

# Aarhus University's code of practice to ensure scientific integrity and responsible conduct of research at Aarhus University

The following rules replace Aarhus University's 29 June 2000 code of practice to ensure good scientific practice.

## Part 1. Rules

### Purpose

1.-(1) The purpose of these rules is to lay down the formal framework for scientific integrity at Aarhus University in order to promote responsible conduct of research at the university. In addition, the rules set the framework for advising on the responsible conduct of research and the handling of suspicions of breach of responsible conduct of research Aarhus University.

(2) The rules cover research being conducted or that has been conducted at Aarhus University, or that forms the basis for an academic degree awarded by Aarhus University.

(3) All scientific and scholarly work at Aarhus University must be conducted in compliance with the university's policy for the responsible conduct of research.

### Definitions

2.-(1) Scientific and scholarly work at Aarhus University must be carried out with due respect for the generally recognised methods of the research area in question, scientific and scholarly codes of ethics and other professional requirements.

(2) In connection with scientific and scholarly work carried out at Aarhus University, no conduct is allowed that may be characterised as 'scientific dishonesty' or acts and omissions that conflict with 'responsible conduct of research' which cannot be characterised as misconduct.

**Section 3.** Pursuant to section 2 of Consolidated Act no. 306 of 24 April 2009 and legal practice in the area, 'scientific dishonesty' means: "Falsification, fabrication, plagiarism and other serious violation of good scientific practice committed wilfully or grossly negligent on planning, performance or reporting of research results. Included hereunder are:

- 1) Undisclosed fabrication and construction of data or substitution with fictitious data.
- 2) Undisclosed selective or surreptitious discarding of a person's own undesired results.
- 3) Undisclosed unusual and misleading use of statistical methods.
- 4) Undisclosed biased or distorted interpretation of a person's own results and conclusions.
- 5) Plagiarism of other persons' results or publications.
- 6) A false credit given to the author or authors, misrepresentation of title or workplace.
- 7) Submission of incorrect information about scientific qualifications."

4.-(1) Actions and omissions that conflict with 'responsible conduct of research' which cannot be characterised as misconduct include:

- 1) Deliberate misrepresentation of research results or deliberately providing misleading information about one's own or another person's role in the research, even though the extent and consequences of the unlawfulness cannot in themselves be considered as serious.
- 2) Conduct which is not in keeping with the 'Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity' (e.g. applicable experimental protocols, IT, documentation, authorship, private funding etc.).
- 3) Participation in scientific or scholarly work where personal or financial interests in the work and its results may give cause for reasonable doubt being cast on the impartiality of the person in question.

## **Basis**

**Section 5.** The evaluation of whether a specific practice is in accordance with responsible conduct of research is based on the 'Policy for responsible conduct of research at Aarhus University', the 'Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity' and the international recommendations on which these policies are based, as described in the above-mentioned policy.

**Section 6.** The requirement for responsible conduct of research does not pose a threat to the right to freedom of research, as it does not dictate any particular method. Also, there is no requirement for 'political correctness' or a requirement for restraint in terms of reasoned and relevant criticism of other researchers' scientific or scholarly work.

(2) Fundamentally, it is the shared responsibility of the university and researchers to promote and develop critical scientific and scholarly discussion within the research environments. This is vital to maintaining and developing the fundamental principles of research integrity, and to ensuring the responsible conduct of research and preventing research misconduct, cf. the university's policy.

## **Part 2. Advisory group and committee**

**7.-(1)** Aarhus University shall establish an advisory group for responsible conduct of research and a committee for Responsible Conduct of Research.

### **The advisory group for responsible conduct of research**

#### **Objectives**

**8.-(1)** Anyone affiliated with Aarhus University must have access to confidential and professional advice on responsible conduct of research from an adviser. The role of the advisers is not to process the cases brought to them, but to offer advice based on the information provided.

#### **Appointment**

**Section 9** On recommendation from the academic councils, the deans of the four main academic areas each appoint an adviser to the advisory group for responsible conduct of research. Advisers must have a deep understanding of responsible conduct of research, extensive and long experience as researchers, including experience with international research, and high academic legitimacy and integrity.

