

UOC Code for Research Integrity

UOC

Research Ethics Committee

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Record of changes		
Review	Change	Date
This document replaces <i>The UOC's Code of Good Practice in Research and Innovation</i> from 2012 (link)		
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UOC Code for Research Integrity

1. Preamble

The UOC Code for Research Integrity is a set of recommendations and commitments regarding research-related activities to ensure the integrity of research staff's conduct and the quality of the knowledge generated.

The ethical principles governing scientific practice at the UOC aim to:

- Provide university staff with appropriate guidance on research ethics.
- Develop guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research and ethical guidelines for trustworthy AI.
- Avoid possible conflicts arising from research practice.
- Improve the quality of research.

The UOC Code for Research Integrity is aligned with the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) (ALLEA, 2023), and is based on the same fundamental principles of research integrity: reliability, honesty, respect and accountability.

2. Objective and scope

This Code establishes the general framework for carrying out research, innovation and knowledge transfer activities¹. Its main objectives are threefold:

- To ensure the quality of the research carried out at the UOC.
- To establish procedures that guarantee the integrity of research at the UOC.
- To guarantee adequate mentoring of trainee research staff at the UOC.

Scientific integrity is based on attitudes and conduct backed by ethical and deontological principles that inspire and guarantee rigorous and responsible practice. This code is intended to promote quality research and provide guidelines that prevent malpractice and problems of integrity for research staff in their work.

¹ From now on, when we talk about research, we will do so in a broad sense, on the understanding that it includes research, innovation, knowledge transfer and research in teaching activities.

This Code applies to UOC academic and administrative staff who develop, carry out or support research activities of any kind, as well as to students and others who are not members of UOC staff but participate in the university's research activities.

3. Training and supervision of trainee research staff

The UOC must ensure that staff involved in research have the necessary training to take on the responsibilities that this activity demands.

This training must include good practices in the preparation of research plans, regarding both methodology and data management, ethical application and integrity in research, good practices in publication, authorship and the dissemination of results, as well as cross-cutting matters of interest that will ensure that research staff in training have acquired the necessary knowledge to do research well.

Support for trainee research staff is based on the role of a supervisor, who will direct, mentor or tutor them. Every person linked to the UOC through a contract or grant, for training purposes, will be assigned a supervisor.

The supervisor must exercise the following functions and obligations:

- a) Ensure that the trainee receives adequate training in good scientific practices.
- b) Ensure knowledge is exchanged and shared between the supervisor, the research team and the trainee.
- c) Promote a culture of integrity in research.
- d) Provide trainees with up-to-date information about the regulations currently applicable to scientific praxis.

The rights and duties of trainees and supervisors are specified in the [UOC Doctoral School's internal regulations \(in Catalan\)](#), the [UOC regulations on acceptable behaviour \(*Normativa de convivència*\)](#) and the [UOC Code of Ethics](#), plus the Charter of Commitments for each doctoral degree programme.

4. Research protocols and plans

Before it begins, a research project must be formulated in a written protocol. A report on a research project with competitive funding or the research plan for a doctoral thesis are possible examples of written projects.

Before research begins, the research project and research plan for a doctoral thesis must be independently evaluated by the UOC's Research Ethics Committee. It is the responsibility of the research project's principal investigator and the doctoral student to submit an application for ethical protocol evaluation, in accordance with the procedure established in this regard.

The research project or research plan must take gender and diversity perspectives into account and also be sensitive to the relevant differences that may exist among the research participants, using non-sexist language as far as possible.

Under no circumstances is it acceptable for a research protocol or part of it to be secret. This is different from cases when, for reasons of competitiveness and confidentiality, it may be appropriate to temporarily restrict the distribution of certain protocols or parts of them.

Any research that involves the use of a third party's facilities or equipment or any research facility or equipment that is not exclusively for the university's use will require the prior approval of the head of the institution, centre, facility or equipment to be used.

