

**Principles for good teamwork and
leadership at the Leibniz Centre for
Tropical Marine Research (ZMT)**

Principles for good teamwork and leadership

ZMT follows the mission to protect and sustainably use tropical coastal ecosystems with respect to the specific challenges caused by global environmental change and the opportunities that can result from sustainability strategies. The mission of ZMT requires a high degree of interdisciplinarity to combine expertise and internationality in terms of cooperation regions and mobility with partner institutions and guests. ZMT is aware of its unique role in research, capacity development, and knowledge exchange and thrives on the high motivation of its employees and the cooperation in international networks.

ZMT actively faces new challenges through digitalisation, flexible and mobile work, constant need for agility and the necessary organisation of unexpected events. In more than 30 years of its existence, the world of work has changed and this won't stop in the future. During this period, ZMT has grown considerably and needs a modern management culture for different management levels and functions.

Therefore, **mutual respect and trust, space for self-organisation as well as creativity, willingness to learn and to change** are guiding principles of work at ZMT. We use and strengthen **participative and communicative forms of cooperation and decision-making processes**. In a culture of diversity, we value different patterns of thinking, feeling and acting as a chance to achieve our mission. We are open to suggestions and changes that help us to better fulfil the ZMT mission. Our inclusive work attitude helps all of us to welcome ZMT newcomers during their orientation phase, especially from different socio-cultural backgrounds.

The principles represent our common understanding of how we all as members of the ZMT community, irrespective of our particular function, envisage good teamwork and how we want to practise this in our day-to-day work. Furthermore, they also define the expectations and requirements for all staff in research, science enabling units, science management and infrastructural units with their special responsibility for fulfilling the ambitious tasks of ZMT. They set quality standards which are used by ZMT to assess itself on a regular basis, e.g. with the help of employee surveys. These principles reflect discussions on good leadership and cooperation, e.g. at the level of the Leibniz Association¹.

Principle 1: Teamwork and appreciation

We all work together in a spirit of responsibility and trust; we are reliable and loyal. Mutual respect, appreciation, empathy, attentiveness and tolerance are the natural basis for teamwork and leadership. We jointly support **non-discriminatory treatment**, regardless of age, gender, disability, chronic disease, ethnic origin, sexual orientation and identity, religion or philosophy of life. We all determinedly oppose any form of discrimination.

¹ Cf. Guiding Principles for our Actions in the Leibniz Association, Adopted by the General Assembly of the Leibniz Association on 28 November 2019: https://www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Bilder_und_Downloads/%C3%9Cber_uns/Integrit%C3%A4t/Guiding_Principles_for_our_Actions.pdf

Principles for good teamwork and leadership

Our behaviour is characterised by mutual support and the willingness to take and to share responsibility. We motivate each other to participate in thinking and shaping. We address conflicts actively and fairly, seek constructive solutions together at an early stage and make use of existing consultation services.

We as leaders assume our special responsibility in this regard.

Principle 2: Goal and result orientation

We all align our work with the goals that result from our mission, the strategic goals defined in the Programme Areas, and by the membership in the Leibniz Association. **We fulfil our tasks effectively, efficiently, appropriately and on time, making full use of our creative leeway.** We use the opportunities of **digitalisation** to simplify processes. We are creative and open in finding appropriate and adequate solutions. **The long-term guiding principle is to examine and if necessary transform current patterns of action so that we can fulfil the ZMT mission.**

Instead of micromanagement, **we as leaders** create clarity about setting goals and foci, performance priorities and requirements, reporting obligations, and accountability for results. In consultation with the management and other leadership levels, we create time corridors through **careful planning, set priorities, and also clear subordinated priorities in times of high pressure.**

Principle 3: Organisation, delegation, responsibility

We all take responsibility. We are highly aware of our role and our individual contribution to the ZMT mission and the fulfilment of our respective tasks. We assume responsibility for our tasks, decisions, actions and their consequences. Besides our duties, we also know our rights and processes for their implementation.