(2) Associate professors, senior researchers, professors and emeritus professors at Aarhus University may be appointed as advisers. A substitute for each advisor is appointed in the same way. The advisers and their substitutes are appointed for a 3-year term. Members are eligible for reappointment.

(3) Advisers must, to the required extent, have their workload reduced in order to be able to perform their advisory duties.

## Tasks

**10.-(1)** Advisers have an individual and joint obligation to disseminate knowledge about responsible conduct of research at Aarhus University.

(2) Advisers must also promote an understanding of the special circumstances applicable to the different research disciplines and be able to provide advice to researchers and research groups involved in interdisciplinary research cooperation.

**11.** Advisers have the following tasks:

- 1) to be available to provide independent and confidential advice to anyone affiliated with Aarhus University, including research groups, who has questions about the applicable guidelines on responsible conduct of research or is in doubt as to whether the standards and guidelines on responsible conduct of research are being met;
- 2) to stay informed of the applicable standards and guidelines on research integrity and responsible conduct of research and contribute to ensuring that responsible conduct of research is established and maintained at a high international level;
- 3) to contribute to teaching research integrity and responsible conduct of research;
- 4) to report, in anonymised form, on the type of inquiries received once a year to the committee for Responsible Conduct of Research.

## Independence

**Section 12.** The advisers are independent of the university management. As a consequence, advisers may not disclose information received in connection with advising the university's researchers to management.

(2) In the event that an advisers are given information that provides reasonable grounds for a suspicion of misconduct or other behaviour that conflicts with responsible research practice, advisers must recommend the party in question to present the matter to the person suspected of misconduct or inappropriate behaviour, to report the matter to the head of department (at Arts: the head of school), to report the matter to the Committee for Responsible Research Practice, or to report the matter to the Danish Committees on Scientific Dishonesty (DCSD). In the event of suspected violations of a particularly serious nature, either on account of the manner of their performance, repeated performance or the collusion of several parties, the adviser must report the matter him or herself.

(3) If the party in question provides information regarding his or her own possible violation, the advisor must inform him or her that he or she does not have a duty to disclose information which may impact the assessment of the presumed violation, cf. the principle of self-incrimination<sup>1</sup>.

## The Committee for Responsible Conduct of Research

### Purpose

**Section 13.** Everyone must have the option of contacting a central committee that can conduct an independent investigation of a justified suspicion of research misconduct or other breaches of responsible conduct of research.

### Appointment

**Section 14.** On recommendation from the academic councils, the rector appoints one member from each main academic area and a substitute for each member. The members must be recognised researchers with long research experience and high academic integrity.

(2) Associate professors, senior researchers, professors and emeritus professors at Aarhus University may be appointed as members. The members and their substitutes shall be appointed for a 3-year term. Members are eligible for reappointment.

(3) The rector also appoints a chair, who must be a lawyer.

(4) Members must, to the required extent, have their workload reduced in order to be able to perform their duties as members.

### Tasks

**15.-(1)** The committee has the following tasks:

- 1) to consider specific cases of suspected scientific dishonesty and other breaches of responsible conduct of research;
- 2) to recommend what sanctions should be imposed in the case, depending on its severity and conclusiveness, cf. sections 3 and 4
- 3) to contribute to the clarification of the existing guidelines for responsible conduct of research at Aarhus University;
- 4) to ensure, in cooperation with the advisory group, an ongoing dialogue on Aarhus University's policy for responsible conduct of research at Aarhus University;
- 5) to submit an annual report to the rector summarising the cases the committee has considered.

(2) In addition, on request from the rector or on its own initiative, the committee may propose rules and guidelines on responsible conduct of research.

**16.-(1)** The committee is free to organise its own work as it deems best.

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<sup>1</sup> Act on legal protection with regard to the administration's use of coercive measures and duties of disclosure, section 10(3)

**Section 17.** The committee is independent of the senior management team in connection with its activities, including its investigation and consideration of specific cases.

