

# **Code of Research Ethics for Public Higher Education Institutions**

Approved by the University Council 5 November 2020

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## 1. OBJECTIVE AND CORE VALUES

### 1.1. Objective

These rules are intended to provide a framework for the research of students, teaching staff and research staff at public higher education institutions in Iceland, and thereby safeguard the integrity of their research.

### 1.2. Core values

This code of ethics is based on the following core values:

**Respect for the individual:** Researchers are obliged to respect the free will of participants and their privacy. Protection must also be ensured for those participants unable to make independent decisions in their own affairs.

**Welfare:** Researchers are obliged to reduce as far as possible the risks to participants and increase as far as possible the benefits of the research. They must also ensure that the benefits of the research outweigh the risks.

**Safety:** Above all, researchers are obliged to avoid causing harm. Risks must always fall within acceptable limits and benefits suffice to justify the research.

**Fairness:** Researchers are obliged to ensure that the benefits and burdens of research are fairly distributed and that they do not abuse their position in relation to vulnerable individuals. Researchers must take gender equality and equal opportunities into account at all stages, including the choice of research topic, methodology, and the interpretation, presentation and use of results.

**Honour and good scientific practice:** Research must be conducted honourably and in accordance with recognised scientific methodology.

## 2. ETHICAL CRITERIA FOR RESEARCH

### 2.1. Respect, human rights and human dignity

*Researchers must always safeguard the human dignity of participants.*

Though research may be conducted with the aim of improving general quality of life, it can also threaten important values. It is therefore important that researchers safeguard human rights and human dignity in their choice of topic, in their interaction with participants and in the publication of results. Researchers are required to satisfy the following criteria:

- a) Participants must be guaranteed freedom and the right to self-determination.
- b) Steps must be taken to prevent harm and unnecessary suffering.
- c) The privacy of the individual must be protected and intimate relationships between individuals respected.

## **2.2. The integrity of researchers and individual participants**

*Researchers should demonstrate integrity and respect the will of individuals if they do not wish to take part in the research, or if they wish to stop participating.*

It can prove difficult to participate in research in which the participant's opinions are examined and interpreted. Particular care must be taken when:

- a) self-respect and other important values are at stake,
- b) it is difficult for individuals to refuse to participate, e.g. when research is carried out as an on-site inspection of an institution,
- c) an individual provides general permission to gather information, e.g. by agreeing to an open interview or to be monitored in day-to-day life.
- d) an individual will be identifiable, e.g. when it is possible to identify individuals or groups in research results,
- e) the individual does not possess sufficient competence to protect his or her own needs and interests,
- f) it is not possible to provide participants with sufficient information before the end of their participation, e.g. when participants are deceived, see Article 2.4.2.

## **2.3. The obligation to do no harm**

*Researchers must ensure that their research causes participants no harm, neither mental nor physical, and must avoid negative consequences for participants.*

Researchers are required to avoid causing harm to participants. However, researchers must weigh up and evaluate whether the benefits of the research are so great that insignificant harm could be justified. If participants are harmed by their participation, researchers are obliged to assist them in getting appropriate help.

## **2.4. The obligation to inform participants**

### **2.4.1. Informed consent**

*Generally, research carried out on people must be based on the informed consent of participants.*

Informed consent means that participants receive general information on the purpose of the research, its implementation and background, as well as precise information on what participation in the research involves and what positive or negative consequences could result from participation.

Information provided to participants must include the following:

- a) The purpose of the research, length of the study and implementation, and information on the researchers.
- b) The right of participants to refuse to participate or to withdraw their participation at any stage.
- c) The possible consequences of refusal to participate or withdrawal from research after it has begun.

- d) Points which might reasonably be expected to affect interest in participation or continued participation in the research, such as possible discomfort, risks or harm.

- e) The intended applications of the research.
- f) Possible limitations on confidentiality, e.g. due to legal requirements.
- g) Rewards, payments, prizes or other incentives to participate.
- h) Information on who participants should contact with any questions about the research or the rights of participants.