Research that requires the use of experimental spaces and the provision of specialized services in the UOC's laboratories must follow the instructions and recommendations of the laboratory managers, whose prior approval is required for the use of the facilities.

5. Research projects sponsored by industry or other for-profit entities

This type of research should ensure that the process of training, intellectual development and building professional expertise can progress in accordance with the skills and dedication of the research staff, in addition to promoting quality research and innovation in the UOC's fields of knowledge.

When the work of research staff requires results, works or technology owned by third parties, they must respect the moral and economic rights of these third parties in relation to intellectual property and request the corresponding authorization for their use. It is important to seek advice on knowledge transfer to ensure that intellectual property rights are not infringed and appropriate agreements are negotiated. Similarly, any use of open-source software must comply with the conditions allowed by the corresponding open-source licence.

Research staff will ensure transparency and primacy of interests. In the exchange or transfer of knowledge and technology with other entities, the public interest must always prevail, so that agreements are totally transparent. The results of research must always be independent of personal, group, business or institutional interests.

When the research staff participating in a project promoted by industry make an essential contribution to its design and execution, appropriate agreements must be signed with the promoting entity to regulate the relevant intellectual and industrial property rights.

The UOC will also take the necessary measures to protect the intellectual freedom of its research staff and their intellectual property, and avoid disproportionate confidentiality commitments or unjustified restrictions on the publication of the results obtained, in accordance with current legislation. The guarantees of confidentiality and discretion imposed by commitments to any other entities, together with common sense, must prevail.

Collaboration with entities that engage in illegal activities or favour violence, discrimination against people or aggression against the environment must be avoided.

All commitments by the sponsoring entity and the UOC's centres, groups or research staff must be specified in an agreement or contract signed by the sponsoring entity and the Fundació per a la Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. This will necessarily include: a) everything that refers to the protocol of direct or indirect economic compensation in relation to the research; b) the intellectual and industrial property rights regime; and c) the procedure envisaged for validating the research integrity protocol. These agreements must be accessible to the bodies, committees and individuals with responsibility for the matter subject to the agreement.

All sponsoring entities must be informed of the content of this code, compliance with which is mandatory for all members of the team carrying out the research work.

6. Research data management

The UOC, as the owner of the data produced during the research, must provide sufficient means and materials, and appropriate media, to store and safeguard the data obtained and the documentation compiled during the research, as stipulated in the regulations in force in this regard.

The research must have an adequate system for compiling, recording and documenting data and a data management plan detailing the system for storage, custody and conservation of the data.

Research staff must anticipate and actively monitor any risks of incorrect identification or non-compliance, with agreements on protecting the privacy and confidentiality of data posed by different systems for storing and processing information used in research.

It is advisable to create a data management plan before starting a research project. The data management plan is a living, formal document that describes how data will be managed and organized during any research process or activity.

The data generated and stored must be available in open access whenever possible, in accordance with the FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) principles for data management. Data and materials collected in the course of research must be identified precisely to ensure traceability and it must be possible for third parties to share them, except in cases where restrictions have been established in connection with their possible commercialization.

If data are transferred to third parties, the recipient must provide information regarding the use that they wish to make of them. Such transfer will require the approval of the research team and the Research Ethics Committee, who, in accordance with the protocol, will establish whether the transfer may be limited for reasons of availability or confidentiality.

All members of the research team must be able to access information concerning the data obtained and the interpretation thereof, in accordance with the objectives and purpose of the research carried out.

All information stored as the result of a research project must be kept for at least ten years from the first publication of the results, unless applicable legislation or the terms of the call for funding allow shorter periods or require longer periods.

Main considerations regarding personal data

The ethical protocol form must describe the processes related to the collection of personal data and the protection of the said data and of the participants who provide them, in cases where this is required.

The confidentiality and anonymity of participants will be safeguarded, and their privacy will also be respected.

