

Code of Ethics for Researchers

Preamble

Science is a collective endeavor comprising scientific research—understood as the systematic pursuit of knowledge and understanding through the acquisition of information, reflection, observation, and experimentation—and the education of new generations of researchers. Regardless of the methodological specifics of individual scientific disciplines or the organizational conditions under which research and education are conducted, science can progress thanks to researchers' commitment to ethical ideals and values, such as respect for human dignity, freedom, equality, honesty, truthfulness, integrity, and fulfilling commitments. These ideals and values shape the choice of research subjects, the formulation of hypotheses and theories, the collection of data, and the application of research methods. Researchers' dedication to these ethical ideals and values, as well as the organizational and institutional solutions based on them, protects their independence from pressures by research funders and ideological, economic, or political interest groups.

Maintaining high standards in science and the fair assessment of scientific achievements are crucial not only for the integrity of science but also for its social credibility and recognition. Ensuring the reliability of scientific activities and their outcomes and resisting undue pressures fosters public trust in scientists, whose primary calling is the pursuit of knowledge and understanding which should guide their research endeavors.

Chapter I. Values and Ethical Principles of Scientific Work

§ 1.

Maintaining the integrity and credibility of science is the responsibility of representatives of all scientific disciplines. Adherence to the underlying principles and values must be required of all researchers and institutions involved in conducting research, funding scientific activities, disseminating, presenting, and publishing research results, implementing findings, as well as organizing scientific life, both in their mutual relations and in interactions with the external environment.

§ 2.

Fundamental values and principles of scientific work include:

1. Integrity in presenting the objectives and intentions of planned or ongoing research, methods and procedures, interpretation of results, and communicating potential risks and justified expectations regarding benefits and applications of the results.
2. Honesty in conducting research, critical analysis of results, attention to detail, and diligence in presenting research findings.
3. Objectivity, i.e. basing interpretations and conclusions on reasoning that considers verifiable data from other researchers in the same field.
4. Independence from political, ideological, worldview, or economic pressures, as well as from the influence of entities commissioning research or expertise.
5. Openness in discussions with other researchers about one's research, including through publishing results, education, and reliable dissemination of knowledge to society.

6. Transparency in research documentation, ensuring data accessibility after publication.
7. Responsibility toward research participants and subjects; research involving humans or animals should only be conducted if it is the only way to obtain knowledge of significant social value, always respecting human dignity and other living beings, and with the approval of an appropriate ethics committee.
8. Responsibility for the socio-economic and environmental implications of scientific conclusions.
9. Impartiality, honesty, and integrity in evaluating the work of other researchers, reviewing, and recognizing their scientific achievements, including proper citation and attribution.
10. Avoidance of exploiting one's scientific authority in statements outside one's area of expertise.
11. Courage in opposing views contrary to current scientific knowledge and practices inconsistent with the principles of scientific integrity.
12. Commitment to future generations of scientists, manifested in respecting and fairly treating colleagues, supporting those seeking scientific advancement, and introducing them to the ethical principles and standards of research integrity.
13. Avoidance of exploiting hierarchical relationships, such as through mobbing, discrimination, or sexual harassment, to gain undue personal or professional benefits.

Chapter II. Best Practices in Scientific Research

§ 3.

Best practices in scientific research encompass detailed guidelines for conducting, presenting, and evaluating research and its results in accordance with the ethical values and principles of scientific work.

§ 4.

The responsibility for promoting, disseminating, and applying best research practices lies with the scientific community as a whole, as well as with scientific institutions and governmental and non-governmental agencies operating in the field of science. Research sponsors and academic publishers are also obligated to promote best practices in scientific research.

Section 1. Research Data Management

§ 5.

All original source data, i.e. primary research results that form the basis of scientific conclusions, as well as samples or materials obtained from research, must be documented and archived in a manner that prevents manipulation and ensures accessibility after publication for a period appropriate to the discipline.

§ 6.

Access to research data should be as open as possible, with restrictions only where necessary; where applicable, this should comply with the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) standard. Concealing research data or results is permitted only in cases provided by law or justified by the interests of the research sponsor or employer.

§ 7.

Data, metadata, protocols, code, software, and other research materials are valid and citable research outputs. Researchers and institutions conducting research are obligated to provide transparent information on how to access and obtain permission to use these materials.

§ 8.

Researchers and institutions conducting research must ensure that agreements concerning research results include fair and ethical provisions for their use and protection, respecting intellectual property rights.

§ 9.

Researchers and institutions conducting research involving humans must protect personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). They must inform research participants about the type and scope of collected data, its use, storage duration, and principles for reuse, sharing, and deletion.

Section 2. Conducting Scientific Research

§ 10.

All empirical research should be preceded by an analysis of associated risks and the effects of research findings on individuals, society, or the environment.

§ 11.

Research objectives should be realistic and achievable according to the standards of the given discipline. When seeking research funding, objectives should be realistic, and every effort must be made to achieve them with integrity.