If research involves intervention or other interference, researchers must be sure to explain at the outset:

- a) that the intervention is being explored and has not yet proved its value,
- b) what participation involves and how participants are divided into intervention groups and control groups, where applicable,
- c) what options, if any, are available if participants decide not to participate or withdraw from the research,
- d) payment or compensation which participants may receive for damages or expenses resulting from participation.

Researchers must provide participants with the opportunity to ask questions about the research or their participation, and answer these questions to the best of their ability. Information about the research must be clear and comprehensible. When seeking informed consent, the language used must be appropriate for the maturity, age and background of participants in such a way that it can be reasonably assumed that they fully comprehend the information. If participants have a limited understanding of Icelandic, they must be provided with information in a language they understand well. Participants must make their decisions without external pressure or coercion.

Informed consent is intended to safeguard the free will and human sanctity of participants. There is no need for informed consent if new work is carried out using pre-existing anonymous data. If the data is not anonymous, and significant changes are made to the implementation of research after it has begun, researchers must seek the informed consent of participants again.

Participants must be informed that they have the right to withdraw from participation in the research at any point without giving a reason and without incurring any negative consequences. Withdrawal from research can either be oral or written. Data collected before a participant's withdrawal may be used with the participant's consent. Once the research is complete, participants may not forbid the use of data or demand that it be destroyed.

#### **2.4.2. The use of deceit**

*The use of deceit as a method in research is only permitted in exceptional cases. Researchers must provide a reasoned argument explaining why it is not possible to implement the research without deceit.*

If participants are deceived, it must be ascertained that the academic, epistemic or practical benefits of the research justifies this and that other methods would not be equally successful or are not feasible. It is not permissible to deceive participants if participation might be reasonably expected to cause pain or significant upset.

Researchers must explain the use of deceit for the purposes of the research as soon as it is possible to do so without compromising the research, not later than at the end of participation or, in exceptional circumstances, as soon as data collection is complete. Participants who have agreed to participate having been deceived may withdraw their participation when the deceit is revealed. If deceit has been part of the organisation of research, participants must be given an ample and reasonable length of time to consider whether they wish to withdraw their participation. If participants choose to withdraw their

participation, researchers are required to destroy all data connected to those participants.

### **2.4.3. Limited requirement for informed consent**

*Researchers must respect the privacy, free will and human sanctity of participants. However, in some cases it can be difficult to obtain informed consent. In cases where participants are not independent, informed consent must be sought from a parent, legal guardian or proxy.*

The privacy, free will and human sanctity of participants must always be respected, but for some research informed consent can be difficult to obtain. For example, research involving children, individuals living with mental impairment or imbalance due to a medical condition or trauma, individuals suffering significant physical pain or chronic sleep deprivation, or individuals under the influence of mind-altering substances. Individuals with a limited ability to give informed consent may only take part in research if:

- a) it is not possible to conduct the research using individuals who can give informed consent,
- b) it is more likely than not that participants or the group to which they belong will directly benefit from participation in the research.

In cases where participants are not independent, informed consent must be sought from a parent or legal guardian. If a dependent participant is younger than 18, see item 2.6.

If a proxy answers questions on behalf of a participant unable to answer for him or herself, e.g. due to age, illness, impairment or other reasons, steps must be taken to protect the participant's privacy and ensure that the relationship between the participant and the proxy is not disrupted. If the participant gives the slightest indication that he or she does not wish to provide certain information, researchers are not permitted to obtain it from the proxy.

### **2.4.4. Research without informed consent**

*Although informed consent is the general standard, it is possible to respect the human sanctity of participants in certain situations in spite of the fact that they have not consented to participate in the research in advance.*

Circumstances may be such that researchers do not have direct contact with participants, where the data involved is not considered to be sensitive personal information or is anonymous. This applies to circumstances where the risks of participating are minimal and the benefits of participation in the research are considered more significant than possible negative consequences. This applies in particular to research:

- a) focused on teaching methods, course material or class management methods and which is conducted in a place of education,
- b) which makes use of anonymous questionnaires or observations of normal situations, or records data and information which does not create a risk of participants facing legal consequences, suffering financially, professionally or in terms of their reputation,
- c) focused on professional competence or activity within working units or institutions and which is conducted within the relevant institutions or units.