Scientific research can only be carried out with the free, express and informed consent of participants. Information on consent must be adequate, provided in a comprehensible form, and include procedures for revoking consent (at any time and for any reason).

The privacy of the participants and the confidentiality of the information concerning them must be respected, especially in the case of particularly vulnerable individuals or groups. Information must not be used for purposes other than those for which consent is given.

The identity of participants will not be revealed, unless it is with their explicit consent or in cases where the activities and texts analysed are of a public nature.

The collection and use of unnecessary personal information must be avoided.

7. Practices for publishing and disseminating results

Research staff must publish the results of their work in journals or media that follow rigorous peer review procedures and respect the usual standards of scientific quality. Open access to these results must also be enabled, whenever possible. The UOC facilitates and encourages this practice with its [Open Knowledge Policy](#), which establishes the institutional framework for knowledge generated at the university to be shared and transferred openly.

Research staff must not delay the publication of research results obtained with public funding, unless this is necessary for their legal protection. In the case of publicly funded research, the non-publication of research results may constitute serious misconduct due to misappropriation of resources.

If the results obtained in a research project could lead to inventions or applications that may need to be protected for their commercial interest, the person responsible for the research project must notify the relevant UOC knowledge transfer unit and take this possibility into account when publishing the results in journals.

If, in the course of their work, researchers detect that the results generated are potentially transferable, they may protect them in accordance with the provisions of the UOC's Regulations on the intellectual and industrial property R&I activities. If this possibility is detected, and always before the results are disseminated, research staff should contact the UOC department responsible for managing knowledge transfers. It will perform an analysis and evaluation of the results and, if deemed appropriate, start the procedures necessary for the legal protection of the R&I results.

Splitting a single research project into parts for publication is only acceptable for reasons of length. Submitting the same work to more than one publication is considered inadmissible practice.

Duplicate or redundant publication is considered unacceptable practice. Secondary publication is only warranted under the terms set out in the Vancouver Group Rules².

Plagiarism, defined as the use or copying of ideas, text, or data from other sources without acknowledgement, is research misconduct and is unacceptable. In publications and in patent or utility model specifications, references must be included to all works directly related to the research, while unjustified or honorific references must be avoided. References to work by third parties must sufficiently acknowledge their merit.

Authors must acknowledge the contributions of those who have helped in the study or preparation of the publication. The acknowledgements section of a publication must follow strict guidelines. The persons or institutions referred to have the right to decline their

² See the criteria for "Acceptable secondary publication" in *Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication*, updated February 2006, International Committee of Medical Journals Editors, <http://www.icmje.org/>.

inclusion. Some journals require written authorization from those who are to appear in the acknowledgements. The same practice applies to sources referred to as "personal communication".

In any type of publication of the results of research, institutional affiliation must be explicitly declared and support for the project recognized: a) the institutions or centres of affiliation of the authors of the work, in accordance with the regulations on affiliation; b) details of funding, subsidies or financial sponsorship received; c) if the ethics protocol is supervised by an independent Ethics Committee, it must be mentioned, together with the specific authorizations obtained; d) If applicable, details of possible conflicts of interest.

Research staff must ensure that the results of their research are disseminated in society and that the content is made available in an appropriate form to non-specialist audiences. In the public presentation of results in the media, the author's name must always be associated with that of the UOC and, whenever possible, the subsidies and grants received must be mentioned.

It is not considered acceptable to disseminate the results of research in the media before they have been subjected to peer review, i.e. before they are accepted for publication or presentation at conferences.

8. Authorship of scientific papers and publications

For full authorship of a publication, the author must: a) have contributed substantially to the creative process, i.e. to its conception and design, or to the analysis and interpretation of the data, b) have contributed to the preparation of communications, reports or publications based on the project, and c) be able to present in detail their personal contribution to the research and discuss the main aspects of the research as a whole. Authors must accept in writing the final text of the original manuscripts submitted for registration or publication.

