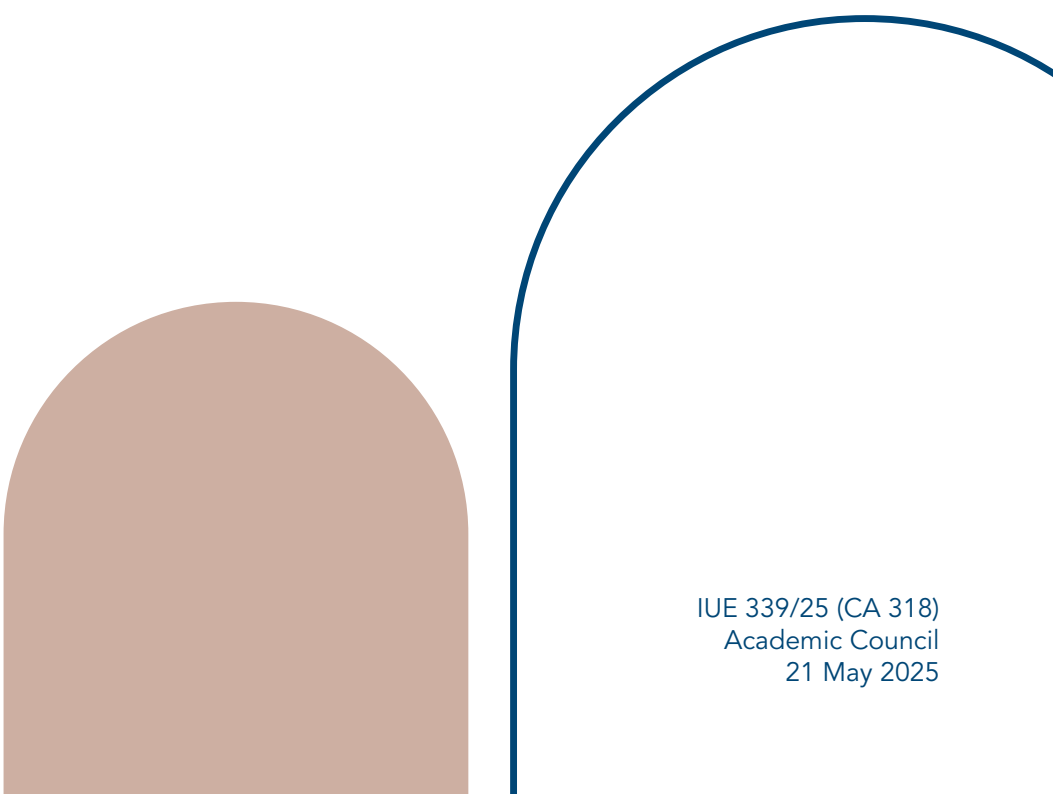


Guidelines for research contractual collaborations within the EUI Academic Community

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IUE 339/25 (CA 318)
Academic Council
21 May 2025

Introduction and background

In response to the Ethics Committee's request for Guidelines regarding research projects coordinated by EUI Principal Investigators (hereafter, "PIs") with Academic Assistants and Research Fellows (hereafter, "academic staff"), the Dean of Research in 2024, in his quality as mediator officer for research assistants¹ drafted a guideline for ethical and transparent research coordination and dispute resolution. This guideline arises as part of the Ethics Committee's comprehensive response to requests from the parties concerned for a clarification regarding the procedure by which these assistantships should be established, conducted and, in the case of any disagreements arising, how disputes ought to be efficiently and equitably resolved.

Given that the EUI already provides a comparable approach for the investigation and sanction of misconduct in its Code of Ethics in Academic Conduct and Research and given the indications contained in the Code of Doctoral Supervision, the present document proposes specific guidelines elaborating upon prospective *ex-ante* dispute resolution procedures designed to resolve interest misalignments before they evolve into genuine disputes. By establishing such guidelines, the EUI develops a novel mechanism aligning the interests of PIs and academic staff.

