects to also share their plans and to consider the interests of other CDC members, giving space and celebrating our diversity and interdisciplinarity.
 - be respectful of each other's time, try to be aware of and plan with potential care responsibilities and emergencies. This means, for example, both, planning events with due notice and a clear time frame, and scheduling events preferably and when possible, during normal working hours.
- respect each other's privacy (first part taken from: <https://www.thefeministclub.nl/coc/>).

Communication within this space is considered private, and each member is free to decide how much, or how little, they want to share. Do not share photos, screenshots, conversations or other information shared within the group with people outside of our community without the explicit consent of all involved. If you have received permission in the past, ask again; circumstances may have changed, and information may no longer be valid. Although our working schedules might vary, we respect our colleagues' privacy and personal boundaries, and do not expect communication or any other kind of response or reaction outside of their regular or communicated working hours.

- cultivate respectful interactions with one another and cherish an appreciative communication culture. We want to think through, develop, and support unfinished ideas and new projects. To do so, we could take 15 min. of each Jour Fixe to do a round of news, share what is currently going on with us, if we need support or input from other CDC members, and give/ask for advice.

The Appointment of a Trusted Person(s):

To preserve a positive working environment, we will appoint (in accordance with our future statute) a trusted person(s) to process incidents within our group if necessary (ideally from two different projects and hierarchy levels) to handle incidents within our group when necessary. Every incident will receive the appropriate attention and care necessary. Each incident that requires outside intervention will be escalated to an appropriate councillor. The role of the trusted person(s) is to be an awareness person for our various meetings, events, and projects to ensure that colleagues know there is someone to turn to in case of an incident. They will process complaints/queries internally first and evaluate how best to proceed. All interactions will be handled confidentially. The trusted person(s) will be trained for this role and have the appropriate resources to escalate an incident when appropriate. The chosen candidate(s) will devote 1 hour of working time per week to this role as prioritized task within their job fulfilments.

Potential Sanctions Mechanism (Internal):

It is important to explicitly define behaviour that will not be tolerated in CDC events. Acts of discrimination will result in appropriate sanctions. The following possible sanctions were informed by Association doing Science and Technology Studies (STS) in and through Germany:

In the extreme case where facts have been established in a fair manner (proper procedures within the group have been followed) that point to a member's behaviour/s considered unacceptable under this Code of Conduct, the trusted person(s) can determine reasonable sanctions that reflect the gravity of the offence/s. Possible sanctions may include one or a combination of the following:

- issuing a warning to cease the discriminatory or harassing behaviour and retaining a record of that warning in case of future violations.

- barring the member from participating in future CDC activities and events;

- notifying the member's home institution of the violation.

If behaviour/events/cases are so serious that they cannot be dealt with through this Code of Conduct, they will be referred to the established procedures within the university.

For whistle-blowers - Implementation of the Whistleblower Protection Act at Leuphana see

<https://www.leuphana.de/en/intranet/news/single-view/2023/08/29/implementation-of-the-whistleblower-protection-act-at-leuphana.html>

Officer for Whistleblower Protection: Thies Ove Plath

(See here on the German version of the website, Beauftragter für Hinweisgeberschutz)

<https://www.leuphana.de/einrichtungen/universitaetsverwaltung/delegierte-und-beauftragte.html>

More information exists in German only:

<https://www.leuphana.de/intranet/arbeitsgrundlagen/hinweisgeberschutz.html>

- Persons accused of research misconduct are given full details of the allegation(s) and are allowed a fair process for responding to allegations and presenting evidence.

- Action is taken against persons for whom an allegation of misconduct is upheld, which is proportionate to the severity of the violation.

The university is obliged to follow up on information regarding discrimination and violence and, if there is a suspicion or complaint, to take appropriate measures to clarify what happened. The Beschwerdestelle (complaints office) fulfills a central function according to § 13 AGG (Allgemeines

Gleichbehandlungsgesetz, engl. General Act on Equal Treatment). It is in the Legal Office.

Discriminatory and violent acts have consequences. The consequences depend on the relationship between the perpetrators and the university (i.e. whether they are external persons, students, civil servants or other employees). On the part of the university, informal and formal measures can be taken to react to

sexualized discrimination and violence. What kinds of sanctions are happening depend on the specifics of the case.

Informal measures include, for example, personal discussions with a trained person and requests to take part in training and education programs. Formal measures include, for example, an official interview, instruction, warning, transfer, exclusion, ban, de-registration, dismissal, disciplinary proceedings or criminal charges by the university management.

The German Criminal Code (Deutsches Strafgesetzbuch, dStGB) contains specific paragraphs that criminalise violations of the right to sexual self-determination. These include sexual assault and rape (§ 177). Coercion (§ 240), defamation (§ 185) and stalking (§ 238) are not a private matter either, but criminal offences. In the university context, sexual abuse of young people (§ 182) can also play a role in relation to students or apprentices under the age of 18.

Contacts and Resources at Leuphana and beyond if you are affected

For those who have experienced sexual discrimination and/or violence at Leuphana:

In [German](#) and [English](#)

What Can I Do If I Am Personally Affected at Leuphana?

In [German](#) and [English](#)

Against Sexual Harassment: Information on and Support at Leuphana:

In [German](#) and [English](#)

How Can I Raise Awareness in My Surroundings?

In [German](#) and [English](#)

Complaints office for employees under section 13 AGG:

This position is represented by Stephanie Verbeeth, Head of Professorial Services, Civil Servants and Legal Matters.

More general information on Gender and equality at Leuphana:

In [German](#) and [English](#)

Leuphana equal opportunities office:

A place to go if you have experienced or observed discrimination.

Kathrin van Riesen, Anja Thiem

<https://www.leuphana.de/en/institutions/office-for-equal-opportunities/contact.html>

Leuphana Faculty of Cultural Studies, equality work, decentralized equal opportunities team:

A place to go if you have experienced or observed discrimination.

<https://www.leuphana.de/en/institutions/faculty/humanities-social-sciences/equality-work.html>

Staff Council:

<https://www.leuphana.de/en/services/staff-council/contact.html>

Office for Equal Opportunities:

<https://www.leuphana.de/en/institutions/office-for-equal-opportunities.html>

Contact Ombudspersons for students, professors, teachers:

<https://www.leuphana.de/universitaet/organisation/ombudspersonen.html>

Leuphana's Ombudspersons helping to solve conflicts and problems: "The University places two Ombudspersons at the academic employees' disposal. Both work on a voluntary basis and independently and can refer contraventions of the Code of Ethics to the university's own ethics committee. They are the first point of contact for university members if there is a suspicion that a violation of the Code of Ethics has occurred."

Psychotherapeutic Counselling Lüneburg, Student Union East Lower Saxony, Alina Jankowski, Henner Janssen, Tel. 04131 - 7896327, <https://stw-on.de/en/1%C3%BCneburg/counselling/psychotherapeutic-counselling-centre-2-2>

Codes of Conduct Referenced:

Code of conduct of the Association doing Science and Technology Studies (STS) in and through Germany, 2024

Digital IDEAS Summer Insitute. University of Michigan. 2023.

Forum Gender & Spatial Transformation. ARL Hannover. 2024.

<https://stsing.org/the-stsing-e-v-code-of-conduct-annex>

<https://femedtech.net/code-of-conduct/>

<https://www.thefeministclub.nl/coc/>