

Guidelines for Research Ethics

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## 1. AIMS AND CORE VALUES

### 1.1. Aims

These guidelines are intended to form a framework for the research work of students and teaching and research staff at the University of 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 human dignity:*** Researchers are required to respect the autonomy of participants and their privacy. Assistance and/or protection must also be ensured for those participants unable to make independent decisions in their own affairs.

***Beneficence:*** Researchers are required 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.

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

***Justice:*** Researchers are required to ensure that the gains 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, interpretation, presentation and application of results.

***Integrity and good scientific practices:*** Research must be performed with honesty and in accordance with accepted scientific practices.

## 2. ETHICAL CRITERIA FOR RESEARCH

### 2.1. Human rights and human dignity

*Researchers must always respect and ensure the human dignity of participants.*

Though research may be performed with the aim of improving general quality of life, it can also threaten important values. It is therefore important that researchers respect human rights and protect 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) Protect freedom and autonomy of research participants.
- b) Prevent harm and unnecessary suffering.
- c) The privacy of the individual must be protected and relationships between individuals respected.

## **2.2. The integrity of researchers and the participation of individuals**

*Researchers should show 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 be a participant in research where one's personal situations are examined and interpreted. Particular care must thus 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 participant observation,
- c) an individual accepts to provide information, e.g. by agreeing to an open interview or by being 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 ability to protect his or her own needs and interests,
- f) it is not possible to provide participants with sufficient information until their participation has been completed, e.g., when participants are deceived, cf. Article 2.4.2.

## **2.3. The duty not to cause 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, it must be weighed and evaluated whether the benefits of research are so great that insignificant harm could be justified. If participants are harmed by their participation, researchers are required to support them and reduce their harm as much as possible.

## **2.4. The duty 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 who is responsible for it, 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, its duration and implementation, and information on the researchers.
- b) The right of participants to refuse to participate or to withdraw their participation at any stage of the study.
- 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 usefulness 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 persons participants may contact with any questions on the research or the rights of participants.

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

- a) that intervention is under consideration and has not yet demonstrated its value,
- b) what participation involves and in what way participants are divided into intervention groups and control groups, should these be used.
- 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 the expenses that arise from their participation.

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

Informed consent is intended to respect autonomy and protect human dignity of participants. There is no need for informed consent if new work is carried out on already existing anonymised data. If the data is not anonymised, and significant changes are made to the implementation of research after it has begun, researchers must receive 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. When the research is complete, participants may not forbid the use of data or demand that it be destroyed.

#### **2.4.2. The use of deception**

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

If participants are misled, it must be made clear that the academic, epistemic or practical benefit of the research justifies it, and that other methods would be less successful or unfeasible. It is not permissible to mislead participants if it might be reasonably expected that participation could cause pain or significant upset.

Researchers must explain the use of deception for the purposes of the research as soon as it is possible to do so without compromising the research, no later than at the conclusion of participation or, in exceptional circumstances, as soon as the collection of data is complete.

Participants who have agreed to participate when deception has been used may withdraw their participation when the deception is revealed. If deception 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. Should participants choose to withdraw their participation, researchers are required to destroy all data connected to the participants in question.

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

*Researchers must respect privacy, autonomy and human dignity of participants. However, in some cases it can be difficult to obtain informed consent. In cases where there are incapacitated subjects, informed consent must be sought from a parent, legal guardian or proxy.*

The privacy, autonomy and human dignity 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 disease or trauma, significant physical pain, 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 do not possess full legal capacity, informed consent must be sought from their parent or legal guardian. If participant is younger than 18, see item 2.6.

If a proxy answers questions on behalf of a participant unable to answer for himself or herself, e.g. due to age, illness, impairment or other reasons, the personal integrity of the participant's life must be ensured, and 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 dignity 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) centred on teaching methods, course material or class management methods which is conducted in a place of education,
- b) which makes use of anonymous questionnaires, watching in normal situations, or record data and information which does not represent a risk of participants facing legal consequences, suffering financially, professionally or in terms of their reputation,
- c) centred on professional competence or activity of working units or institutions,

and 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 consent from the participants for use of the data in question in new research is not available, researchers must consider the nature of the information and the interests of the participants before they use data gathered by other people. If the data is not anonymous, researchers must obtain consent from participants or the permission of an appropriate body, such as the Ethics Committee, before using the data in new research.

Researchers are bound to confidentiality and are required to protect the personal information 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 concerning them, and their points of view must be taken seriously. Children and teenagers have the right to protection in conformity with their age and needs.*

Individuals are considered children up until the age of 18. Research on children, their lives and situations is important and their contribution is of major importance in such research. Efforts must always be made to ensure that children and teenagers are fully valid participants when appropriate, and that their points of view and experience are taken seriously. The interests and needs of children must be protected accordingly and sometimes differently than for 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 that age group on which it is focused.

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 reference from the Ethics Committee.

It is a prerequisite for research on children that the research and its purpose are explained to them in language appropriate for their age and maturity, and that they 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.

