

Ethical Guidelines for International Cooperation Agreements at Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet)

Adopted by the Board by authority on 1 December 2014

1. Introduction

Like other Norwegian universities and university colleges, OsloMet complies with official Norwegian foreign affairs and cooperation policy. This implies that OsloMet cooperates with educational institutions in different parts of the world in certain desirable areas while, as an institution and a country, we may have other points of view than our partners. Experience shows that academic cooperation often contributes to creating peace and understanding and developing attitudes and spreading knowledge about human rights and democracy.

It is therefore desirable that OsloMet participates actively in international cooperation relating to education and research. This also entails a need to ensure that the university college does not become involved in cases or cooperation that has unfortunate consequences. In order to attend to the university college's corporate social responsibility, the university college's ethical guidelines for entering into international cooperation agreements will facilitate ethical assessment of each individual international cooperation, agreement or project in which OsloMet is a partner.

OsloMet's ethical guidelines for international cooperation agreements are based on the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges, the human rights and applicable Norwegian policy in the field of international cooperation. The guidelines apply to academic staff, guest researchers, PhD Candidates and students involved in different forms of international cooperation under such agreements.

The university, represented by the Rector, is responsible for ensuring that international cooperation agreements are conducted in accordance with the current acts, regulations and guidelines.

The responsibility to ensure that the regulations are complied with and assessed on a continuous basis, is delegated to the Dean/Head of Centre.

Managers at all levels are responsible for entrenching the regulations among those involved in international cooperation, providing guidance in the areas covered by the ethical guidelines and establishing a good balance between trust and control.

Project managers' are responsible for ensuring that international cooperation projects are conducted in accordance with good international cooperation practice, and within the established framework..

Project team members, students and PhD Candidates have an independent responsibility to familiarise themselves with ethical issues linked to international cooperation.

2. Human rights

- OsloMet does not accept cooperation agreements that violate human rights¹. This includes all forms of cooperation that lead to deterioration in the situation of oppressed, marginalised or minority groups on the basis of ethnicity, skin colour, gender, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.

3. Political aspects

- OsloMet shall not enter into any cooperation that leads to an escalation of political conflicts.
- In international cooperation agreements in which OsloMet is a partner, topics such as freedom of expression and academic freedom shall be discussed between the parties during the preparation of and execution of the agreement.
- When entering into international cooperation agreements with institutions in countries with forms of government in which power is largely concentrated with the governing authorities, the general conditions for academic and research cooperation must be carefully assessed.

4. Corruption

When entering into cooperation agreements with institutions in countries with considerable corruption, it is OsloMet's responsibility, to the greatest extent possible, to ensure that the agreement neither directly nor indirectly facilitates or contributes to any form of corruption.

5. Ethnocentrism²

- OsloMet shall ensure that the development and execution of international cooperation is quality assured with respect to ethnocentric attitudes. This includes ensuring that all of OsloMet's employees involved in international cooperation, including student exchanges, have the intercultural competence they need to participate in a way that promotes equal and respectful cooperation.
- By entering into international cooperation agreements, the parties to the agreement shall be equally involved in the development of the project. During the process, the parties shall make careful assessments of the differences in cultural norms and values, including how the parties' approach the differences in these areas in a manner characterised by mutual respect during all phases of the cooperation.

¹ The United Nations Association of Norway: <http://www.fn.no/Bibliotek/Avtaler/Menneskerettigheter/FNs-verdenserklaring-om-menneskerettigheter>

² Ethnocentrism is understood to mean the cultural framework of understanding that is characteristic of one's own society. Ethnocentrism often involves the glorification of one's own society. An ethnocentric approach means putting one's own group in focus, and using it to measure the world's social and cultural differences against (www.storenorskeleksikon.no).

6. Protection of the environment

OsloMet's international cooperation shall not be developed in such a way that it can be harmful to the environment or climate. The participants in cooperation projects shall endeavour to ensure that their work contributes to preserving or creating a good environment in the short and long term. This includes, among other things, respect for biological diversity, the stability of ecosystems³, the consequences for landscape and urban environments and emissions.

7. Health and safety

When entering into an international cooperation agreement, OsloMet shall carefully assess the safety situation and health-related conditions in the countries or areas in which the project is to be carried out. This is to ensure that the duty of information disclosure and the safeguarding of the health and safety of all those involved are taken into account, including employees and students of the partner(s) in the project. The safety assessment shall also cover vulnerable groups directly or indirectly affected by the cooperation.

8. Global responsibility

OsloMet is responsible for disseminating relevant knowledge to regions that would otherwise be excluded due to economic differences.

OsloMet's international cooperation agreements shall contribute to counteracting global injustice and conserving biological diversity.

³ See Norwegian Official Report NOU 2004:28. The Nature Diversity Act