The Ethics Committee has indicated that the guidelines should provide clarity to both parties, including the PIs, but that the guidelines should take particular care toward protecting the interests of, and providing clarity and assurance to, academic staff engaged in such projects. The following guidelines have been identified by means of a thorough benchmarking exercise examining the comparative approaches of similarly placed institutions as well as a set of best practices derived from the approaches of CIVICA network partners, as well as relevant principles and requirements of the European Charter for Researchers².

The first section includes the guidelines and the related article that has been included in the EUI Code of Ethics in Academic Conduct and Research. An appendix illustrates the results of an extensive benchmarking analysis conducted with institutions comparable to the EUI.

1 See EC Decision of 10 April 2019, [IUE270/19 \(CA 260\)](#)

2 For the purpose of this document, the following principles and requirements from the [European Charter for Researchers](#) are particularly relevant: a) among those applicable to researchers: Ethical principles, Contractual and legal obligations, Relation with supervisors, Supervision and managerial duties; b) among those applicable to employers and funders: Intellectual property rights; Co-authorship; Supervision; Complaints/appeals.

Guidelines

1. Declaration of Intent

- 1.1 These Guidelines intend to provide support, guidance, and clarity to members of the EUI academic community engaged or considering involvement in collaborative research projects regarding the manner in which assistantships should be established and conducted in the framework of such projects. These Guidelines regard, in particular, the establishment and conduct of research collaborations between EUI PIs and academic staff. To this end, the Guidelines illustrate the practices that should be maintained in order to prevent disputes and all forms of misconduct from arising within the context of collaborative research projects. Furthermore, the Guidelines provide a comprehensive mechanism by which such disagreements and disputes, if they arise, may most equitably be resolved in the interests of all parties involved.

2. Scope

- 2.1 These Guidelines apply to contracts involving PIs and academic staff (Academic Assistants and Research Fellows). Although other types of contracts are excluded from the specific requirement of a written agreement as specified below, the general principles apply to all collaborative research projects at the EUI.
- 2.2 By collaborative research, we refer to any process in which members of the EUI academic community work together—sharing resources, expertise, and knowledge—to achieve common research goals, whether through externally or internally funded projects.

3. General Principles

- 3.1 The definitions and procedures provided in the Guidelines are elaborated from the following general principles.

3.1.1 Consensus of Expectations

The Guidelines are designed to promote the establishment of a consensus of expectations regarding the conduct of research contractual collaborations.

3.1.2 Mandatory Due Diligence

The principle of Due Diligence, for the purposes of the Guidelines, is defined as the ‘care that a reasonable person exercises to avoid harm to other persons or their property’.³ The primary operative measures, through which the Guidelines protect the principle of ‘Consensus of Expectations’, flow from a thorough understanding and commitment toward the mandatory nature of due diligence. The Guidelines’ operative provisions, particularly those enumerated in Section 5 on ‘Procedures for the Avoidance of Disputes’, can be considered mechanisms to promote the essential nature of diligence within research collaborations, most importantly that all parties to such collaborations are aware that it is necessary to arrive toward a prescriptive and articulated written explicit agreement regarding research conduct, by which the parties explicate a mutual and transparent set of expectations for the entire collaboration. Due diligence suggests that, to avoid disagreements or disputes, collaborators should communicate clearly and explicitly from the start of the collaboration. This communication should go beyond standard formalities to ensure everyone genuinely shares their expectations.

3.1.3 Oversight

This principle provides that where collaborations consist of bilateral contractual relations between parties with varying bargaining power (for example, between a PI and academic staff members), such relations could be assessed by a third party tasked with overseeing those procedures of due diligence are respected and ensuring that the achievement of a granular consensus agreement regarding expectations at the outset of research projects are adhered to. Third parties tasked with overseeing such agreements shall be specifically trained to understand the exigencies of power imbalances that emerge in supervisory relations and the need to maintain open, honest, and confidential channels of communication with all parties involved.