Exceptions 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 who are neglected or subjected to abuse. A prerequisite for this, however, is that sufficient provision is made to ensure the protection of the child and the upholding of their rights. An exception will never be made that goes contrary to the law or official edicts.

Confidentiality is an important principle in all research also in research regarding children. 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 are in a 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 the possibility of the child taking 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 regarding them.*

People's privacy must be respected, and individuals protected from unwelcome disturbance or visibility, for example because of their religious or political views, sexual orientation, illness, discomfort 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 personal and what is public in such media.

If research is based on observing the behaviour of participants without their knowledge, researchers must protect the integrity of the personal lives of those who are observed. It is only appropriate to observe participants in places where the individual in question can expect to be seen 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 a claim to the confidentiality of all information gathered by researchers on their personal lives and intimate relationships. being. Researchers must ensure that the use and publication 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 disposal of lists of participants' names or other information which could possibly be used to identify participants.

The aforementioned requirements are based on the need for freedom and the right to a privacy. Current legislation on privacy protection (cf. the Act on the Protection of Privacy as regards the Processing of Personal Data, no. 77/2000) ensures that certain information is handled with care and sets limits to the confidentiality of researchers towards participants. Participants must be informed of who has access to any data which is not anonymous.

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

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

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

*Researchers are required to evaluate the effect on third parties not directly participating in the research, and to avoid this to the best of their ability.*

Interviews, documentary research and examinations often lead to researchers receiving information on far more individuals than those who are the focus of the research. The research may affect the personal lives 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. In such research, the effect 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 effects on groups or institutes. Researchers must be wary of unforeseen consequences, such as individuals in a certain group feeling that an unfair level of attention is directed towards them. The effect on third parties on the one hand and critical thinking and the pursuit of truth involved in the research on the other must always be weighed and evaluated.

## **2.9. The processing and storage of personally identifiable information**

*All research projects, including student projects, involving work with personally identifiable data, must be in accordance with the law on the protection of personal integrity and processing of personally identifiable data nr.19/2018. Personally identifiable data must be stored in a responsible manner. Such data 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 legislation and regulation applying to the rights of individuals and the handling of personal information, cf. the Act on the Protection of Privacy as regards the Processing of Personal Information nr.19/2018, the Patients' Rights Act no. 74/1997 and other laws which could pertain to the subject area 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 feasible.

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 disposal of lists of participants, their background information or other information which could identify people from the data.

## **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 governmental purpose.*

Cross-referencing of data with personally identifiable information creates new research data about individuals and can therefore require a renewed review by the Ethics Committee and the approval of the Data Protection Authority. If personally identifiable research data is to be reused, participants must renew their consent even if the data was originally gathered through their consenting to participate. This requirement for renewed consent does not apply when anonymised data is cross-referenced or re-analysed.

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

*Researchers must take particular care when they hold more than one role towards participants. They are responsible for explaining their positions and roles to participants in their research, and those accompanying limitations, expectations, and responsibilities.*

When researchers relate to participants in more than one way, they must inform them of when they take on the role of researcher. Researchers may hold more than one role towards participants, for example when potential solutions 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 assistance.

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

*Researchers must avoid becoming dependent on those providing them with information.*

Researchers sometimes uncover reprehensible or illegal conduct, for example intentions to commit acts of violence, or the neglect of a child. This can put researchers in a difficult position, especially with regards to the requirement for confidentiality. Researchers may not cover up a violation of the law, even if it might be advantageous for the research. When research is carried out on a group of criminals, the promise to treat information confidentially and the requirement to report serious actions may come into conflict. It is possible to avoid such conflict by making limitations to confidentiality clear to those who provide information.

In individual cases it may be right for researchers to place more emphasis on the protection of individuals, e.g. children, than on confidentiality towards those who provide information. Researchers are required to take particular care and consider the correct reaction when they

become aware of circumstances which threaten life and limb or involve violations of human rights.

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

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

Research into the traditions and values of different cultures and time periods is common in the social and human sciences. When research is conducted on societies in a vulnerable position or on 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 derogative 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.

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

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

People belonging to groups in difficult situations are not always capable of defending their interests against researchers. Researchers can therefore not take it for granted that conventional practices concerning information and consent will ensure the right to self-determination for individuals or protect them from undue pressure.

Individuals belonging to such groups may shy away from participation in research out of fear that the group will appear in an unfavourable light in the public sphere. 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. Confidentiality 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 could cause individuals or groups embarrassment or shame.

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

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

Requirements for good scientific practices shall apply no less to research on deceased people. Due to respect for the deceased and their living relatives, researches 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 approach 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 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 should pay special attention to ethical points of view.

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 disruption to 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. COMMISSIONED 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 ensured.*

Researchers work in a reciprocal relationship with society. Commissioned 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 research institutes at the university level autonomy, with a view to ensuring independent research. Although commissioned research carried out under the authority of clients is an important component in the development of knowledge in society, the role of the university as a research institution is mainly focused on independent research.

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

*Researchers and research institutes are required to see to it that research projects carried out for clients meet general methodological and ethical requirements.*

The client for commissioned research has the right to define its framework so long as this does not conflict with methodological and ethical requirements made in research.