Participation in a research project must be included in the acknowledgements section, as must contributions to the results of the research. Researchers are recommended to follow the [CRedit](#) standard, a taxonomy for assigning and acknowledging authorship roles in results.

A person linked to a research team who asks to be listed as an ex officio author, due to their hierarchical position or employment relationship, violates academic freedom, commits an act of injustice, and may even be guilty of an abuse of authority. Conversely, not recognizing as an author someone who has made proven contributions to the project constitutes misappropriation of intellectual property by the other authors.

The publication of reports, work or technical records or any other written material addressed to third parties must always include a list of the authors of the research or study, the centre

or centres to which they are affiliated and the subsidies received, on the same terms as for a scholarly publication or a patent.

The order of the authors follows the criteria agreed by those involved in the initial phases of the research project.

In general, however, this Code recommends a) the first and/or corresponding author should be the person who has made the most significant contribution to the research and has prepared the first draft of the publication or paper, b) the senior person who directs and/or has the ultimate responsibility in the research should be the last author, and c) the other authors should appear in order of importance. The author in charge of correspondence is the person who has the main responsibility throughout the publishing process and in future interactions arising from the publication of the work.

When there is no author who can assume responsibility for all the content of a publication, contributions will be identified separately, except in cases where this issue is subject to editorial regulations.

In scholarly publications, the authors have the right to justify the order in which they sign. Some journals require this as a condition for publication.

When two or more authors have dedicated the same effort to a project and shared the main work of preparing the manuscript, they will both be considered as first authors. This circumstance will be made explicit in the publication of the original. The same criterion can also be applied in the case of intermediate and senior authors.

If someone does not wish to appear as the author when the results of the research are published, despite having participated in it, they must issue a waiver expressly in advance and in writing.

Anyone who has not complied with the UOC Code for Research Integrity within the framework of a specific research project cannot be considered an author. Consequently, they will not appear as authors in any dissemination of the results of the research.

9. Review and assessment

Activities related to the review, assessment or criticism of manuscripts sent for publication, or to project descriptions, protocols, reports, etc. that are entrusted to personnel considered to be experts or authorities, must be objective and based on scientific criteria and not on opinions or personal ideas.

A review cannot be accepted if conflicts of interest are detected or if the proposed reviewer is not considered sufficiently qualified.

Reports and texts subject to review are always confidential and privileged information. Consequently, this documentation: a) may not be used for the benefit of the reviewer until the information has been published, b) cannot be shared with any other colleague, unless it is for a specific reason or there is explicit permission from the editor or the research agency, and, c) it may not be retained or copied unless those responsible for the editorial process or the agency have given their permission. When the process is finished, the material is usually destroyed or returned.

10. Responsible use of generative AI

The European Commission has published guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research and ethical guidelines for trustworthy AI.

Based on the principles of research integrity, the guidelines provide guidance to researchers, universities and research centres, and funding bodies to ensure a consistent approach.

In 2024, the conclusions of the guidelines are as follows:

- Researchers should refrain from using generative AI tools that do not respect privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property rights in sensitive activities, such as peer reviews or assessments.
- The UOC must facilitate the responsible use of generative AI and actively monitor how these tools are developed and used within its organizations.

Generative AI is constantly evolving and these guidelines are regularly updated and can be consulted on the [official website of the European Commission](#), and in the regulations and procedures that the UOC establishes in this regard.

11. Possible conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest can occur when the researcher has a real, potential or perceived opportunity to prioritize their own interests, or those of any other person or organization, over the interests of the institution or other parties, for example:

- When the research is sponsored by a related body.
- When the researcher or related body could benefit, directly or indirectly, from any inappropriate dissemination of research results (including delays in or restrictions on the publication of such results).

- When the researcher or related body could benefit, directly or indirectly, from the use of the UOC's resources.
- When private benefits or significant personal or professional benefits depend on the results of the research.