In some cases, researchers are granted access to pre-existing data, e.g. from official bodies or other researchers. If participants have not given consent for use of this data in new research, researchers must consider the nature of the information and the interests of the participants before they use data collected by others. If the data is not anonymous, researchers must obtain consent from participants or permission from an appropriate body,

such as the Research Ethics Committee for Public Higher Education Institutions, before using the data in new research.

Researchers are bound to confidentiality and are required to protect the personal data

of participants in their research, whether informed consent is obtained or not.

## 2.5. Participation of children in research

*It is important that children and teenagers take part in research on subjects concerning them, and their points of view must be taken seriously. Children and teenagers have the right to protection consistent with their age and needs.*

Individuals are considered children up until the age of 18. Research about children, their lives and circumstances is important and their contributions are key in such research. Efforts must always be made to ensure that children and teenagers are valid participants where applicable and that their points of view and experiences are taken seriously. The interests and needs of children must be safeguarded differently than those of adult participants. Children are individuals who are still maturing and have different needs at different stages of their lives. Researchers must possess sufficient knowledge of children to be able to tailor their research methods and the contents of their research to the target age group.

The participation of children in research requires the following:

- a) informed consent from a parent or legal guardian,
- b) consent from the child in question as far as he or she is able to give consent,
- c) a statement from the Research Ethics Committee for Public Higher Education Institutions.

In order for research to be conducted on children, the research and its purpose must be explained to them in language appropriate for their age and maturity and they must consent to participate. A child's participation must be of his or her own free will, and it must be made clear that the child can withdraw from the research. Informed, freely given consent is, however, always tied to certain difficulties in research involving children, compared to research on adults. Children are generally more willing to follow instructions than adults and often feel unable to object. They also find it more difficult to put the possible consequences of their participation into perspective. Consideration must be given to the child's wishes, as they are manifested in words, behaviour or body language.

Exemptions may be made from the general rule concerning informed consent from a parent or legal guardian in the following cases:

- a) The research does not involve risk or harm to the child.
- b) The research could not go ahead if informed consent was sought from a parent or legal guardian, such as when participants are children affected by or subjected to abuse. A prerequisite for this, however, is that sufficient provision is made to ensure that the children are protected and their rights upheld. An exemption will never be made that goes contrary to the law or regulatory acts.

Confidentiality for the child is an important principle for research. Nevertheless, a situation may arise in which researchers are legally or ethically obliged to pass on information, e.g. to the child's parent or to child protection authorities. This applies, for example, when researchers become aware that a child has been subjected to violence or neglect. Researchers may also become aware that the interests of a child and of a parent / legal guardian conflict. Additionally, the risk of harm to the child if the information is passed on to a third party must be evaluated. In the aforementioned cases, it is important to evaluate whether the child is likely to be able to make an independent decision on whether to continue participating in the research.

## **2.6. Respect for the right to privacy and intimate relationships**

*Researchers must respect the privacy of participants. Participants have a right to be informed of who has access to confidential information about them.*

Steps must be taken to respect people's privacy and protect individuals from unwelcome attention or exposure, for example because of their religious or political views, sexual orientation, illness, suffering or various emotions.

Researchers must be particularly cautious in asking about anything pertaining to intimate interaction or relationships and avoid putting any kind of pressure on participants.

The division between personal life and public life can be problematic where information gathered on the internet is concerned. If such data is used, researchers must take particular care due to disparities in people's understanding of what is considered private and what is public online.

If research is based on observing the behaviour of participants without their knowledge, researchers must protect the privacy of those who are observed. It is only appropriate to observe participants in places where the individual in question can expect to be observed by strangers. If the person being observed gives the slightest indication that he or she does not wish to be observed, this shall be interpreted as a refusal to take part in the research.

## **2.7. Confidentiality**

*Participants have the right to know that all information gathered by researchers on their personal lives and intimate relationships will be confidential. Researchers must ensure that the use and sharing of research data does not harm participants.*

As a general rule, data must be anonymous and strict rules must be followed concerning access, storage and deletion of lists of participants' names or other information which could potentially be used to identify participants.