§ 12.

Research involving humans must respect human dignity and protect the autonomy of each participant, ensuring voluntary participation.

§ 13.

Research involving humans is permissible only with informed consent from participants (or their legal representatives), respecting their right to withdraw consent at any time without negative consequences. For minors, assent appropriate to their age and maturity must be obtained.

§ 14.

Living organisms, the natural environment, and cultural artifacts studied in research must be treated with appropriate respect and care.

§ 15.

No risks to the health and safety of collaborators or unrelated individuals should arise from research activities.

§ 16.

The use of artificial intelligence tools in research requires clear disclosure in reports or publications, distinguishing between independently produced material and results generated with these tools. Researchers are responsible for selecting appropriate tools and ensuring that their use complies with intellectual property, data protection, and ethical principles.

§ 17.

Researchers must responsibly and efficiently manage research funds and provide accurate accounting.

§ 18.

Research sponsors or funders should be informed of researchers' ethical and legal obligations and any resulting limitations.

§ 19.

Researchers must notify their employer if research results indicate potential risks to human or animal health or the environment.

Section 3. Authorship and Publication

§ 20.

Researchers are obliged to publish the results of their work. Published works should be reliable, transparent, and precise, including a clear description of the research methods and instruments used (e.g., external services or artificial intelligence tools) to enable replication by other researchers.

§ 21.

Researchers must strictly adhere to intellectual property laws.

§ 22.

An author or co-author of a publication is a person who simultaneously fulfills all three of the following conditions:

1. Made a significant contribution to the conception or design of the research project or collected, analyzed, or interpreted data obtained during the study;
2. Drafted or substantially contributed to the writing of the initial version of the research paper or critically reviewed its intellectual content;
3. Approved the final version of the manuscript submitted for publication.

§ 23.

Providing funding, access to equipment, training in its use, or data collection without substantive involvement does not warrant authorship of a scientific achievement or publication. Holding a managerial position in a scientific institution or its subdivisions does not justify claiming co-authorship of publications produced by subordinates.

§ 24.

All co-authors are collectively responsible for the reliability of the research and publication, as well as for adherence to ethical standards in conducting research and assigning authorship unless they explicitly agree otherwise (e.g., assuming responsibility only for specific parts of the research within their specialization). It is recommended to specify the nature of each author's contribution in the affiliations.

§ 25.

If artificial intelligence tools are used in preparing a publication or part of it (e.g., summaries), authors must include an appropriate statement in consultation with the journal or publisher. The use of artificial intelligence tools is permissible only if intellectual property rights are respected.

§ 26.

Whenever possible, a co-authored publication intended to support applications for academic degrees or titles should include a clearly delineated, independently developed section or be structured to enable an evaluation of each co-author's precise contribution.

§ 27.

The order of authors' names in publications should follow the conventions of the given scientific discipline and be agreed upon by all co-authors. The intellectual contributions of non-authors who have significantly influenced the research should be appropriately acknowledged.

§ 28.

Republishing the same work (or substantial parts of it) is permissible only with the consent of all co-authors and the editorial board of the journal or publisher where the work was originally published. The original publication's bibliographic data must be cited.

§ 29.

Unjustified expansion of publication records by repeatedly documenting the same scientific achievement under different titles or fragmenting research that could be presented in a single work into multiple publications is unacceptable. Related works with significant content overlap should be considered a single item in the author's portfolio.

§ 30.

The proper citation of other authors' works in publications must be strictly observed. Unwarranted self-citation or citing works that are not substantively related to the publication's content should be avoided.

§ 31.

Acknowledgment of funding and other forms of support must be appropriately noted.

Section 4. Mentorship of Early-Career Researchers and Students

§ 32.

Researchers serving as educators must treat students with respect and as equal partners.

§ 33.

Supervision of individuals preparing theses or dissertations should be entrusted to competent and qualified individuals or committees designated by the institution authorized to conduct such education.

§ 34.

Researchers supervising early-career researchers must possess the necessary skills to support research tasks and demonstrate ethical integrity in fostering respectful interpersonal relationships consistent with the values and principles of scientific ethics.

§ 35.

Supervisors are obligated to diligently fulfill their duties, ensuring that the research conducted under their guidance meets scientific standards and that the resulting work does not include unauthorized use of others' work. Supervisors share responsibility for any violations of intellectual property rights or ethical principles by those under their mentorship.

§ 36.

A supervisor must not exploit for personal gain their knowledge, position, or advantage over individuals preparing theses or dissertations. Supervisors should adhere to best practices in their research field, avoid conflicts of interest, and base their guidance on their expertise and experience.

§ 37.

A supervisor should exemplify ethical conduct in science and ensure that the person under their supervision is familiar with the ethical values and principles of scientific research.

§ 38.

Supervision of a thesis or dissertation does not grant co-authorship of scientific works or publications authored by the supervised individual.

Section 5. Relationships with Society

§ 39.

