# Ethical Guidelines for Research at Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet)

*Issued by the Rector on 9 October 2014*

## I Introduction

All research and scientific activities are based on trust. The research community and wider society should feel confident that research is conducted in compliance with generally accepted requirements to integrity and objectivity. The abovementioned requirements are stated in the general guidelines developed for our sector by the Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics in 2014.

The guidelines for research ethics issued by Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet) are based on the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges, the Act relating to Ethics and Integrity in Research and pursuant regulations, and on the ethical norms prepared by the Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics. These guidelines shall apply for academic staff, visiting researchers, PhD candidates, and students conducting research at OsloMet (hereinafter referred to as 'researcher' or 'researchers').

The University, represented by the Rector, is responsible for ensuring that research is conducted in compliance with current laws, regulations, and guidelines.

The Deans/Centre Directors are delegated responsibility for ensuring that the regulations are observed and continually assessed; see Roles and Responsibilities of Persons/Entities Responsible for Research at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences.

Leaders at all levels are responsible for entrenching the regulations among researchers, providing guidance in research ethics, finding a good balance between trust and control, and for developing an open and transparent research culture that makes it difficult to get away with misconduct.

Project managers are responsible for ensuring that research is conducted in compliance with good research practice and recognised academic and ethical principles in their respective disciplines and within the established framework.

Supervisors have a particular responsibility for informing PhD candidates and students of the regulations for research ethics that apply in their respective disciplines.

Project team members, students, and PhD candidates are personally responsible for familiarising themselves with issues concerning research ethics.

## II Scientific misconduct

- OsloMet accepts no form of scientific misconduct.

- Scientific misconduct includes serious breaches of recognised standards of research ethics; see the Act concerning Ethics and Integrity in Research, section 8. It covers but

is not limited to falsifying or fabricating data, plagiarism, and gross negligence during the application phase or while conducting or reporting on research. It also covers:
    - deliberate suppression of undesirable results
    - deliberately misleading use of statistical methods
    - deliberately misleading information about who contributed to the research and the number of contributors
    - deliberately or through gross negligence withholding details of methodology
    - deliberate misinformation about academic qualifications in applications
    - deliberate destruction of research information to hamper investigation in the event of suspected fraud[1]

- Staff and students at OsloMet have the right and duty to report scientific misconduct.

- The requirement of scientific integrity applies to all types of research. OsloMet has rules for handling cases of scientific misconduct

## III Good scientific practice

*Research ethics* involve ethical issues concerning the role of the researcher and the practice of research:

- **Integrity**: The researcher is responsible for the credibility of his or her own research. Fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, and similar serious violations of good scientific practice are incompatible with such credibility.[2]
- **Impartiality**: The researcher must avoid confusing roles and relationships in a way that may give rise to reasonable doubt concerning conflicts of interest; see the Act relating to Procedure in Cases concerning Public Administration, section 6. Impartiality may also arise after a discretionary assessment. Openness about relevant roles and relationships in which the researcher is involved must be clarified with colleagues, research participants, sources of finance and other relevant parties.[3,4]
- **Independence**: The researcher must be ensured freedom of choice of topic, method, how to conduct the research, and publication of results.[5]
- **Openness**: The researcher must make available research results to ensure verifiability and to give something back to the research subjects and to wider society.[6]

OsloMet has a particular responsibility for ensuring that students and others receive training in these areas.

## IV Publication, authorship and co-authorship

[1] Ref. Proposition no. 58 to the Odelsting (2005/2006) concerning ethics and integrity in research
[2] General Guidelines for Research Ethics, section 7.
[3] See General Guidelines for Research Ethics, section 6
[4] Research Council of Norway's Regulations on Impartiality and Confidence
[5] See Act relating to Universities and University Colleges, sections 1-5 (5) and (6)
[6] See General Guidelines for Research Ethics, section 11

- The researcher must respect the contributions of other researchers or students and must observe standards for authorship and cooperation. Individual areas of responsibility should be clarified as early as possible in the process and in consultation with all parties involved.

- In accordance with the Vancouver Protocol, three main criteria must be fulfilled to legitimately entitle co-authorship:
    - significant contribution to the idea and design *or* data collection, *or* data analysis and interpretation
    - preparation of the manuscript *or* significant portions of the manuscript *or* critical revision of the intellectual content
    - approval of the article to be published
    - agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

- Researchers employed at two institutions are responsible for ensuring that both institutions are correctly accredited; see the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions' Recommended Guidelines for accrediting institutions in scientific publications.

- The general rule is that results must be published in both academic and popularised form, though subject to the restrictions of confidentiality and duty of confidentiality. Nonetheless, no permanent restrictions may be agreed upon or laid down regarding the right to disclose research results beyond those that follow from or are pursuant to laws; see the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges, section 1-5 (6). When time-limited, exclusive right of use by the contracting party has been agreed, the researcher has the right and duty to ensure that the research findings be made public once the time limit expires.[7]

- A supervisor wishing to use the unpublished research results of a student/PhD candidate he/she is supervising in his or her own publications or research must obtain the consent of the student/PhD candidate. Likewise, a student/PhD candidate wishing to use the unpublished results of a supervisor must first obtain the supervisor's consent.