The aforementioned requirements are based on the need for freedom and the right to privacy. Current legislation on data protection (cf. the Act on Data Protection and the Processing of Personal Data, no. 90/2018) ensures that certain information is handled with care and sets limits regarding confidentiality between researchers and participants. As a general rule, participants must be informed of who has access to any data which is not anonymous.

Researchers must ensure confidentiality for participants concerning all points of which they become aware during the research, whether confidentiality has been guaranteed or not.

When the consent of participants has not been obtained, researchers shall take particular care.

## **2.8. Considering the impact on third parties**

*Researchers are required to assess the impact on third parties who are not direct participants in the research and to avoid this to the best of their ability.*

Interviews, documentary research and observations often mean that researchers receive information on far more individuals than those who are the focus of the research. The research may affect the privacy or intimate relationships of individuals who are not participants in the research, but are rather dragged into it due to their relationships with participants.

Research taking place in a specific environment may be of such a nature that it is easy to identify individuals. For such studies, the impact of the research on third parties must be given particular consideration.

In cases where research results are used in policy-making, it can be difficult to prevent negative impacts on groups or institutions. Researchers must be wary of unforeseen consequences, such as individuals in a certain group feeling that they are the focus of an unreasonable level of attention. Researchers must always weigh up and evaluate the impact on third parties on the one hand and criticism and the pursuit of truth involved in the research on the other hand.

## **2.9. Processing of personal data and storage of personally identifiable information**

*All research projects, including student projects, that involve work with personally identifiable information, must comply with the Act on Data Protection and the Processing of Personal Data no. 90/2018. Personally identifiable information must be stored in a secure and responsible manner. Such information shall not be stored for longer than is necessary to achieve the set objective. Storage of personally identifiable information is subject to the informed consent of participants.*

Researchers are required to comply with laws and regulations about the rights of individuals and the handling of personally identifiable information, cf. the Act on Data Protection and the Processing of Personal Data no. 90/2018, the Patients' Rights Act no. 74/1997 and other laws which could apply to the subject of the research.

Researchers must always consider whether there is a need to store personally identifiable data. When it is considered necessary to store such data, for example for continuing or long-term research, personally identifiable information and databases must be stored separately. Data must be stored in such a form that it is not possible to identify participants for longer than is necessary. Efforts must be made to remove any identifying features from the data as soon as is considered reasonable.

Researchers are required to ensure that unauthorised persons do not have access to personally identifiable information. Careful consideration must be given to who will have access to such information and on what terms.

Researchers must make appropriate provisions to prevent the results of the research being published in such a way that it is possible to trace information back to individual participants.

Care must be taken with extensive recording of personally identifiable information. Although it can be important to preserve data for future interests, the storage of such data and access to it must be monitored. It is important that clear guidelines apply to the storage of data and deletion of lists of participants, their background information or other information which could be used to identify individuals.

## **2.10. Limits on the reuse of personally identifiable data**

*Personally identifiable data from one research project may not automatically be used in another research project. Such data may not be used for a business related or political*

*purpose.*

Co-utilisation of data containing personally identifiable information creates new research data on individuals and can therefore require a renewed statement from the Research Ethics Committee for Public Higher Education Institutions. If personally identifiable research data is to be reused, participants must renew their consent even if the data was originally collected with their consent. This requirement for renewed consent does not apply when anonymous data is combined or re-analysed.

### **2.11. Researchers' responsibility to provide clear descriptions of their roles**

*Researchers must take particular care when they have more than one role in relation to participants. They are responsible for explaining their positions and roles to participants in their research, as well as any accompanying limitations, expectations and obligations.*

When researchers are connected to participants in more than one way, they must inform them when they take on the role of researcher. Researchers may have more than one role in relation to participants, for example when potential strategies are being researched, or due to friendships with individual participants. Parallel roles can be useful for the research, but information obtained under such circumstances requires the informed consent of the participant in question.

Where applicable, researchers must explain to participants that participation in the research has no effect on their rights to public services.