3 [Due diligence Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster.](#)

3.1.4 Confidentiality

The core principle of Confidentiality⁴ is a keystone toward the protection of less influential parties in research collaboration projects. All parties to research collaborations, as well as third parties mandated in the code for the oversight of such collaborations, must always respect the principle of confidentiality. Toward practically achieving this end, the Guidelines provide for non-public channels by which breaches of confidentiality can be alleged and investigated.

3.1.5 Granularity

The principle of Granularity provides that procedures must be suitably variegated to the particularities of each research relationship. This principle emerges from the connected insights that; first, no two research collaborations are the same and second, that research collaborations tend to evolve and develop over time. This principle concretely underlines that any formal mechanisms or procedures that are established, for example, to achieve consensus between all parties in the beginning stage of a research project, must be both prescriptive and flexible. Such procedures must be prescriptive in regard to mandating certain core requirements for consensus, without which no conceivable project can be equitably progressed, but must be suitably flexible in regard to the many kinds of research relationships that are conducted within the EUI community. Such flexibility must be carefully calibrated toward an understanding of the spectrum of differences in power between collaborations involving established PIs and academic staff.

3.1.6 Precision & Clarity

The present Guidelines' primary function is to provide clarity to the parties to research projects conducted within the EUI. As such, the Guidelines are drafted from a central concern with precisely establishing the kinds of misconduct that represent infractions in order that all concerned parties may condition their behaviour upon an explicit, accessible, and transparent enumeration of behaviours to be avoided. Precision & Clarity rep-

⁴ See [PD10/2019](#) of 18 February 2019 Regarding Data Protection at the EUI, art. 12 on "Confidentiality of processing": "Persons employed or contracted by the EUI, who act as Processors on behalf of the EUI, shall process personal data, and in particular sensitive data, only on instructions from the Controller and in full compliance with EUI's data protection policy. Processors are bound by the duty of confidentiality."

resent a core principle underlying the achievement of shared expectations and alignment of the interests of all concerned parties.

4. Definitions of Misconduct

4.1 The present section enumerates a summary of behaviours that are to be considered inappropriate for the purposes of the Guidelines. This list is non-exhaustive, and as such, it is included here to provide clarity to all parties concerning the most common causes of concern. All indications about research misconduct provided in the EU's current Code of Ethics in Academic Conduct and Research apply as well.

4.1.1 Failure to follow the Guidelines

Any party to a research project will be determined as having failed to follow the present Guidelines where they infringe upon any of the principles or operative provisions. In particular, such a failure will be determined where any party fails to respect the policies enumerated in Section 5 of the Guidelines regarding 'Procedures for the Avoidance of Disputes'.

4.1.2 Breach of confidentiality

A breach of confidentiality occurs where any party, that is, explicitly or implicitly, expected to honour the principle of confidentiality with respect to any information confided in him or her, or any privileged information gained in the conduct of research, is deemed to have negligently or intentionally disclosed such information to any party to whom the information's discloser ought not reasonably to have expected that the information would be shared. The attribution of such a breach, in indeterminate cases, is to be made upon allegation or suspicion of such a breach and in accordance with the 'Investigative Procedures and Sanctions' provided in Section 6.

4.1.3 Retaliation

Allegations regarding behaviours which are to be considered retaliatory to any disagreement or previous allegation concerning the misconduct of any party are to be treated with the utmost seriousness. Retaliation may be defined as any behaviour, beyond those procedures explicitly established in Section 6, by

reference to the EUI Code of Ethics in Academic Conduct and Research, which has as its purpose the disciplining or punishment of any party to a research collaboration. The attribution of such a breach, in indeterminate cases, is to be made upon allegation or suspicion of such a breach and in accordance with the 'Investigative Procedures and Sanctions' provided in Section 6 of the Guidelines.