**19.-(1)** The rector shall ensure that secretarial services are provided to the committee.

### **Chapter 3. Consideration of cases**

**“20.-(1)** When a case is referred to the committee for Responsible Conduct of Research, the committee will decide whether to consider, reject or suspend the case.

(2) Cases shall normally be normally processed in writing, but in special circumstances the committee may decide to allow oral proceedings. In oral proceedings, the accused party is entitled to be accompanied by an observer.

(3) In special cases, the committee may decide that a previously rejected or completed case may be reopened, particularly if new essential information has come to light.

(4) The committee shall not consider complaints lodged anonymously.

#### **Initiative and deadlines**

**21.-(1)** A case may be referred to the committee in the following ways:

- 1) a named natural or legal person may lodge a written complaint;
- 2) the rector may refer a case to the committee;
- 3) the committee may open a case of special significance on its own initiative;
- 4) a person wishing to be cleared of circulating rumours or allegations may request that a case be opened by the committee.

(2) The committee may only in special cases consider a complaint which has not been lodged with the committee within a reasonable time after the time at which the complainant has or should have the necessary prerequisites for lodging such complaint.

#### **Rejection**

**22.-(1)** The committee may reject a case, if the complaint is manifestly unfounded, or if the case is not deemed to be relevant to the purpose of the committee; see section 1.

**23.-(1)** If the case has been referred to the Danish committees on Scientific Dishonesty (DCSD) in accordance with Consolidated Act no. 306 of 24 April 2009, the committee may reject or suspend consideration of the case pending DCSD's decision.

#### **Principles governing consideration of cases**

**24.-(1)** The committee shall examine a given case in compliance with the rules of the Danish Public Administration Act, including examination of parties, and in accordance with the principles described in clause 5 of the University's policy.

## Information

**25.-(1)** The committee shall ensure that sufficient evidence is collected and presented in the case and may solicit statements from experts; see section 26.

**26.-(1)** The committee may, on an ad hoc basis, obtain the assistance of researchers at Aarhus University who are able to provide special insight into fields of study or research areas of relevance to the assessment of a specific case. When considering special issues, the committee may also obtain expert assistance from persons outside Aarhus University who are able to provide special insight into a particular field of study or research area.

(2) The committee may set up an ad hoc committee of experts to assist in the consideration of a case, on which committee the particular field(s) of study relevant to the case is/are represented. Persons who are not members of the committee may be members of ad hoc committees. An ad hoc committee shall make a recommendation to the committee.

## Report

**27.-(1)** When a case has been considered, the committee shall prepare a written report with a reasoned opinion on the case and a recommendation on any sanctions to be imposed. The report etc. shall be presented to the rector and submitted to the parties.

(2) As a general rule, the consideration of the case shall be completed within six months of the case being referred to the committee.

**28.-(1)** The committee's recommendation shall indicate whether its decision is unanimous. If unanimity has not been reached by the committee, the recommendation shall also include the minority opinion.

## Sanctions

**29.-(1)** If the committee concludes that the defendant is guilty of conduct in conflict with responsible conduct of research, the committee may recommend the following sanctions to the rector and the responsible dean, taking into account the severity and conclusiveness of the case:

- that the defendant be reprimanded for the unacceptable conduct (reprimand/warning);
- that the responsible dean consider whether the case should have consequences for the defendant's employment;
- that the scientific or scholarly work concerned be withdrawn;
- that any aggrieved parties be informed;
- that any private or public partners be informed;
- that other relevant public authorities in the field be informed;
- that, if a criminal offence is deemed to have been committed, the police be notified.

**30.-(1)** If the case has previously been considered in a committee under the DCSD, and this committee has concluded that the defendant is guilty of research misconduct, the committee for Responsible Conduct of Research may restrict itself to submitting an opinion on the choice of sanction.

## Confidentiality

**31.-(1)** The members of the committee are bound by the same duty of confidentiality as applies to public offices in respect of information received in their capacity as members of the committee.

### **Entry into force**

**Section 32** These rules come into force as of 25 March 2015.