# Code of Conduct

ISTA aims for excellence in all its endeavors. We value respect, integrity, and recognition, as well as fairness and diversity on campus, and we strive to integrate these values into our behavior and practices. This code is a shared statement of our commitment to upholding the ethical, professional, and legal standards that we, in our role as ISTA employees, use as the basis for our daily and long-term interactions, actions, and decisions. They apply to all members of the ISTA community as we work towards the common goal of fostering the excellence and the reputation of the Institute.

**Mutual respect and recognition**

We form a collaborative and inclusive community where the pursuit of new ideas and high performance can thrive, and everybody's contributions are recognized. Our culture is built on honesty and trust: we value differences in approaches and views and communicate openly with each other, in a spirit of goodwill. We provide a welcoming and safe working environment free from discrimination and harassment. We do not tolerate any form of behavior or expression that violates the dignity of a member of our community.

**Diversity and inclusion**

ISTA cherishes diversity in personalities, backgrounds, experiences, and thoughts among all our employees. Diversity creates a workplace that enables employees to gain new ideas and insights, and that will take science into exciting new directions.

ISTA is committed to equal opportunities and social equity, regardless of age, gender (identity), ethnicity, race, social/cultural background, creed, religion, sexual orientation, and physical/cognitive abilities.

ISTA encourages its employees to exercise their right of freedom of thought, conscience, and faith as long as they don’t chide, harass, or proselytize others, or lead people to mistake their private opinions, beliefs, and expressions for ISTA’s views.

**Responsible leadership**

As supervisors and senior colleagues we cultivate talent and foster careers. We are aware of the impact that our behaviors, words, and decisions may have on others. We understand leadership and seniority as a supportive tool for accomplishing common goals and ambitions, whereby we recognize, challenge, and encourage the strengths and abilities of the other. In our daily work we take responsibility for the well-being and safety of our co-workers, subordinates, and visitors and take all reasonably possible precautionary measures against accidents and health risks.

**Ethical and responsible conduct of research**

ISTA is committed to ensure the quality of research according to the highest international academic standards. As scientists and support staff engaged in research, we give appropriate consideration to research ethics and good scientific practice in planning and performing scientific research, we conduct research with integrity and intellectual honesty at all times, and we strive to avoid or minimize potential risks of harm for humans and the environment. As research group leaders we are role models, creating a research environment that teaches junior researchers to adhere to the principles of research integrity. We offer guidance and training to our group members to properly develop and structure their research activities. We do not tolerate any form of scientific misconduct and support the principles of open science and open data.

**Compliance with Institute policies and law**

Our activities are conducted in conformance with all legal requirements. All members of the ISTA community act in conformance with external as well as internal laws, policies, and guidelines and, accordingly, are obliged to be familiar with all rules and regulations that bear on their areas of responsibility. In case of doubt, we seek clarification on a policy or guideline that seems to be unclear, outdated, or at odds with the Institute's objectives.

**Disclosure and mitigation of conflicts of interest**

We act in the best interest of ISTA, its reputation, and its missions of research excellence and the training of young scientists in all our interactions with external parties. We strive to avoid any activities that are, in any way, in conflict with or harmful to the interests of the Institute or may pose a risk for its reputation. We do not use our position at ISTA for personal advantage or gain. Our funds, resources, and the name ISTA is not used to pursue any private matter or interest. All hiring and promotion decisions and all interactions with research collaborators, suppliers, and other business partners are based on quality criteria. The Institute does not support nepotism nor discriminate against existing relations. The Institute strives to avoid all conflicts of interest; to this end all members of the ISTA community disclose any potential conflict in an appropriate and timely manner. This disclosure requirement includes romantic relationships between employees and their supervisors.

**Accountability and appropriate use of resources**

To earn public trust and our stakeholders' confidence in the integrity of ISTA, we hold ourselves accountable through regular external evaluations and reviews, using the standard yardsticks of the international scientific community. We use the public and private funds entrusted to us in an effective manner, adhering to the principles of sound financial management. We provide appropriate structures to enable efficient work processes for all involved. We strive to keep all financial records and other documents, whether for internal or external use, accurate, clear, and complete. We share space, major scientific equipment, and technical services whenever feasible. Any unused capacities or facilities are made available, at cost, to other scientists in Austria and abroad. ISTA is committed to benefit financially from its intellectual property where possible, also as a means to preserve public funds.

**Reporting violations and interpretation rules**

Any breach of this code is investigated in an appropriate way, and disciplinary action may be taken. The Institute protects good-faith whistle-blower reporting as well as the rights of incriminated persons. For this purpose, ISTA will set up internal structures and procedures for reporting violations and resolving conflicts. This code is an internal document and subject exclusively to the interpretation of ISTA; no rights of third parties can be derived from it.