4.1.4 Intellectual Property Infringement

As provided in the EUI's Code of Ethics in Academic Conduct and Research and, when applicable, in line with the EUI standard contractual clauses for Memoranda of Understanding (MoU)/Partnership Agreements on Intellectual property rights, failure to observe legal rules and regulations regarding copyright and the moral rights of authors constitutes misconduct in breach of the present Guidelines. Elaborating on this core definition, the particular circumstances of research collaborations between PIs and academic staff require that PIs respect the procedures enumerated in Section 5 and comply with them in a manner that is cognisant of the likelihood that intellectual property rights and authorship claims develop throughout the course of academic research collaborations. In particular, this requires that coordinators comply with the provisions concerning the establishment of a clear and granular agreement which sets out the shared expectations, *inter alia*, regarding how intellectual property in the proposed research shall be vested. Furthermore, such an agreement shall not foreclose the possibility that, owing to discrepancies which may emerge between the division of labour envisioned in the original agreement and the division of labour which emerges as part of the research project's actual conduct, parties to any such agreement may challenge the initial delineation regarding the vesting of intellectual property in the resultant research. Any such challenge shall be investigated in accordance with the 'Investigative Procedures and Sanctions' provided in Section 6 of the Guidelines and in accordance with applicable law.

5. Procedures for the Avoidance of Disputes

- 5.1** In accordance with the principles and objectives articulated above, the following procedures have been identified for the

establishment and conduct of research projects involving PIs and academic staff.

5.1.1

The parties to the proposed contract shall complete a screening process in which the parties shall submit a comprehensive and granular agreement defining their expectations regarding the nature and objectives of the project concerned. This agreement is to be submitted to the HR service after the initial dialogue between the PI and the academic staff member, which is part of the onboarding phase during the first month of the contract and, in any case, no later than two months from the start of the contract.

5.1.2

In case of doubts or disagreement, each party may submit the agreement, even confidentially, to designated representatives within the Ethics Committee and the Academic Service [hereafter “third party”], which shall examine it for compliance with the principles of the present Guidelines.

5.1.3

The third party, in its examination, shall have particular regard to protecting the interests of weaker parties to any proposed contract, including by informing such parties of any concerns they may have regarding the form of the proposed agreement.

5.1.4

This third party shall also provide a safe and confidential space for the airing of any concerns or grievances from any party involved or considering becoming involved in such research collaborations and shall also make available a confidential mediation service by which parties may submit any questions, concerns or grievances they may have.

5.1.5

In the case that substantial disagreements should emerge despite the protective procedures outlined above, the third party shall provide a neutral resource through which the parties may mediate their dispute, with the intention of establishing wheth-

er a mutually acceptable resolution may be defined without the instantiation of more formal procedures of investigation or sanction.

5.1.6

Where the third party believes that formal procedures are warranted, they may recommend to the party whose interests have been injured or side-lined in the dispute that formal investigations be launched. Furthermore, the third party may instantiate such proceedings of their own motion by submitting a complaint to the Ethics Committee.

5.1.7

The agreement remains valid for the whole duration of the research project also in case of contract renewal, unless one party requests to rediscuss the terms of the agreement.

6. Investigative Procedures and Sanctions

- 6.1** The procedures for investigating allegations of research misconduct of the types enumerated in the present Guidelines and the sanctions appropriate where such misconduct is established are to be found in Section IV, C & D of the EUI Code of Ethics in Academic Conduct and Research.

7. Article included in the EUI Code of Ethics in Academic Conduct and Research

- 7.1** The following article, included in the EUI Code of Ethics in Academic Conduct and Research, emphasises the particular exigencies which may emerge within conditions of unequal bargaining power between PIs and academic staff involved in these projects:

The Principal Investigators (PIs) and Academic Assistants/ Research Fellows (AAs/RFs) at the EUI involved in a research project shall formalize a written agreement outlining their shared expectations regarding the research elements of their collaboration. This agreement will be submitted to the HR service no later than two months after the start of the contract. The HR service provides a draft model agreement

that can be used for this purpose and informs the parties about a neutral and confidential mediation service available for addressing concerns about the agreement. The Chair of the Ethics Committee and the Director of the Academic Service provide the mediation service.