Researchers are responsible for the implementation of the research, the results and the academic interpretation. Research institutes and researchers are obliged to indicate any

limitations to the results of the commissioned research, concerning either the methodology or the practical value.

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

*Researchers taking part in research project have responsibilities. The contribution of each researcher to the research project must be clear.*

Should disagreement arise pertaining to trust between researchers and an institution, or to flaws in methodology or other components of the research, it must be kept in mind that each individual researcher is responsible for his or her own research and those matters in which he or she is involved. Copyright and publishing rights in connection with contract research must be ensured 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 reports based on commissioned 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 the objectivity of the party in question. 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 aims, or to a threat to independence if the nature of the research subject is such as to potentially have an effect on 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 divulge such situations. In some cases, the tension between roles may be so great that they cannot both be held.

### **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 which research they have funded.

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 themselves 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 aim. 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 commissioned research. It can be important 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 specific 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 their 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 promotion of researchers.

## **4. GOOD CONDUCT IN RESEARCH**

### **4.1. Scientific integrity**

*Researchers and research institutes must comply with standards for good conduct, as well as strengthening them.*

Bad working practices impede the gathering of new knowledge. The requirement for good, appropriate scientific methods is therefore obligatory in all research. Distinctions may be

drawn between more and less serious transgressions in research, 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 divided into fabrication, falsification, 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 privacy 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 privacy 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 strategies which are sometimes challenged, and debate exists concerning even basic scientific questions. In such circumstances, it is important to critically consider one's own competence and perform 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 ensure the quality of their research. Research teams must also encourage objective discussion.

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

#### **4.5. Authors and joint 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 joint authors.*

Research work does not automatically confer the right to be recorded as a joint author on publication of results. 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 of data and its analysis. Additionally, the individual in question must have worked on the writing of the text or played a systematic role in its review and final editing, and also be responsible for the work as a whole.

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

*Supervisors are required to always 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 demean students. Supervisors may not exploit the fact that students are dependent on them.

Supervisors must discuss with their students those rules which apply to the use of research data and joint authorship of works. The University of Iceland and its institutes should form a standardised agreement on the joint use of research data by supervisors and students when applicable. Should a supervisor wish to make use of any of a student's material which is still in progress, a contract should be drawn up concerning this. 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 make use of each other's work.

In the supervisor-student relationship, a bilateral relationship can form which may lead to incompetence in assessing 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 the transfer of knowledge**

*The scientific community should promote public discussion and ensure that scientific knowledge is relayed to the general public. The integration of scientific knowledge is an important part of democratic debate.*

Many large projects arise in society 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 scientific knowledge of various kinds. The communication of research results must be based on reciprocity and accessible presentation of information from researchers in different research fields.

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

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

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

Researchers must use their scientific knowledge as the basis of their contribution to public discourse. Researchers generally do not have control over 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. Submission 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 with the public publication of results. At the data processing stage of research, 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 primary information and its interpretation is accessible and comprehensible for participants.

## **5. RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND ETHICS REVIEW BOARD**

### **5.1. Appointment of the University of Iceland Ethics Review Board**

5.1.1. The University council shall appoint the University of Iceland Ethics Review Board. The committee is composed of one representative and one alternate from each school within the University, in accordance with nominations from the school deans. The University of Iceland Centre for Ethics shall also nominate one representative and one alternate. The chair of the committee, and the alternate chair, shall be appointed by the rector without nomination. The committee shall be appointed for a three-year term. Nominations shall comply with the provisions of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men. 5.1.2. The University of Iceland Ethics Committee may consult with specialists as appropriate.

5.1.3. The provisions of 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. Responsibilities of the University of Iceland Ethics Review Board**

5.2.1. The University of Iceland Ethics Committee shall provide teaching staff, students, research staff and other staff at the University of Iceland with references concerning research plans. These guidelines are established as a basis for the references.

Researchers or those responsible for research are obliged to seek a reference from the committee concerning research which addresses ethically sensitive subjects:

<https://www.personuvernd.is/einstaklingar/spurt-og-svarad/allar-spurningar-og-svor/hvad-eru->

[personuupplýsingar](#)) or which focuses on individuals or groups in vulnerable positions. Participants in vulnerable positions are, for example, children and individuals who have difficulty assessing risk and providing informed consent due to developmental impairments or physical or mental illness, individuals who undergo forced hospitalisation or institutional incarceration, as well as participants in research involving deceit.

It is permissible to seek a reference from the committee for other research, on the condition that it is licensed in accordance with the law.

5.2.2. An online application must have been received by a member of the University of Iceland Ethics Committee no later than a week before a scheduled committee meeting, if it is to be handled at that meeting. All requested accompanying documents must accompany the application if the committee is to consider it.

5.2.3. The University of Iceland Ethics Committee meets as often as necessary.

### **5.3. Other tasks**

5.3.1. The committee shall gather information and promote education and informed debate within the University community on research ethics and good practice in research.

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

5.3.3. The Ethics Committee shall advise the rector and the University Council on matters within the purview of the committee.