## V Contract research

- All the ethical guidelines that apply to research also apply to contract research.

- To protect the credibility of the research, one must be aware of the relationship with the contracting party. The interests of the contracting party must not compromise the integrity of the research. See the Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics' web page regarding contract research.

[7] Ethical Guidelines for the University of Life Sciences

- The sources of funding for research must be clearly stated in all publications. The underlying conditions for the project must be clarified in advance, and important information must not be omitted.

- A contract research project must facilitate freedom to design the way in which the problem is solved to ensure that it is scientifically sound. Contract research must be conducted without undue outside influence being placed on the results. The Standard Agreement for Research and Report Assignments issued by the Ministry of Education and Research must be used.

## VII Protection of research subjects

- OsloMet researchers who use individuals in their research must familiarise themselves with the Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees' ethical guidelines to protect individuals involved in research. This concerns issues such as:
    - informant integrity, freedom and co-determination
    - the requirements of voluntariness, informed consent, and the right to withdraw
    - anonymity, de-identification, and presentation and publication of results
    - payment of research subjects
    - confidentiality and duty of confidentiality
    - research conducted on vulnerable groups and on groups/individuals with no or reduced capacity to consent.
    - storage of tape recordings, video recordings, and code lists that may help identify research subjects
    - obtaining necessary approval from the Data Protection Official for Research, the Norwegian Social Science Data Services, the Norwegian Data Protection Authority, and the Regional Committees for Medical and Health Research Ethics or similar bodies

  Researchers who conduct health research must familiarise themselves with the Declaration of Helsinki.

- OsloMet researchers must endeavour to ensure that their research will benefit the research subjects and will not cause harm.

- Action research and intervention research set specific requirements to clarification of roles, publication, etc. The Work Research Institute specifically mentions action research in its ethical guidelines.

## VIII Protection of animals

Animals have an inherent value and must be treated with respect. Staff and students must demonstrate due care and respect for animal welfare and must justify the necessity for experiments.

Current legislation and guidelines for using experimental animals must be complied with.[8]

## IX Protection of the environment

OsloMet's research activities must not harm the environment. Researchers must endeavour to ensure that their research contribute to protecting or creating a healthy environment in the short and long term. This includes taking into consideration biodiversity, ecosystem stability,[9] and the impacts on landscapes and urban environments.

It is normal practice to adhere to the precautionary principle when assessing the environmental impacts of research.[10]

## X Global responsibility[11]

OsloMet has a responsibility to disseminate relevant knowledge to regions which would otherwise be excluded because of economic disparity.

OsloMet's research must contribute to counteracting global injustices and protecting biodiversity.

## XI Sources

It is important that ethical principles and guidelines be perceived as reasonable and to align with those of equivalent institutions. This document has therefore been based on the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges and on other codes of ethics:

- Act relating to Ethics and Integrity in Research, section 8
- Act relating to Universities and University Colleges, sections 1-5 (5) and (6)
- Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Law and the Humanities, prepared by the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities in 2006.
- General Guidelines for Research Ethics prepared by the Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics in 2014.
- Ethical Guidelines for the University of Life Sciences, 2008.
- Guidelines for Good Research Practice at Oslo University College, 2010.
- Ethical Guidelines for the Work Research Institute, 2009.
- Guidelines for Research Ethics for Akershus University College, 2008.

[8] Ref. Animal Welfare Act and Regulations concerning Animal Experimentation

[9] See NOU 2004:28: Act relating to the Management of Biological, Geological and Landscape Diversity.

[10] There are many versions of the precautionary principle, but one of the most cited is that stated in the Rio Declaration: "Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation." (UNEP, 1992). (www.unep.org). In recent years this principle has been reworded to include health and social impacts.

[11] General Guidelines for Research Ethics, section 13.

## XI Relevant literature

- **Research ethical checklist**
  The research ethical checklist is a five-point list prepared by the National Committee for Research Ethics in Science and Technology. It is general in nature, covers all disciplines, and summarises what the Committee considers important issues to clarify when conducting a research project. The checklist is also used in connection with applications for project funding from the Research Council of Norway.
  Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics: Research ethical checklist (last revised: 23 June 2014).
- **University of Oslo's 10 commandments for ethical practice in research**
  The University of Oslo's 10 commandments for ethical practice in research presents a clear summary of what researchers should do to make sure they comply with good research practice.
- **The Research Council of Norway's Regulations on Impartiality and Confidence**
  The Research Council of Norway's Regulations on Impartiality and Confidence, 2004, last revised 2013.