### **2.12. Requirement for independence from participants**

*Researchers are required to avoid being dependent on those who provide them with information.*

Researchers sometimes uncover reprehensible or illegal conduct, for example plans to commit acts of violence, or the neglect of a child. This can put researchers in a difficult position, especially with regards to confidentiality. Researchers may not cover up unlawful activity, even if this might be advantageous for the research. When research is carried out on a group of offenders, the promise of confidentiality and the obligation to report serious unlawful activity may conflict. It is possible to avoid such conflict by making limitations to confidentiality clear to those who provide information.

In certain cases it may be right for researchers to place more emphasis on the protection of individuals, e.g. children, than on confidentiality for those who provide information. Researchers are required to take particular care when considering their response if they become aware of circumstances which threaten life and limb or violate human rights.

### **2.13. Respect for the values, opinions and cultures of others**

*Researchers shall treat the values, opinions and cultures of participants with respect, even if they are different from their own.*

Research into the customs and values of different cultures and periods is common in the social and human sciences. When research is conducted on vulnerable communities or minority groups, particular care must be taken to ensure that research results are not presented in such a way as to create or lend weight to unfounded stereotypes. The same care must be taken in the case of research into the social customs of historical periods. Researchers are required to avoid derogatory descriptions of the cultures and social practices of others. Researchers must not attribute illogical

or indecent intentions to participants without providing convincing supporting arguments for their conclusions, based on research data. It is important to draw a distinction between the recording of events, circumstances and points of view on the one hand and their interpretation on the other hand.

#### **2.14. Respect for people belonging to vulnerable groups**

*Researchers must ensure that they do not harm the interests of people belonging to a vulnerable group.*

People belonging to vulnerable groups are not always capable of defending their interests against researchers. Researchers cannot, therefore, take it for granted that standard practices concerning information and consent will guarantee individuals' right to self-determination or protect them from unfair pressure.

Individuals belonging to such groups may shy away from participating in research out of fear that the group will appear in an unfavourable light in a public outlet. In these circumstances, particular emphasis must be placed on the requirements for information and consent. On the other hand, society has a rightful interest in investigating living conditions, for example to assess the risks of harmful and antisocial behaviour and the success of social strategies. The Data Protection Authority can work against its own purpose, e.g. when it leads to the concealment of the position of a certain group, and therefore prevents responses to discrimination against it, or its exclusion from society.

Researchers gathering information on the characteristics and behaviour of individuals and groups must avoid categorisation and differentiation which could lead to unfair generalisations and cause embarrassment or shame for individuals or groups.

#### **2.15. Respect for the deceased**

*Care shall be taken when deceased people are the subject of research.*

Requirements for good scientific practice shall apply no less to research on deceased people. Due to respect for the deceased and their living relatives, researchers must choose their words with care. Graves and physical remains must be handled with the utmost respect.

#### **2.16. Respect for cultural artefacts**

*Researchers are required to treat cultural artefacts of all kinds with due respect and ensure that they are not damaged or lost.*

It is in the interests of present day populations and future generations to be able to gather information on their own history and culture. It is therefore necessary to preserve sites, memorials, objects, texts, archives and other remains and information from the past. When researchers work with physical remains from excavations, they must take particular care with consideration of ethics.

Each generation has its own points of view and priorities in the field of research. It must be kept in mind that information about the present day will become the research material of future generations. Taking into consideration the research of the future, it is therefore necessary to take care with research on cultural artefacts so that important information about them will not be corrupted.

There are particular ethical problems related to research in which the source material is unavoidably destroyed in working with it. The value of the information provided by such research must be assessed in light of the impact on source material available for future research.

Researchers and research institutes must avoid appropriating cultural artefacts with an uncertain or disputed origin or history of ownership.

### **3. CONTRACT RESEARCH**

#### **3.1. The value of freedom of research**

*The freedom of research is a core value in university research. Therefore, balance between independent research and contract research must be guaranteed.*

Researchers work in a reciprocal relationship with society. Contract research is research which is defined and funded by the government, institutes, companies or private parties. In such cases those who pay for the research define the outer framework, and the academic freedom of the researcher is limited in this way. On the other hand, the government has given higher education institutions and university-level research institutes autonomy, with a view to ensuring independent research. Although contract research carried out under a client's authority contributes to the development of knowledge in society, a university's research role is focused on independent research in particular.

