

Press release

Findings of the administrative investigation at the former Institute for Astronomy

ETH Zurich opens dismissal proceedings

Zurich, 31 October 2018

ETH Zurich is opening dismissal proceedings against a professor at the former Institute for Astronomy. This decision is based on the comprehensive administrative investigation commissioned by the ETH Executive Board a year ago.

Based on the findings of the [administrative investigation](#) opened on 25 October 2017 and concluded in October 2018, the President of ETH Zurich is now launching dismissal proceedings. The administrative investigation performed by an independent external expert has highlighted serious professional misconduct over an extended period. The investigator is recommending the termination of the employment relationship. To this end, a special committee is being set up to review whether dismissal is appropriate, as prescribed by [Art. 13 para. 2](#) of the Professors' Ordinance (see info box on next page).

"The final report confirms this is a case of unacceptable behaviour which we do not tolerate," comments ETH President Lino Guzzella. But at the same time, he stresses that misconduct is clearly the exception, not the rule: "Virtually every single ETH Zurich professor – over 500 of them – carries out their duties with integrity, day in, day out."

The independent investigator also provided, as instructed, a number of recommendations to improve the protection of doctoral students and to optimise the supervision provided. These recommendations will be incorporated into the "Management" project already under way. Measures are currently being drawn up within the six subprojects involved – Early detection, Appointments, Onboarding of professors, Doctorate, Postdoctorate and Procedure for reporting misconduct – and some of them have already been implemented.

A case manager has been appointed, for example, to coordinate the handling of ongoing investigations. There are now three, rather than two, ombudspersons and their appointment is more independent because the candidates are proposed by the University Assembly. A year ago, the number of

trusted intermediaries was increased from one to two in order to assure good scientific practice. The university will improve the supervision offered to doctoral students, partly through regular on-site meetings and consistent implementation of planned control mechanisms, such as a research plan. There are currently internal discussions about the introduction of personal development plans and a system of multiple supervision for doctoral students. During the appointment process, more emphasis will be placed in future on the candidate's management skills. New onboarding strategies will ensure that incoming professors are familiarised with the values and practices of ETH Zurich. Additional measures are being prepared and will be continuously introduced.

The investigator's final report can only be published once the entire proceedings have been concluded.

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Dismissal proceedings pursuant to the ETH Professors' Ordinance

Before making an application to the appointing authority, the ETH Board, the President of ETH establishes a committee to review whether a dismissal is appropriate and to make a recommendation on the matter. The ETH President then submits this recommendation, along with his own application, for the ETH Board to reach a decision. The Executive Board appoints three members of the committee itself, and also asks the Lecturers' Conference (KdL) to propose three members. Three members of the committee must be external appointments.