As leaders, we delegate responsibility, supervise the completion of tasks and coordinate individual work. As part of this, we strengthen **self-organisation of teams** and personal responsibility of staff members. We create space for trying out new approaches and ideas, also as an essential element of agile working and active promotion of young talents. We motivate and encourage our staff members by giving them responsibility, autonomous creative opportunities and authority. We involve them in planning procedures and decision-making. This includes, for example, the provision of time corridors and the opportunity to participate in discussions. We ensure a **balanced and adequate distribution of responsibilities and tasks** in our working units and assign tasks to individuals or teams in a clear and transparent manner. We take into account the different states of knowledge and skills, as well as experiences, diverse intercultural backgrounds, and interests of staff and we offer support to meet their needs at each stage of their respective working lives.

Principle 4: Information and communication

We all use the advantages of flexible and mobile work as well as innovative forms

Principles for good teamwork and leadership

and methods of working, such as agile working for suitable tasks. Regular, clear and reliable agreements within the team on work organisation are important for us, particularly in case of mobile working with flexible time and location. In this context, we respect ZMT requirements and a fair balance of interests among each other.

We provide information in a transparent, appropriate and timely manner. We all contribute to **efficient information sharing** and communicate in an open, clear and appropriate way with each other. We promote the exchange of information within and between working units and ensure knowledge transfer in accordance with our competences and areas of responsibility. We are approachable for our colleagues. We make appropriate use of the various possibilities of personal and digital communication according to the situation. **E-mails are short and to the point;** any communication disruptions are preferably settled in direct exchange. With regular collegial exchange at eye level, we promote a positive working atmosphere.

As leaders, we provide timely, comprehensive and cross-hierarchical information regarding agreed goals, tasks and the status of work. We communicate and explain decisions to the team in a timely and transparent manner. We work on good planning to improve the management of peaks.

Principle 5: Feedback and learning from failure

Giving and accepting feedback is something we all take for granted; a critical feedback is considered as an opportunity to learn, to amend processes, and to develop professionally. We cultivate a mutual constructive feedback and a culture of failure-friendliness between leaders and staff – across hierarchical level - from top to bottom, but also from bottom to top. It is more important to learn from any failure than trying to avoid it at all costs.

We provide feedback in the form of praise or constructive criticism in relation to expectations and agreed goals that we have made clear in advance, or in relation to specific work results or situations. Any criticism within the context of academic supervision and quality control is expressed objectively, with suggestions for improvement and recognition of good approaches; such criticism serves to further the development of younger colleagues. We acknowledge good performance and work results; we address problems at an early stage and develop possible solutions together. We express criticism in an objective, constructive and timely manner. We take criticism and suggestions as an opportunity for new perspectives and further development. We encourage personal initiative. Structural weaknesses are discussed objectively and examined appropriately.

Principle 6: Personnel development / equal opportunities

We deal openly with **mistakes**, use them as an opportunity to learn new lessons and to maintain the high-quality standards of our work results. In cases of agile working and own initiative, we also recognise mistakes as potential for development.

Principles for good teamwork and leadership

We are all committed to diversity, equal opportunities and equal participation in professional development. For this purpose, we take joint responsibility, we are committed to the concept of lifelong learning and we support the work of all colleagues. We regularly conduct cooperation and staff development meetings and keep on developing them over time. We use offers of further education and training to systematically develop our leadership skills in methodological and social respect. We use the opportunities to face new challenges and to change.

As leaders, we actively promote team development, support the professional development of our staff according to their potential with suitable personnel development measures, feedback on new tasks and professional skills development. Leadership is goal and content oriented, based on partnership and appropriate to the situation. We see our culture in this regard as an opportunity to apply and further develop what we have learnt in our own career, also when returning from higher management positions.

