

# Code of Good Practice in Academic Research

honesty  
ethics  
responsibility  
communication  
freedom  
fairness  
trust  
research



European  
University  
Institute



**European University Institute**

**Code of Good Practice in Academic Research**





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## I. Introduction

Starting with the notion of academic freedom as the leading principle of our research, at all levels, the European University Institute is committed to promoting and maintaining high standards of integrity and accountability in the conduct of academic research and is keen to embed and endorse a culture of honesty and transparency in all its institutional activities. In undertaking this commitment, the Institute emphasizes that academic freedom is a core value to be safeguarded and sustained. The Institute is dedicated to guaranteeing a free academic environment to conduct research, to teach, to speak and to publish, subject to the norms and standards of scholarly inquiry, without interference or penalty, wherever the search for truth, knowledge, scholarship and/or understanding may lead.

The EUI is publicly financed institution whose funding enables it to provide essential research resources to its scholarly community. It requires its members to adhere to the terms and conditions governing access to such resources be they on paper or in digital format.

The EUI supports the principle of Open Access and invites its members to facilitate the widespread dissemination of their published research by reporting and depositing their publications with the Institutional Repository of the EUI (Cadmus).

The Institute invites its members (teaching staff, fellows, research students, visiting students as well as administrative and support staff) to abide by the highest standards of integrity in their conduct of academic research and/or support to academic research activities. This document provides guidelines on good practice in academic research at the EUI.

## II. Academic Freedom and Responsibility / Integrity

Academic freedom is the freedom to teach, study, and pursue knowledge and research without unreasonable interference or restriction from law, institutional regulations, or public pressure. Its basic elements include the freedom of scholars to inquire into any subject that evokes intellectual concern, to present findings, to publish data and conclusions without control or censorship, and to teach in the manner they consider professionally appropriate.

At the same time, accountability and integrity in conducting academic research form the cornerstone of any academic enterprise and violations of widely-recognized academic research standards represent serious offenses to the entire academic community at the Institute and are considered injurious for its credibility and authority as an institution that promotes excellence in academic research in Europe.

Academic integrity requires that academic research follows elevated professional standards, including appropriate research design and frameworks, adheres to high levels of research ethics, abides by the requirements set out by professional and regulatory research guidance and research ethics frameworks issued in appropriate areas.

### Principles / Values of Academic Integrity

Academic responsibility/integrity is defined in terms of the commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, legality, and communication / dissemination.

- **Honesty**

An academic community should advance the quest for truth, knowledge, scholarship and understanding by requiring intellectual and personal honesty in learning, teaching, and research.

- **Trust**

An academic community should foster a climate of mutual trust to encourage the free exchange of ideas and enable all to reach their highest potential.

- **Fairness**

An academic community should seek to ensure fairness in institutional standards, practices, and procedures for academic integrity as well as fairness in interactions with each other.

- **Respect**

An academic community should promote respect among students, staff, and faculty: respect for self, for others, for scholarship and research, for the educational process, and for our intellectual heritage.

- **Responsibility/accountability**

An academic community should uphold high standards of conduct in learning, teaching, and research by requiring shared responsibility for promoting academic integrity among all members of the community.

- **Legality**

An academic community should observe valid legal norms related to the conduct and publication of research particularly in relations to copyright, the intellectual property rights of third parties, the terms and conditions regulating access to research resources, and the laws of libel.

- **Communication / dissemination**

An academic community should seek to make the results of its research as widely and as freely available as possible.

### III. Definition of Research Misconduct

Misconduct in academic research implies (and is not limited to) fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or deception in proposing, carrying out, or reporting results of research, and deliberate, dangerous or negligent deviations from accepted practice in carrying out research. It includes failure to follow an agreed protocol if and when this failure results in unreasonable risk or harm to persons, the environment, and when it facilitates misconduct in research by collusion in, or concealment of, such actions by others. Misconduct also includes any plan or attempt to do any of these things. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretation or judgment in evaluating research methods or results, or misconduct unrelated to research processes.