Appendix: Benchmarking of Approaches within Comparable Institutions

A comprehensive examination of current approaches within comparable institutions reveals that a majority, for example, of the CIVICA partners approach the resolution of disputes primarily through the establishment of formal and quasi-judicial *ex-post* procedures, which appear to be geared predominantly toward the resolution of explicitly illegal forms of misconduct.

Bocconi University governs the issue within Part III of its Code of Conduct for Bocconi Faculty which, in Articles 13 & 14, deals respectively with 'Legality and Safety of Research' and 'Prohibition of Plagiarism'. Article 13 establishes a number of important ground rules including in Article 13(1) that both 'faculty and researchers must respect the legal provisions applicable to their contractual or service relationships' and, also in 13(1), that both parties 'must be compliant with the guidelines established by the Bocconi Research Ethics Committee'. In a similar vein, Article 13's remaining paragraphs provide linkages between the Code and various sources of law external to the code in question, including laws on data privacy, cybersecurity, health and safety and industrial/intellectual property - see Article 13(2) & 13(3). Article 14, as previously mentioned, deals with plagiarism in a similar manner to Article 13, by providing in 14(2) that 'faculty and researchers have a specific duty to avoid plagiarism and to comply with legislation on intellectual property and on the processing of personal data'. Beyond these relatively sparse provisions in the faculty code, Bocconi seems not to have established procedures published for governing relations between principal investigators and research assistants. The only document which refers to research assistantships and similar contracts is the [Regulation governing Bocconi University's procedures of selection for the offering of contracts as Research Assistant](#) which is largely concerned with the procedural aspects of hiring research assistants, including the impartiality of the evaluation process. Neither Bocconi's [Code of Conduct](#) nor its [Academic Rules and Regulations](#) contain specifications of how to deal with disputes in research relationships, and only the latter contains provisions on a 'code of conduct' which is entirely addressed to the student, and phrased restrictively. Bocconi's [Codice Etico e di Comportamento](#) Article 6 on 'Quality and transparency of scientific and research activities' provides that all activities must comply with the 'highest ethical standards in terms of methodologies, dissemination and use of the results'. Article 7(2) contains a provision on IP rights, as follows; 'Referring to patents and other intellectual property rights, the rights of exploitation are held by the University and/or the individual inventors, pursuant to law,

the University regulations and the contractual relationship between the inventors and the University'. Articles 9 through 13 deal with various desiderata for the working environment, as well as prohibitions on certain kinds of abuse (including nepotistic practices, discrimination, and moral & sexual abuse). However, beyond restatements that the University condemns such practices, the Code does not provide specific procedures for practical realisation.

Bocconi's approach is mirrored to an extent in the approaches of the Central European University (CEU), SciencesPo and IE University. Regarding the **CEU**, there is no mention of doctoral supervision, or of research assistantships or procedures for dealing with difficulties in such relationships in the [Code of Ethics of the Central European University](#). The CEU ethics code appears to be geared predominantly toward the resolution of explicitly illegal forms of misconduct. The [CEU Doctoral Regulations](#) also do not mention beyond general provisions how difficulties in the supervisory relationships are managed. The CEU also provides an [Intellectual Property Rights Policy](#) which does not explicitly mention issues as they emerge within research projects of the kind which the current investigation considers.

