**Code of Practice for the Interaction between
Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and Principal Investigators (PIs)
in the Cluster of Excellence "The Politics of Inequality"**

Preamble:

This document stipulates rights and responsibilities Early Career Researchers (ECRs) (all doctoral and post-doctoral researchers funded with support from the Excellence Cluster) have in relation to their supervisors/hosts (henceforth PIs) and the cluster community, as well as the responsibilities PIs have towards the ECRs they are supervising and/or hosting. It builds on and complements existing codices at the University of Konstanz, in particular the "Konstanz Code of Practice for Postdoctoral Researchers"[1] and the "Code of Practice for Doctoral Researchers at the University of Konstanz"[2] as well as the supervisory agreements between doctoral researchers and their supervisors in the context of the Graduate School for Behavioral and Social Sciences (GSBS). This code recognizes the fact that for ECRs, the working relationship between ECRs and PIs includes both aspects of scientific qualification and training as well as regular employment duties, in particular when positions are attached to projects. The code also recognizes the varying nature of employment positions of ECRs in the cluster (independent doctoral and post-doctoral researchers as well as project-related positions). The purpose of this code is to set guidelines for achieving a sustainable and acceptable balance between these different aspects and to create a positive working environment for ECRs, which centers on the notion of mutual respect and trust. PIs have the biggest influence to achieve this goal and thus need to be aware of their responsibilities when supervising or hosting ECRs.

Establishing a positive feedback culture

PIs provide regular feedback and guidance to the ECRs for their qualification work. It is expected that feedback meetings between the ECRs and their PI on the academic qualification work take place at least once per month and that both parties are prepared so that the meeting can be mutually beneficial. ECRs are encouraged to independently seek additional feedback they need to make progress with their qualification work from the primary host and dissertation committee (if applicable). The feedback should be made available within a reasonable amount of time. It is also encouraged that members of the cluster community from all levels seek and provide further feedback to each other.

Above and beyond feedback on their academic work, ECRs regularly meet with their PIs (at least once per year) for a more general career talk to discuss their working relationship, including, but also going beyond their academic work. For doctoral researchers, it is recommended to schedule this meeting in close proximity to the deadline of the annual GSBS Progress Report. PIs should establish additional career talks at the beginning and at the end of a working relationship with ECRs they supervise or host.[3] Both PIs and ECRs need to prepare for the general career talk in advance to ensure that valuable feedback can be provided and that all relevant aspects can be discussed in a constructive way.

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[1] https://www.uni-konstanz.de/en/research/research-career/konstanz-code/
[2] https://www.uni-konstanz.de/en/research/research-career/code-of-practice-for-doctoral-researchers-at-the-university-of-konstanz/
[3] A template for career talks is available at the cluster homepage and the management office.

Balance between qualification and project work

For ECRs employed on project positions, achieving a good balance between their individual qualification work (dissertation and habilitation (or equivalent)) and project work is crucial. While working on project-related work, PIs guarantee that ECRs have sufficient time to successfully complete their qualification work within the appropriate time windows (four years for dissertation, (up to) six years for habilitation (or equivalent) – in accordance with the Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz). When and if urgent project-related work dominates during certain periods, PIs should ensure that sufficient time is made available in the following to allow ECRs to move forward with their qualification work in consultation with the ECR. This also needs to be ensured for the reverse case of urgent tasks related to the ECRs qualification work. PIs, in consultation with the ECR, need to strategically design project-related work and academic output in a way that minimizes the discrepancy between project work and qualification work in order to allow ECRs to complete their qualification work while working on the project.

Integration into the academic community of the cluster, the university and beyond

The whole Cluster community is expected to participate regularly and actively in the cluster events (Cluster colloquium, methods café, roundtables, etc.) as well as events of the departments. PIs need to ensure that ECRs have enough time for these activities given their project and qualification work. ECRs are also expected to actively participate in and contribute to the working groups of their PIs as well as project groups (if applicable). Furthermore, regular in-person attendance of ECRs in the cluster office building is expected in line with the cluster's policy on home office work.[4]

ECRs have the opportunity to regularly participate in conferences, summer/winter schools and other academic trainings. ECRs are encouraged to consult on these points with their PI. In later career stages, ECRs have the opportunity to contribute to academic teaching and supervision (in coordination with the departments).[5]

Foundations of a good working relationship

The cluster strives to nurture a positive working environment based on mutual respect and trust. This implies a culture of respectful communication and transparency between and within the groups of ECRs and PIs. ECRs are regularly informed and included in decision-making processes of the cluster (via the ECR spokesperson(s)). ECRs (primarily via their spokesperson(s)) keep the cluster community informed about their cluster-related activities and potential conflicts in regular meetings between the ECRs and the Executive Board and in the Plenary meeting of the cluster.

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[4] This policy is available at the cluster homepage and the management office.
[5] Please refer to the cluster's policy on teaching for ECRs, available at the management office.