Misconduct includes (and is not limited to) the following acts:

- **Plagiarism**  
The adoption or reproduction of ideas or words or statements of another person without proper acknowledgment.
- **Abuse of intellectual property rights**  
Failure to observe legal norms regarding copyright and the moral rights of authors.
- **Abuse of research resources**  
Failure to observe the terms and conditions of institutionally licensed research resources.
- **Defamation**  
Failure to observe relevant legal norms governing libel and slander.
- **Willful misinterpretation**  
The deliberate attempt to represent falsely or unfairly the ideas or work of others, whether or not for personal interest.

- **Fabrication / fraud**

The falsification or invention of data, information, or citations in any formal academic exercise.

- **Sabotage**

Acting to prevent others from completing their work. This includes stealing or cutting pages out of library books or otherwise damaging them; or willfully disrupting the experiments of others; or endangering institutional access to licensed research resources by willfully failing to observe their terms and conditions.

- **Professorial misconduct**

Professorial acts, such as exploitation, that are subjective, academically fraudulent, biased and even prejudiced.

- **Denying others access to information or material**

To deny others access arbitrarily to scholarly resources or to deliberately and groundlessly impede the progress of another student or scholar.

- **Misconduct in formal examinations**

Misconduct in formal examinations includes having access, or attempting to gain access, during an examination, to any books, memoranda, notes, unauthorised calculators, or any other material, except such as may have been supplied by the invigilator or authorised by the Academic Department. It also includes aiding or attempting to aid another candidate or obtaining or attempting to obtain aid from another candidate or any other communication/conversations with other candidates within the examination room.

## Identifying Levels of Violations of Good Academic Practice

Academic integrity violations can be classified according to the nature of the violation.

Minor infringements may occur because of inexperience or lack of knowledge of the principles of academic integrity and are often characterised by the absence of dishonest intent on the part of the researcher committing the violation.

Minor infringements may result from:

- a.* Weak procedures and methods which may jeopardise the integrity of the research but are not undertaken deliberately or recklessly
- b.* Weaknesses which present no major risks to either subjects or policies which they may influence

On the whole, these minor infringements can be seen as failings which may reflect only poor, rather than unacceptable practices and therefore mainly require further training and development rather than any formal disciplinary action.

### **Level one violations**

Level one violations are breaches of academic integrity that affect a significant aspect or portion of the academic work. More specifically they refer to clear breaches of good practice, including deliberate, reckless or grossly negligent conduct which undermines the acceptability, veracity, or reliability of the research, in part or in whole.

Examples might include:

- i.* False claims to experience, qualifications or contributions
- ii.* Misrepresentation of findings to lesser degrees
- iii.* Inappropriate failure to declare relevant conflicts of interest
- iv.* Minor plagiarism or lesser violations of the intellectual property rights of third parties

Such violations may present no risks to subjects, the wider community or the environment, but they may warrant some penalty or sanction at institutional level.

### **Level two violations**

Level two violations are breaches of academic integrity that are more serious in nature or that affect a more significant aspect or portion of the academic work compared with level one violations.

Key examples are:

- a. Deliberate, reckless or grossly negligent conduct which would clearly pose a significant risk in one form or another to the integrity of the research.
- b. Conduct that may pose risks to subjects, the wider community, the environment or to the research reputation of the institution and research in general.

Examples are:

- i. The willful destruction of data (except where required by the legitimate data provider or where norms of privacy might be endangered)
- ii. Misleading claims of access to data which cannot be verified
- iii. Fabrication or falsification of data
- iv. Plagiarism [definition – major and minor]
- v. Falsification of ownership
- vi. Defamation
- vii. Systematic abuse of the terms and conditions of licensed research resources
- viii. Systematic violation of the intellectual property rights of third parties

Allegations of level two violations will require serious investigation. Such violations should always be reported directly to the Principal of the EUI or his direct delegate (see VII).

## **IV. Institutional Responsibilities**

The Heads of Departments, Directors of Graduate Studies, the Directors of the Academy of European Law, Robert Schuman Centre and Max Weber Programme, the Library Director, together with the teaching staff, are responsible for promoting and endorsing a transparent academic environment conducive to the application of the high professional and ethical criteria of good practice for academic research. Professors are expected to create and sustain a climate of mutual co-operation that facilitates the open exchange of ideas and the development of academic research skills. They are also expected to ensure the provision of appropriate supervision and direction for researchers, in accordance with the nature of the individual academic discipline and associated mode of research.