SciencesPo provides, in its [Ethics and Integrity Charter](#) that 'members of the academic community shall ensure that students, doctoral researchers, research assistants, post-doctoral researchers, and research technicians who are involved in their research project are acknowledged as co-authors or, at the very least, are cited for their participation'. The same Charter, in Chapter 2, heading 5, provides a typology of forms of misconduct which SciencesPo construes as 'breaches of research integrity'. Beyond definitions regarding, for example, plagiarism and fraud, it should be noted that SciencesPo also lists a category of less severe infringements that the institution considers 'questionable and inappropriate practices'. These include; 'negligence in obtaining consent from participants when conducting a research project'; 'breach of the confidentiality owed to participants, funders, or colleagues when conducting a research project'; 'hindrance and interference: an attempt to hinder, influence, or sabotage the work and results of a colleague, student, doctoral student, or post-doctoral researcher'; 'negligence in the attribution and management of authorship for research outputs'; 'misrepresentation of research accomplishments on a CV or list of publications'; 'exaggerating the potential applications of research in publications, funding applications, or to the general public'. The relevant Charter does not, however, explicitly provide for transparent gradations of procedure to which these less severe but 'questionable practices' give rise, though presumably, their separation from more grave forms of misconduct indicates that they are to be dealt with in a less punitive manner.

IE University's published materials focus largely on establishing ethical principles as they regard the conduct of their student community. These principles are articulated in IE's [Code of Ethical Conduct](#) which, though officially addressed to 'all members of the IE Community, whether students, faculty, administrators or staff', in its specifics, largely concerns only the kinds of infraction which emerge in respect to the submission of student work. IE's [Code Of Conduct](#) is directly addressed to the university's teaching and research faculty in their 'relations with students, customers, collaborators and suppliers' but lacks specific consideration of the particular demands of research projects conducted internally between principal investigators and established academic assistants and research fellows. Finally, IE's [Principles of Integrity of Research](#) which is 'rooted in the IE Code of Conduct' provides for a more brief summation of the institution's principled commitments in research, *inter alia*, regarding; responsibility and respect for human subjects, including 'the interaction of IE researchers with colleagues and peers' which 'shall be based on mutual respect conducive to creating a positive, cordial, and respectful environment for work and collaboration'. Beyond re-statements of principle, however, IE University does not comprehensively address the issue that the present Guidelines concern.

The London School of Economics (LSE), the Hertie School, the National School of Political Science and Public Administration (SNSPA), the SGH Warsaw School of Economics (SGH) and the Stockholm School of Economics provide more promising insights for application to the question under consideration.

SNSPA provides a comprehensive [Regulation](#) on doctoral supervision which holds, for example, in Article 55(1), that 'upon the motivated request of the PhD student, the Council for Academic Doctoral Studies can decide to change the PhD supervisor' in case of 'violation of the legal or contracting obligations undertaken by the supervisor' or for 'other reasons regarding the supervisor relation between the PhD supervisor and the PhD student'. Article 55(2) provides that the 'Council for Academic Doctoral Studies nominates another PhD supervisor' and may also do so of its own motion where 'the unavailability of the PhD supervisor' is ascertained. Article 55(3) provides that the Council must consider 'with priority the necessity for the PhD student to be able to complete the doctoral programme'. Article 57 summarises that 'dissensions between the PhD student and the doctoral school' are 'settled by the Council for Academic Doctoral Studies'. Beyond this code of doctoral supervisory practice, however, the SNSPA does not explicitly deal with the issues inherent in academic assistantships under Principal Investigators. Nevertheless, to a certain extent, insights drawn from practices regarding doctoral supervision may be translated to apply within

the context of supervisory relationships within a broader variety of research projects.

SGH provides a user-friendly summation of its policies linked to a single webpage devoted to [Ethics at SGH](#). The [Ethics Code](#) itself, however, is largely phrased in regard to the institution's broader principled commitments toward maintaining certain abstractly constructed values such as professionalism, cooperation, integrity and inter-collegial respect. While these are elaborated upon to a certain extent, the manner in which they might apply, for example, within sensitive relationships involving power imbalances, is not explicitly spelt out. Given this, the draft code of conduct supplied in section two of the present document has been explicitly formulated not only to enumerate a statement of principles, but to discuss how these principles apply concretely within the relationships concerned. The [Guide to the Ethics Code](#), while appearing to provide more of the same in regard to principled language devoid of specific procedures for their realisation, also introduces an interesting mechanism by which complaints and questions may be anonymously submitted to the Rector through the office's 'Informative Service'. While the guide does not provide specifics of how these anonymous complaint procedures are transparently conducted, the notion of anonymity is an interesting one to consider in regard to the present problem.