Principle 7: Compatibility of work and family life, care and individual life situations

We all consistently strive to realise the goals of the audit Compatibility of Work, Family Life, and Care (berufundfamilie). We consider family and individual concerns in our daily work and when formulating priorities. We ensure a fair balance of interests among staff members with and without family commitments. For this purpose, we make agreements within the team.

As leaders, we set an example by using suitable balance measures ourselves when our individual circumstances so require. We are interested in questions of compatibility and any problems our team members may have and support them in finding solutions by using the offers available.

Principle 8: Health at work

We all contribute to a positive, open and healthy working environment. Physical and mental health is important to us. We watch out for any work-related stress and actively address this issue. We participate in measures for occupational health management, measures to increase mental resilience, self-management and we use the possibilities of ergonomic workplace design at ZMT and at remote workplaces.

As leaders, we understand that our leadership behaviour can have an impact on the

Principle 9: Sustainable work and research

health of our employees. For this reason, we ensure a high level of job satisfaction in our organisational units through good leadership and a sense of empathy.

We recognise the consequences resulting from overuse of natural resources in our

Principles for good teamwork and leadership

daily work and contribute to solutions towards climate neutrality and lowering footprints on water and materials. We constantly observe our habits to become more nature-positive, e.g. through reduced printing, waste avoidance, low consumption of energy, and sustainable mobility patterns. We practice a sustainable and healthy food approach. Nevertheless, we know that our work itself also requires and consumes resources, in particular through international travel. Through our behaviour and planning, we strive to minimise this consumption of resources and make our research sustainable.

As leaders, we actively monitor and, wherever possible, reduce the environmental impact of our daily work and research activities.

Instruments for implementation and contact information

At ZMT and in overarching structures (Leibniz Association, DFG), there are instruments available to facilitate the implementation of good teamwork and leadership, and to provide support in case of conflict. All members of the ZMT community are invited to use and co-shape these instruments and reach out for support whenever needed.

- The **annual talks** between staff members and their line managers provide the opportunity for both sides to actively shape a working relationship and culture in line with principles of good cooperation and good leadership. Detailed information is available on the Alfresco site [Annual Talks](#). There are training programmes open to ZMT members on topics related to leadership, teamwork etc. An overview of offers by the Leibniz Leadership Academy can be found [here](#).
Contact person on advanced training is the ZMT Academy for scientists and Ulrike Schumann for science enabling staff.
- The **Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP)** constitutes an important instrument naming concrete measures for fostering Gender Equality at ZMT. It thereby mirrors [German Federal Legal Standards \(e.g. the General Act on Equal Treatment \[Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz \(AGG\)\]\)](#) as well as equality standards of the Leibniz Association and the DFG.
Contact person: Women's Representatives
- As part of the (re-)auditing process berufundfamilie, ZMT has been working on strengthening the compatibility of work and family life since 2018. The last re-auditing process took place in spring 2024.
- By signing the [Diversity Charta](#) in May 2022, ZMT has underlined its commitment to be an appreciative and prejudice-free working environment that values people and their talents – regardless of age, ethnic or cultural origin and nationality, gender and gender identity, physical and mental abilities, religion and belief, sexual orientation and identity, social background.
- With regard to **good scientific practice**, the ZMT Ombudspersons are key actors.

Principles for good teamwork and leadership

Their work is based on the [ZMT guideline for ensuring Good Scientific Practice](#) and connected to the [Leibniz structures](#) on the topic, as well as guidelines established at the level of the [DFG](#).

Contact: [Ombudsperson](#)

- For the resolution of conflicts not (primarily) related to questions of good scientific practice, there is the external [Leibniz Advice Centre for Conflict Guidance and Prevention](#) available to all members of a Leibniz institute.
- In co-shaping an institutional structure and culture of good cooperation and leadership, the [works council](#) plays an important role.

Contact: [Works Council](#)

- In the field of health at work, there are measures in place, including aspects of **occupational safety** and a **company integration management** (Betriebliches Eingliederungsmanagement (BEM))

- **Contact:** [BEM](#)



☺ ...and hard work...