#### **3.2. Quality of contract research**

*Researchers and research institutes are required to ensure that research projects carried out for clients meet general methodological and ethical standards.*

The client has the right to define a contract research project's framework so long as this does not conflict with methodological and ethical standards for research.

Researchers are responsible for the implementation of the research, results and academic interpretation. Research institutes and researchers are obliged to indicate any limitations of the results of the contract research, with regard to either methodology or practical value.

#### **3.3. Responsibilities of research institutes and researchers**

*When researchers take part in research projects they have responsibilities. The contribution of each researcher to the research project must be clear.*

Should a disagreement arise regarding trust between researchers and an institution, methodological flaws or other issues, it must be kept in mind that each individual researcher is responsible for his or her own research and the parts with which he or she is involved. Copyright and publishing rights in connection with contract research must be guaranteed with a written agreement.

Copyright laws address the right of authors to intellectual property which they can neither waive nor reject. In accordance with Article 4, Act no. 73/1972, the author or researcher must be identified by name as far as this is possible, and it is forbidden to alter an author's work or publish it in such a way or context as to possibly compromise the author's honour or individuality. This also applies to explanatory statements and reports based on contract research.

Information gathered by researchers in sponsored or contract research must not be delivered to the client in such a way that it is possible to trace it back to individual participants, unless participants have given their express permission for this.

### **3.4. Independence of researchers and research institutes**

*Researchers and research institutes must ensure their own independence from clients.*

Research institutes and researchers must avoid becoming dependent on clients in such a way that this might compromise their objectivity. When researchers sell their services to clients who benefit from certain research results, the risk of a conflict of interests increases.

Financial relationships are not the only ones that can threaten the independence of research. Personal relationships can raise questions about competence, whether they be family relationships, friendships or long-term connections between the research institute / researcher and the subject being researched. Such relationships can lead to the research being used to defend individual parties, to an insufficient distinction between research and research subject, or to a threat to independence if the research subject is in a position to influence the researcher.

In certain situations, the role of an independent researcher can come into conflict with other roles held by the researcher, e.g. that of consultant or advisor. It is necessary to disclose such circumstances. In some cases, the tension between roles may be so great that they cannot be held simultaneously.

### **3.5. Information on funding**

*It is mandatory to publicly state sources of funding for research.*

Clear information on sources of funding for research must be available. When such information is available, it is easier for researchers to safeguard their freedom and objectivity from inappropriate interference from those paying for the work. Additionally, clients have a right to have it stated that they have funded certain research.

When results are published and used, researchers have a responsibility to publicly and clearly account for how the work was funded, relationships with clients and other factors which may affect faith in their research, or in the report which was produced. If results are used in a biased or subjective way, the researchers are required to respond to this.

### **3.6. Presentation and use of results**

*Clients and researchers must present research results clearly. It is unethical to focus solely on favourable research results or to present results in a misleading or distorted fashion.*

Clients are not authorised to keep any part of the research results separate in such a way that the research presents an inaccurate image of one or more points. Researchers must be able to defend against inappropriate pressure from clients to produce certain results, and may even need to make use of their right to withdraw from the project.

Clients must accept that researchers discuss clients' mandates and involvement in connection with the research, e.g. if the mandate lacks a clear academic or practical angle, interpretation or perspective. Requirements for reliable sources, methodology and reasoning are paramount when research protects the interests or reputation of individuals or could influence governmental decisions.

### **3.7. Publication rights**

*Knowledge is a shared value, and the general rule is that all research results should be published. For results to be published, it must be possible to authenticate them where appropriate.*

Researchers have a right to publish detailed descriptions and results from contract research. This can be important in order to prevent results being presented in a misleading or distorted fashion, and also to give others the opportunity to authenticate results.