The **Stockholm School of Economics'** [research integrity and ethics policy](#) for staff does not lay down specifics beyond principles but links to a variety of other internal governing documents and decisions on the delegation of tasks relating to good research practice (some of which are presently only available in Swedish). The most relevant of these documents are the [Procedure for handling suspicion of deviation from good research practice](#), the [Good research practice](#) publication and the [Good research practice and research misconduct](#) webpage. The latter two publications appear to be the most relevant for current purposes. The former, however, concerns situations of illegality which trigger the involvement of a national oversight authority. The latter, the [Good research practice](#) publication, presents an interesting example of the manner in which the particular exigencies of collaborations between principal investigators and collaborators who are at earlier stages in their careers may be addressed. In Section 5.2 of the publication, the institution discusses the kinds of labour relations of which principal investigators ought to be constantly aware in their dealings with junior or less established colleagues. For example, the publication notes that principal investigators ought to attend to the creation of a 'realistic sharing of the workload and a viable and quite strictly regulated time plan'. This is because 'researchers in the early stages of their careers' are 'so dependent on being able to produce a track record of publications and other results in

order to be able to continue at all' that their ability to influence the development of collaborative projects in which they participate is severely limited. Beyond this, the publication recommends that 'the subject of publications and their authorship' should be openly discussed early on 'at the planning stage'. Section 5.2 of the publication, overall, contains a summary of the issues which may arise and recommendations as to best practices. If the EUI were to use some of its recommendations as a model, and complement them with binding practices, including perhaps mandatory courses in the subjects discussed, or mandatory screenings with a third party, by which the 'planning stage' of any research project is scrutinised by a third party for the transparent manner in which expectations and contingencies are dealt with from the beginning, then the EUI could stand to benefit from operationalising the principles which the Stockholm School sets out.

The **Hertie School** and **LSE** provide what appear to be the most robust and thorough treatments of the relevant issues, bringing together lucid statements of principle, clear definitional categories and robust procedures for dispute resolution. Together with the EUI's current institutional approach provided in the EUI [Code Of Ethics In Academic Research](#), these Guidelines have been determined largely with the language and form of the LSE and the Hertie School in mind. However, some criticism of the LSE's dispute resolution procedure, discussed below, has shaped the approach proposed, particularly regarding the general principles of 'Oversight' and 'Granularity', which are key concepts for the functioning of the system envisioned.

The LSE code, in Section IV, provides its 'procedures for the investigation of allegations of research misconduct'. It provides the following in terms of operative specifics: first, the code underlines that allegations may be brought to the attention of the School by any individual, whether internal or external to the School, following the procedures set out in the Code. Furthermore, there is no time limit on such allegations. The code then specifies a number of principles for the investigation such as that neutrality, confidentiality, fairness and expeditiousness will be maintained. The code also specifies that the School must protect staff from allegations which are 'mischievous, frivolous and malicious or reckless or wholly without substance'; and that 'appropriate action will be taken against any person who is found to have made a malicious or reckless allegation'. Finally, the code provides that the 'member of staff against whom an allegation of misconduct is formally made and investigated will be given full details of the allegation'.

The code specifies the following procedure for the preliminary investigation of allegations received; first, the allegation must be made in writing to the school secretary (email provided); second, within 10 days, the secretary

must acknowledge the allegation and, if required, take preliminary measures to prevent further consequences/risks of the alleged misconduct. At this point, the secretary has significant discretion (without any oversight) to assess whether the case warrants further investigation, and whether it falls within the definition of misconduct (which is in §30 of the code itself). The secretary may determine that the allegation does not warrant further investigation, according to §34 & §35 (as mistaken, malicious, or misunderstood), and thus may dismiss the allegation and, furthermore, may discipline the complainant if the allegation is determined vexatious or malicious according to §36.