Public statements by researchers outside professional forums should be grounded in respect for scientific methods, argument exchange, and fact analysis, and reflect respect for differing opinions.

§ 40.

Exaggerating the significance of research results or their practical applications is unethical.

§ 41.

As citizens or members of society, researchers should speak publicly on matters of public concern, especially those within their scientific expertise.

Section 6. Conflicts of Interest

§ 42.

A researcher faces a conflict of interest when personal relationships, social roles, financial dependencies, institutional affiliations, or non-professional commitments risk compromising critical, impartial, and objective decision-making in research activities or professional responsibilities.

§ 43.

Typical activities involving potential conflicts of interest include evaluating students, doctoral candidates, or researchers; reviewing academic achievements in hiring or promotion procedures; reviewing publications; assessing research projects; allocating research funds; or collaborating with external entities.

§ 44.

Researchers must recuse themselves from activities where a conflict of interest arises and notify the relevant entity. If recusal is impossible, they should disclose the conflict to all concerned parties.

§ 45.

Researchers should annually submit conflict of interest declarations to their employer and follow any guidance regarding necessary adjustments.

Chapter III.

Scientific Misconduct

Section 1. Severe Violations of Research Ethics

§ 46.

Severe violations of research ethics include actions undermining the essence of scientific research—systematic inquiry, reflection, observation, and experimentation. Examples include:

1. Fabricating research results, i.e. including data in research documentation or publications that were not obtained through research;
2. Falsifying research results, i.e. modifying or omitting obtained data to support specific conclusions or to prevent questioning those conclusions;
3. Plagiarism, i.e. misappropriating intellectual contributions by copying, paraphrasing, or reproducing another's work (in part or in whole) without crediting the source or author, and presenting it as one's own.

§ 47.

The place or form of severe violations of research ethics (e.g., research funding applications, reviews, presentations, expert opinions, scientific or popular publications, press statements, teaching activities, etc.) does not alter the nature or severity of these violations.

Section 2. Other Violations of Research Ethics

§ 48.

Initiating, conducting, or tolerating actions that undermine the integrity of the research process or the publication of its results. Such actions include, but are not limited to:

1. Succumbing to or facilitating the influence of research sponsors, opinion centers, or political entities on the outcome of the research process;
2. Misleading use of statistical data;

3. Unjustified non-disclosure of data or research results (concealing research data or results requires providing justification);
4. Including individuals as authors or co-authors of publications who do not meet the criteria for authorship;
5. Selective, inaccurate, or misleading citation of others' works;
6. Unwarranted and substantive extension of a publication's bibliography;
7. Concealing the use of artificial intelligence or automated tools in the creation or development of publications;
8. Establishing, supporting, or knowingly collaborating with journals or publishers that undermine the quality of scientific research and the integrity of publications (so-called predatory journals and publishers);
9. Republishing (in significant part or in whole) one's previously published work, including translations, without citing the original publication and its bibliographic details (self-plagiarism);
10. Fragmenting one's research results into smaller parts to artificially increase the number of scientific publications;
11. Misrepresenting research achievements, data, or the role of others (e.g., students, doctoral candidates, or collaborators) in scientific research or in the preparation of publications.

§ 49.

Initiating, conducting, or tolerating actions aimed at negatively influencing relationships between researchers or their careers and professional advancement. Such actions include, but are not limited to:

1. Harassment, humiliation, or discrimination of others or collaborators;
2. Exploiting hierarchical relationships to encourage breaches of research integrity or to advance one's career;
3. Deliberately obstructing the work of other researchers or hindering their development or career advancement;
4. Preparing unfair reviews of theses or dissertations, achievements in habilitation or professorship procedures, or employment-related evaluations in research institutions;
5. Malicious or baseless accusations of misconduct or other violations of methodological or ethical standards in research;
6. Downplaying the contributions of other researchers, students, doctoral candidates, or collaborators in the authorship or co-authorship of scientific achievements or publications;
7. Participating in collusions between reviewers and authors aimed at mutual positive reviews of their publications to support careers.

§ 50.

Ignoring or tolerating violations of research ethics by failing to report detected misconduct or concealing or covering up inadequate responses from individuals or institutions to such violations.

Section 3. General Rules for Handling Detected Misconduct

§ 51.

Institutional responsibility for addressing disclosed cases of research ethics violations lies with employers (in particular universities, scientific institutes, and public or private research centers), who are obligated to ensure integrity and compliance with proper procedures in investigative and disciplinary processes.

§ 52.

Employers are required to protect whistleblowers of research ethics violations from unwanted disclosure or retaliation.

§ 53.

All allegations of misconduct in conducting scientific research must be thoroughly investigated. If the allegations are confirmed, the facts and circumstances must be examined in detail to take corrective and disciplinary actions in accordance with applicable regulations.

§ 54.

Responses to violations of research ethics should be proportional to the severity of the misconduct, considering whether it was committed intentionally, the magnitude of its consequences, and any aggravating or mitigating circumstances.