Companies and institutes may have a lawful wish to protect themselves and their interests. In certain cases, it may also be necessary to delay the publication of research results as a matter of national security or due to sensitive bargaining positions. Nevertheless, both clients and researchers must endeavour to publicly publish results sooner rather than later. Possible limitations to permission to publish results must be established with a written contract from the outset of the project. Publication of academic articles is also important for the recognition and professional advancement of researchers.

## **4. INTEGRITY IN RESEARCH**

### **4.1. Scientific integrity**

*Researchers and research institutes must comply with and raise standards for scientific integrity.*

Bad working practices impede the gathering of new knowledge. The requirement for good scientific practice is therefore obligatory in all research. Distinctions may be drawn between more and less serious transgressions, ranging from carelessness and bad scientific practice to fraud. Transgressions in research may be divided into two groups: misconduct and fraud. Misconduct is defined as serious negligence and irresponsibility in the implementation of research. Fraud, which involves wilful deceit, may be further categorised into fabrication, misleading information, plagiarism and abuse.

### **4.2. Access to data and its use**

*Other academics must be given access to research data such that they can authenticate results when appropriate, as far as this does not violate data protection laws or confidentiality requirements.*

The main rule is that the researchers responsible for the gathering of data have the first claim to its use. If data is gathered in return for public money, it must be accessible for others to use if feasible and as far as this does not violate data protection laws or confidentiality requirements.

### **4.3. Academic review**

*Academic review must be objective and unbiased.*

Those who review the work of others must be prepared to seriously consider reasoning and approaches different to those they employ themselves. Academic articles are characterised by academic aims which are sometimes challenged and

even basic scientific questions are subject to debate.

In such circumstances, it is important to critically consider one's own competence and to conduct the review objectively and without bias.

#### **4.4. Peer review and debate**

*Researchers must be honest, objective and practice self-criticism. In this way they contribute towards creating an environment which promotes good research.*

Researchers are required to make use of peer review and constructive criticism in order to guarantee the quality of their research. Research teams must also encourage objective discussion.

Research institutes must contribute to creating a productive and positive research environment. This involves providing forums for vigorous debate, respect for different views and the involvement of new researchers.

#### **4.5. Authors and co-authors**

*Only those who have contributed to the documentation, analysis and writing up of scientific material, and who are responsible for it as a whole, shall be recorded as co-authors.*

Research work does not automatically confer the right to be recorded as a co-author when results are published. To be considered a rightful author of a work, a researcher's contribution must be well defined and significant. Such a contribution shall, at the least, involve the theoretical preliminary work and design of the research plan or the processing and analysis of data. Additionally, the individual in question must have contributed to the writing of the text or played a systematic role in its review and final editing, and also bear responsibility for the work as a whole.

#### **4.6. Student-supervisor relationship**

*Supervisors are required to keep the interests of students in mind and not to exploit in their own interests the fact that students are dependent on them. This applies equally to academic results and personal circumstances.*

Supervisors must be conscious of the imbalance of power between a supervisor and a student. Supervisors may not use their academic authority in their own interests or to belittle students. Supervisors may not exploit the fact that students are dependent on them.

Supervisors must discuss with their students the rules that apply to the use of research data and co-authorship of works. Public higher education institutions in Iceland should develop a standardised agreement on the joint use of research data by supervisors and students when applicable. Should a supervisor wish to use any of a student's material which is still in progress, a contract should be drawn up to this effect. If students have gathered their material themselves, supervisors should not use this material before the students' work is complete, generally after they have earned their degrees. A supervisor and student must adhere to good citation practices when they use each other's work.

From the supervisor-student relationship, a mutual relationship can form which may make the supervisor unfit to assess the student's work. The boundaries between personal and professional lives must be respected. There must be no doubt concerning the integrity and objectivity of a supervisor. Should the relationship between supervisor and student become too close, the general rule is that another supervisor should take over.

#### **4.7. Democratic debate and knowledge transfer**

*The academic community should promote public discussion and ensure that academic knowledge is shared with the general public. The integration of academic knowledge is an important part of democratic debate.*

There are a lot of major social projects which demand interdisciplinary and democratic debate, for example in the fields of ecology, globalisation and human rights, and many of these projects require the integration of academic knowledge of various kinds. The communication of research results must be based on reciprocity and accessible presentation of information from experts in different fields.