The European University Institute is committed to the provision of appropriate direction of research and supervision for researchers. Supervisors are accountable to the Code of Practice for Doctoral Supervision at the EUI, which delineates the supervisory relationship, the assessment of research progress, and the procedures to resolve problems in the supervisory relationship.

## **V. Training (Doctoral Researchers and Support Staff)**

The Academic Departments should ensure that all researchers undertake appropriate training in research design, methodology, regulatory and ethics approvals and consents, equipment use, confidentiality, data management, record keeping, data protection and publication, the appropriate use of licensed research resources and respect for the intellectual property rights of third parties. The Institute is also committed to preparing its administrative and support staff involved in record keeping and the implementation of EUI Data Protection Policy and holds them accountable to the code of good practice in academic research.

## **VI. Publication Practice and Authorship, Notification, Archiving and Depositing Copies of Research Publications with the Institutional Repository (IR)**

The European University Institute encourages the publication and dissemination of results of high quality research. It also expects that researchers will engage in the process of publishing and dissemination of their work responsibly and with an awareness of the consequences of any such dissemination in the wider media.

Results should be published in a form appropriate to the academic discipline. The Institute requires that all individuals listed as authors accept responsibility for ensuring that they are familiar with the contents of the publication and can identify their contribution to it. Authors should have participated sufficiently in the research to take public responsibility for the content.

The Institute does not recognize the practice of honorary authorship.

The EUI supports the goal of Open Access for research institutions (SPARC, Berlin Declaration, Open AIRE, European Research Council) and supports practices that will lead to the widest and least costly dissemination of the research publications of its members, compatible with the realities of contemporary scholarly publishing, in order to:

- a.* Attract researchers, fellows and faculty
- b.* Disseminate widely its research findings to scholars, policy-makers, opinion formers and the interested public especially in Europe
- c.* Encourage open availability of publicly funded research
- d.* Preserve the research output of its members for future generations
- e.* Comply with conditions of research funding (EU Framework Programmes, Open AIRE, European Research Council)

EUI notification, open-access, and archiving policies for published research:

- a.* EUI members should notify the bibliographical details of their published research to the Institutional Repository (IR) in a timely fashion
- b.* EUI members are the copyright owners of their research output and are recommended to retain that copyright in dealings with publishers
- c.* EUI members should deposit a digital copy of their published research for open archiving with the IR insofar as this is compatible with their publishing contracts
- d.* EUI graduates should deposit a digital copy of their theses with the IR for preservation purposes. This will not be made available online without their explicit permission.

## **VII. Procedures for Investigation of Research Misconduct**

### **1 – Instigation of Proceedings**

Without prejudice to the right and duty of Departments to address and assess issues of plagiarism in the course of the regular assessment of a paper presented by a researcher, any person may submit a complaint to the Principal of the Institute (or his direct delegate) who will decide whether the allegation deserves investigation by the Ethics Committee of the EUI.

The initiator of the allegation shall be asked to set out in writing the basis of the allegation.

There shall be two stages in the investigation of any allegation:

- a. A preliminary investigation to ascertain whether there is sufficient substance to the allegation as to warrant a more thorough investigation
- b. A formal inquiry which may include the consultation and involvement of external experts when needed

The investigation is the responsibility of the Ethics Committee.

The Library Director reserves the right to investigate any suspected abuse of institutionally licensed research resources and to suspend any user from continued access to all resources, digital or paper, pending a full investigation. The Library Director will also register a complaint with the Ethics Committee when appropriate.

## **2 – Ethics Committee**

The Ethics Committee is appointed by the Academic Council upon the nomination of the Principal to provide advice and guidance to the academic community at the EUI on any matter pertaining to academic / research ethics and to confirm to external parties ethical compliance of research projects on behalf of the EUI. If confronted with a case, the Ethics Committee is to be involved in procedures of investigation of research misconduct as set out by the Code of Good Practice in Academic Research. The Committee should make recommendations to the internal EUI Disciplinary Committee on what action, if any, should be taken as a result of the investigations.

### ***Membership / composition of the Ethics Committee***

The Committee shall be composed of six voting members:

- Two Professors
- Two Research Fellows

- The Dean of Studies
- One Researcher Representative

The Chair is approved by consensus among members.

