



HCSS Ethical Standards

HCSS is a knowledge institute that conducts independent research. Our goal is to offer fact-based analysis of the challenges that our societies face in order to inform public discourse, public and private strategic decision making and contribute to international and national security in accordance with liberal democratic values. We typically conduct our research at the intersection of scientific research and strategic policy for governments, international organisations, and NGOs. We also offer analytical support to inform private sector strategic planning processes. Our work is funded through contract research and through research grants and we also develop our own initiatives.

Our fact-based analysis is intended to generate strategy and policy relevant insights that inform real world decisions. To further this cause, we conduct both basic and applied research, we host public and closed-door events, and we convene and engage with a wide range of stakeholders to further our own thinking and to inform and stimulate debate on the pressing issues of our time. We are not linked to any political party nor beholden to any external corporate or national interests.

HCSS adheres to the ethical principles of independence, accountability, transparency and research integrity. Although other ethical principles may apply, these four principles are relevant for our knowledge institute, given our core mission and activities. The principles are clarified in terms of the standards that HCSS upholds and specified by practices that HCSS adheres to, which is subject to independent external audit. The principles, standards and practices are spelled out below.

Principles	Standards	Practices
Independence	HCSS operates independently and autonomously, without undue influence and bias.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mission adherence. HCSS is a knowledge institute that conducts independent research. We offer clients impartial and unbiased strategic analysis. Our mission is clear, retrievable for the general public, and meaningfully communicated to new clients.• Factual research. Our products of strategic insight are data-driven, informed by the latest academic literature, and factually based on the premise that, no matter what interests are at play, the added value of strategic analysis lies in providing a truthful and objective perspective.• Assuring impartiality. Research questions are formulated neutrally and decisions on the content and methodology are the responsibility of HCSS alone. In case of contract research, clients have the right to refuse publication of commissioned research reports, but they do not have a say in the substance of the research



		<p>outcomes themselves. For any research product that we publish, the source of funding is always clearly indicated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public credibility. HCSS staff actively contribute to the public sphere, including through publications of its own and in reputable professional and academic journals, as well as contributions to news media and other media outlets, establishing the role of HCSS as an independent actor.
Accountability	<p>The HCSS management team is accountable for the organisation's actions, decisions, and allocation of resources. HCSS staff are accountable for their own actions and are committed to uphold ethical standards on behalf of HCSS.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarifying responsibilities. The organisational structure of HCSS is clearly defined, including the roles and responsibilities for staff, subject matter experts, board members and those with other types of affiliation.• Auditing. On request by the client, HCSS' financial reports are audited by an independent controller.• Accountable resources. HCSS keeps track of how funds are attributed and spent, and, concerning individual commissions and project assignments, can account for general expenditures and resource allocations towards clients.• Monitoring performance. At least once every two years HCSS reviews the clients' satisfaction in order to assess, learn and strengthen the organisation's performance and integrity. A summary of the results is made publicly available.
Transparency	<p>HCSS is transparent about its activities, financial resources, and potential conflicts of interest, as far as this openness does not harm the public interest or violates ethically validated non-disclosure agreements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transparent organisation. The type of organisation and the organisational structure of HCSS are clear and easily retrievable. It is fully disclosed and publicly retrievable who the HCSS shareholders are, who have a seat in the management team, the advisory board, and who are accountable for the organisation's actions, duties and financial situation.• Transparent finances. HCSS publishes annual reports, profits and financial statements, or, when opting for partial confidentiality, provides a verifiable motivation reviewed by the external audit for keeping details, clauses or arrangements hidden from publication, which may include assignments that involve national security, corporate confidentiality, through ethically validated non-disclosure agreements, which are subject to external editing.• Appointments. New job vacancies and appointments are communicated publicly. Recruitment and selection procedures are transparent, i.e. the functional requirements are clear and reasons for appointment are transparent.• Non-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion. HCSS subscribes to the principle of non-discrimination. We are dedicated to achieving excellence, which extends to creating an inclusive environment that values individual contributions, promotes fairness, and provides opportunities for all. We value qualifications and skills and do



		<p>not discriminate on basis of personal characteristics like race, religion, gender, age, disability, and sexual orientation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preventing conflicts of interest. HCSS monitors (potential) conflicts of interest or (potential) problematic affiliations among staff and/or board members, and communicates how these are to be resolved, or what active measures are taken to disentangle overlapping responsibilities.• Reasonable confidentiality. In principle, HCSS sources of funding are disclosed. Sometimes, because of national security or company-confidentiality reasons, clients or contracts cannot be publicly disclosed. However, the sources of funding of all publicly available research products are always disclosed.
Research integrity	HCSS professionals conduct research and present findings with integrity and accuracy. They collect, store and process data with adherence to academic norms and values of objectivity and serve the public interest by sharing knowledge whenever possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assuring objectivity. HCSS uncompromisingly strives for unbiased analysis. As a standard, analysts include diverse perspectives and sources of information. Expert knowledge is gained from proven authoritative professionals, policymakers or academics in that particular field.• Fostering multi-disciplinarity. In principle, all of HCSS' research staff, including members of the management team, participate in multiple research projects in order to prevent functional compartmentalisation and monodisciplinary perspectives. Each project is supervised by a strategic analyst that has demonstrable research experience and affinity with the subject matter.• Data protection and research standards. Researchers adhere to academic research standards, including the use of responsible data collection and storage protocols, reliable data, transparent and replicable analytical methods and techniques, and appropriate referencing. Respect for people's privacy and concern for a person's well-being and protection are always taken into account when collecting, processing and publishing data in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Data is treated confidentially when the necessary protection of sources for preventing harm overrides the benefit of contributing to public accessibility.• Quality assurance (QA). To guarantee the quality of our services, an internal or external quality monitor person is added to the research teams. The QA consists, among other things, of making sure that the HCSS research standards are followed and includes an interim and final product peer review.• Fostering exchange. HCSS fosters partnerships and collaborations to enhance research quality and impact, for example by regularly sharing research data and



		findings with other organisations and academia and engaging in joint research projects.
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