Society has devoted a significant financial outlay to research and should benefit from any successes. Researchers and research institutes are responsible for sharing the results of their research in an appropriate manner which is comprehensible for everyone. Good communication requires cooperation between research institutes and other institutions, such as the media, schools, art institutes, philosophical organisations and non-governmental organisations.

#### **4.8. Public discourse and responsibility for the interpretation of results**

*Researchers should contribute towards public discourse using rational arguments based in science.*

Researchers must use their academic knowledge as the basis of their contribution to public discourse. Researchers generally cannot control the ways in which others make use of their research results. Nevertheless, they are partially responsible for the way in which they are interpreted and used in political, cultural, social or economic contexts. Researchers should therefore participate in debates on the proper interpretation of their own research results, and on how best to use them.

When professionals participate in public discourse, they are required to use their professional titles and degrees responsibly.

#### **4.9. Delivery of research results**

*Researchers are required to publish the final results of their research publicly and endeavour to ensure that they are accessible to participants.*

Generally, researchers should conclude their research by publicly publishing the results. At the data processing stage of the project, the contribution of participants should be respected. They should have the opportunity to correct misunderstandings in the interpretation of data, when appropriate and when possible, before the final results are published. Researchers are required to present results at the processing stage and in the final publication in such a way that the main information and its interpretation is accessible and comprehensible for participants.

## **5. RULES OF PROCEDURE for the Research Ethics Committee for Public Higher Education Institutions**

### ***5.1 Appointment of the Research Ethics Committee for Public Higher Education Institutions***

5.1.1. The University Council appoints the Research Ethics Committee for Public Higher Education Institutions. The committee has seven members, including four representatives and their alternates nominated by the school deans at the University of Iceland. Other public higher education institutions jointly nominate two representatives and their alternates. The University of Iceland Centre for Ethics shall also nominate one representative and an alternate. The chair of the committee, and the alternate chair, shall be appointed by the rector of the University of Iceland from among the University of Iceland school representatives. The committee shall be appointed for a three-year term. Nominations must comply with the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender.

5.1.2. The Research Ethics Committee for Public Higher Education Institutions may consult with specialists as appropriate.

5.1.3. Article 3 of the Administrative Procedures Act no. 37/1993 shall apply concerning the eligibility of committee members.

5.1.4. A member of staff from the University of Iceland Division of Science and Innovation shall work with the committee.

### ***5.2. Duties of the Research Ethics Committee for Public Higher Education Institutions***

5.2.1. The Research Ethics Committee for Public Higher Education Institutions shall provide teaching staff, students, research staff and other staff at the University of Iceland and other public higher education institutions with statements on research plans. Statements shall be based on this code of ethics. Researchers or those responsible for research are obliged to seek a statement from the committee concerning research which addresses ethically sensitive subjects (see: <http://www.personuvernd.is/spurningar-og-svor/grundvallarhugtok/>) or which focuses on vulnerable individuals or groups. Vulnerable participants include, for example, children and individuals who have difficulty assessing risk and providing informed consent due to developmental disabilities or physical or mental illness, individuals who have undergone forced hospitalisation or institutional detention, as well as participants in research involving deceit. It is permissible to seek a statement from the committee for other research, on the condition that the study is licensed in accordance with the law.

5.2.2. An online application must have been received by a member of the Research Ethics Committee at least a week in advance of a scheduled committee meeting, if it is to be processed at that meeting. All requested accompanying documents must be included with the application if the committee is to consider it.

5.2.3. The Research Ethics Committee meets as often as necessary.

### ***5.3. Other responsibilities***

5.3.1. The committee shall gather information and promote education and

informed debate within the higher education community on research ethics and good research practice.

5.3.2. The committee regularly reports on its operations on its website.

5.3.3. The Research Ethics Committee shall advise the University of Iceland's rector and University Council and the Icelandic Rectors' Conference on issues within the committee's purview.