If, on the other hand, the secretary ‘determines the allegation cannot be discounted’, only then will the secretary inform the respondent of the allegation and allow them to respond. The secretary then makes a final determination as to whether the investigation is required and, if the secretary deems it necessary, the process moves on to the ‘Screening Stage’. Given the complexity of the investigative process which is provided from the screening stage, it is perhaps most expedient to directly refer to Annex B on p.16 of the LSE [Code of Research Conduct](#) which provides a flowchart of the procedure for the investigation of allegations of research misconduct.

Regarding this highly elaborated dispute resolution procedure, which is reflective of a majority of the CIVICA institutions’ approaches, two criticisms may be made which ought to nuance the manner in which the EUI might design its approach. First, the LSE’s approach, described above, appears to be geared toward the resolution of grave misconduct and is, thus, highly formalised and, arguably therefore, somewhat forbidding, especially when the position of a weaker party is taken into account. Parties, and particularly weaker parties, may be reticent to engage in such weighty and punitive disciplinary processes. Secondly, the LSE procedure allocates a highly concentrated degree of prerogative in the office of the School Secretary, which is solely responsible, without explicit oversight laid down in the Code, for the preliminary procedures and for the screening stage of any allegations of misconduct. This concentration presupposes, and relies for its efficacy upon, the complete impartiality and probity of this office, which may, without any supervision, dismiss allegations as unfounded or even establish retaliatory disciplinary action against the complainant.

It is thus important to bear in mind that the EUI is not predetermined to follow an approach set out by the CIVICA partners. The EUI’s current procedures regarding a variety of not dissimilar dispute resolution mechanisms appear to be more nuanced in many respects than a majority of its partners within the CIVICA network, and thus the EUI might pioneer novel institu-

tional approaches for the resolution of these disputes. In particular, and regarding the two points made immediately above in regard to LSE: first, the EUI might move toward articulating a more nuanced approach to the resolution of disputes *before* the allegations attain the degree of gravity which necessitates the instantiation of the kind of highly formalised procedures described above. Such an approach might include, for example, that the EUI's Guidelines spell out, in clear terms, a mandatory oversight process for the conclusion of research agreements within mechanisms carefully calibrated to maintain the confidentiality and confidence, especially, of vulnerable parties. In addition, an approachable forum may be provided for the airing of grievances, such that all parties to research projects feel confident to voice their concerns at an early stage, before concerns develop into serious problems and consequent allegations. Second, the EUI might provide that the body ultimately determined as responsible for receiving and screening allegations of misconduct could be overseen by another distinct body which is responsible for ensuring the probity of the examination of allegations and screening processes.

In respect to the latter recommendation, and at the close of this benchmarking exercise, it is worth noting, for example, beyond CIVICA, that the **University of Amsterdam (UVA)**, in recent years, has updated its [Code of Practice](#) for doctoral supervision as a response to reports of difficulties arising in, and complaints received regarding, supervisory relationships. As such, the UVA has amended its procedure to require that every doctoral candidate is provided with a first and second supervisor. The second supervisor's more distanced and hands-off role does not, all things running smoothly, interfere largely with the relationship of the first supervisor and the candidate. The second supervisor's crucial oversight becomes relevant only where problems in the main supervisory relationship arise.

This approach of the UVA appears meritorious. It ought to be considered, as a general principle, that, where difficulties within relations of unequal power, and allegations of misconduct are concerned, more than one institutional contact point should be available, and that the work of the body charged with receiving allegations ought to be overseen by a distinct body within the institution. This insight has shaped the following code's prioritisation, *inter alia*, of a general principle of 'Oversight'.