Naturally, errors or misunderstandings arising from honest practice are not considered ethical misconduct.

12. Compliance, monitoring and advice

The UOC's Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer Committee and the Research Ethics Committee are responsible for promoting knowledge of the Code for Research Integrity and its internal adoption. The UOC Code for Research Integrity must be distributed to all UOC research staff and to any new researchers who join.

The Research Ethics Committee is the body responsible for supervising, reviewing and disseminating the UOC Code for Research Integrity. To ensure the integrity of research activity at the university, the Research Ethics Committee must therefore:

- Ensure the observance and fulfilment of the precepts included in the code.
- Act as an arbitration body in the event of uncertainty or conflicts that may arise in relation to the integrity of research, its decisions being binding for any parties who submit conflicts to the Research Ethics Committee.
- Inform and raise awareness among research staff regarding events, needs and guidance related to the ethical and deontological aspects of research.
- Remain attentive and receptive to new problems related to research integrity, and propose updates to the content of the code to the UOC's governing bodies.

Regarding the above functions, the Research Ethics Committee will, at all times, guarantee the diligence of its management, the independence of its actions, anonymity and confidentiality in the processing of personal data, the solvency of the information generated, the impartiality of its deliberations and the fairness of its resolutions, as well as the possibility of appealing against them, in accordance with its [Regulations](#).

Communications can be sent to the Research Ethics Committee by email to comite_etica@uoc.edu. In cases of doubt or potential conflict, it is advisable to consult one of the members of the Research Ethics Committee on an informal, personal basis beforehand. This is particularly advisable before proceeding with any kind of formal communication.

Even in cases of prior consultation, the members of the Research Ethics Committee are obliged to respect anonymity and confidentiality when dealing with personal data and any other information received.

The Research Ethics Committee also receives external advice from the CIR-CAT, the Committee for the Integrity of Research in Catalonia. This is an independent advisory body in Catalonia, whose purpose is to promote and consolidate good practice in research carried out in Catalonia, and to advise, analyse and prevent conflicts of research integrity among the agents carrying out and funding research in Catalonia.

13. Breaches of integrity in research

Academic negligence or misconduct related to any aspect of research activity is a failure to comply with the requirements of the UOC Code for Research Integrity. It may occur in the following cases:

- Invention or falsification of data or research results.
- Plagiarism, non-citation or misappropriation of the ideas, work or data of others.
- Failure to comply with legal obligations in a research project, such as not having the informed consent of participants or the improper use of personal data collected.

These forms of transgression are considered especially serious because they distort the research record.

There are other breaches of good research practice that affect the integrity of the research process or research staff. Some examples of unacceptable practices that distort the research record or damage the integrity of the research process or research staff are given in the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) (ALLEA, 2023) and are applicable to irregular conduct in research at the UOC.

The UOC has specific procedures for misconduct, negligence or breaches of good research practice. The Procedure for dealing with breaches of integrity in research describes irregular conduct in research work, the regulations that apply to it and detail the procedure followed to deal with irregularities in research activity.

Entry into force

The code will come into force as soon as it is published on the UOC's E-Services Portal, subject to approval by the UOC's Executive Board.

Appendix: Key resources

- [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) (ALLEA, 2023)
- [Internal Regulations of the UOC's Doctoral School](#) (2014)
- UOC regulations on acceptable behaviour (*Normativa de convivència*) (2024)
- [UOC Code of Ethics](#) (2023)
- [Regulations of the UOC Research Ethics Committee](#) (2023)
- [Regulations on the intellectual and industrial property R&I activities](#) at the UOC (2022)
- [UOC cloud file storage space policy](#) (2015)
- [UOC Institutional Open Access Policy](#) (2010)
- [Guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research](#), European Commission (2024)
- [Ethics guidelines for trustworthy AI](#), European Commission (2019)
- [Contributor Role Taxonomy \(CRediT\)](#)