The Chair person of the Ethics Committee may invite persons (internal or external experts who are not involved in the disputed matter) and who are not members to attend meetings, provided that they may participate in discussions but may not vote. The respondent has the right to be assisted or represented by an advocate of his / her own choice. The advocate may present the respondent's case but shall not vote.

### **3 – Investigation**

Where possible, the investigation will include examination of all relevant documentation, including, but not limited to: relevant research data; laboratory notebooks; computer files; other materials; proposals; publications; correspondence; and memoranda. Interviews will be conducted with the complainant and the respondent, with other individuals involved in making the allegations and with individuals who might have information regarding key aspects of the allegations.

Details of the allegations and the investigation will be made available only to the Ethics Committee. All individuals interviewed during the investigation will be asked to respect the confidential nature of the investigation.

### **4 – Investigation Report and Recommendations**

The investigation committee will produce a report stating: the procedures under which the formal investigation was conducted; how and, where appropriate, from whom information was obtained; the findings of the

committee and the basis for these; a summary of the views of the respondent; and a description of any recommendations made by the committee.

The respondent will receive a copy of the investigation report and have an opportunity to comment on it. Comments may be submitted to the Ethics Committee and will be attached as an addendum to the investigation report.

The Ethics Committee should make recommendations to the internal EUI Disciplinary Committee on what action, if any, should be taken as a result of the investigation.

Based on the investigation report and recommendations of the Ethics Committee, the EUI Disciplinary Committee may propose sanctions (when considered appropriate).

## **5 – Right of Appeal**

The respondent has a right of appeal, against the decision and/or sanctions made by the Disciplinary Committee.

The respondent may appeal within fifteen (15) days of receiving notification of the final outcome of the investigation. The appeal must be made in writing and should state the basis for the appeal. The respondent should address the appeal to the EUI Appeals Committee.

## **6 – Appeal Process**

The appeal will normally include examination of all evidence called into question by the respondent. The respondent will also be invited to attend to give oral evidence. The respondent may submit any relevant supplementary evidence in support of his/her appeal.

An appeal should normally be completed within ninety (90) days of its initiation, with the initiation being defined as the date of referral of the case to the Appeals Committee.

## **7 – Appeal Report**

The appeal report must state how the appeal was conducted; describe how and, where appropriate, from whom, further information was obtained relevant to the appeal; state the findings of the appeal board; and explain the basis for those findings.

## **8 – Final decision**

The Appeals Committee will decide, on the basis of the appeal report, whether to endorse, amend or overturn the conclusions of the Disciplinary Committee and/or resultant sanctions imposed on the respondent. For the composition and working procedures of the Appeals Committee, refer to article 3.10 of the Academic Rules and Regulations.

The Chair of the Appeals Committee will notify the respondent and the host institution in writing of the outcome of the appeal and will provide a copy of the appeal report and evidence considered by the Appeals Committee.

The Chair of the Appeals Committee will give consideration to informing other interested parties, including journals in which the research was published, of the outcome of the investigation.

The decision of the Appeals Committee, as reported by its Chair, is final.

## VIII. Sanctions

Sanctions as recommended by the Ethics Committee and as decided by the Disciplinary and / or Appeals Committee may include (and are not limited to):

1. Letter of reprimand, which may or may not be recorded on the scholar's file
2. Suspension from the programme for a specific period of time
3. Suspension from the programme
4. Suspension of grant / contract

Any Sanctions, or a decision not to resort to them, is without prejudice to the academic assessment of a researcher's paper by the Department in question, and to the decisions by the Admissions Committee.

## References

The team that developed this policy consulted and benefited from policy documents on good practice in academic research in the following institutions:

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A word cloud of research ethics principles. The words are arranged in a roughly rectangular shape, with 'legality' being the largest word in yellow. Other prominent words include 'accountability' in orange, 'integrity' in blue, and 'objectivity' in purple. Smaller words include 'disclosure', 'acknowledgment', 'truth', 'originality', 'of intellectual property rights', 'of research resources', and 'constructive criticism'.

respect  
truth  
Objectivity  
disclosure  
acknowledgment  
accountability  
integrity  
originality  
legality  
of intellectual  
property rights  
of research  
resources  
constructive criticism

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