

Rules for ensuring good scientific practice

Established in accordance with § 4(1) of Executive Order No. 261 of 18 March 2015 of the Danish Act on Universities (the University Act) and § 20 of Act No. 383 of 26 April 2017 on Research Misconduct, etc.

12 April 2018

Definitions

§ 1. Scientific work at SDU must be carried out in accordance with good scientific practice. Good scientific practice requires scientific probity and good research practice. This includes not engaging in behaviour that could be characterised as "research misconduct" or as "questionable research practice", cf. § 3 of the Act on Research Misconduct, etc.

(2) Research misconduct includes actions or omissions characterised by

1. fabrication, forgery or plagiarism in research
2. the person in question having acted in a deliberate or severely negligent way during planning, execution or reporting of research.

(3) Questionable research practice includes breaches of commonly recognised standards for responsible research practice, including standards in the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and other relevant institutional, national and international practices and guidelines for integrity in research. Actions and omissions in violation of good research practice could be, for instance:

1. Negligence which cannot be characterised as severe but whose consequences for the research must be considered as serious.

2. A deliberate distortion of research results or deceit concerning one's own or others' part in the research, even though the scale and consequences of the illegitimacy cannot in themselves be characterised as grave.
3. Behaviour which is not in accordance with the guidelines for good scientific practice that must have been made public by official and/or academically recognised agencies (e.g. concerning research protocols, data processing, documentation, declaration of authorship, private funding support, etc.).
4. Participation in a scientific work where personal or financial interests in the work's process and results can give rise to legitimate doubts about the concerned party's impartiality.

(4) Finally, good scientific practice requires loyal collegial behaviour which respects commonly accepted norms for presentation and mention of both one's own and others' research contribution.

(5) The requirement for good scientific practice is not a demand for "political correctness" or a demand to hold back professional or objective criticism of other people's scientific works or of common professional assumptions.

Committee

§ 2. The Vice-Chancellor sets up an internal advisory committee for processing cases concerning potential breaches of good scientific practice in connection with research at SDU (Committee on Practice). The committee consists of a chair and a representative from each faculty. The committee can supplement itself in an ad hoc manner with 1-2 people representing special insight in a given subject or research area.

§ 3. The committee has the following tasks:

1. In cases of research misconduct, cf. § 1(2), the committee shall prepare a report on the factual circumstances of the case for the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct.
2. In cases of questionable research practice, cf. § 1(3), the committee shall prepare a report on the case for the Vice-Chancellor, including a justified recommendation to the Vice-Chancellor regarding potential sanctions, etc., cf. § 13.

§ 4. The committee is responsible for processing cases of the type mentioned in § 3 which

1. are raised by written complaint to the committee,
2. are submitted to the committee by the Vice-Chancellor, or
3. are taken up by the committee by its own initiative or upon request from a person wanting to be cleared of pending rumours or accusations.

(2) Anyone can submit a complaint according to (1)[1]. A complaint can concern the plaintiff himself/herself as a request to be cleared of allegations of research misconduct.

§ 5. The committee members are subject to the same duty of confidentiality as for public office with regard to the information obtained in their capacity as members of the committee.

Processing cases of research misconduct

§ 6. The committee prepares a report on the factual circumstances of the case after a dialogue with the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct. The report shall be sent to the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct no later than three months after receiving the complaint.

§ 7. The committee can decline to send a case to the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct if the complaint does not contain information about

1. the scientific product that is the focus of the complaint,
2. the researcher(s) that the complaint concerns
3. the allegations of research misconduct made, and
4. the justification for the submitted allegations of research misconduct.

Processing cases of questionable research practice

§ 8. Only in exceptional circumstances can the committee process a complaint which has not been brought to the committee within a reasonable amount of time after the plaintiff has or should have experienced the necessary conditions for making the complaint.

(2) The committee can decline to process a case when it is found clearly to be without basis, or when the case is not judged to have significant impact for the research. The committee does not process complaints made anonymously.

(3) Only in exceptional circumstances can the committee process a case arising from conditions which at the beginning of the case are more than five years old.

(4) The committee cannot make binding decisions in a case but can only present its assessment of the case, including a justified recommendation to the Vice-Chancellor regarding potential sanctions, etc., cf. § 11 and § 13.

Procedure for cases of questionable research practice

§ 9. Once a case has been brought to the committee according to § 4(1)[1] or [2], the committee will make a decision on whether the case will be processed, rejected or suspended pursuant to § 8(1)-(3). If the committee is processing the case according to § 4(1)[3], the committee shall deliberate accordingly pursuant to § 8(2) - (3).

(2) In exceptional circumstances, the committee can decide to reconsider a previously rejected or finished case. This is particularly the case for new, essential information.

§ 10. The committee itself investigates any given case and ensures that the case is examined as thoroughly as possible with consideration of normal consultative procedure with the parties involved. This includes the committee having the possibility of obtaining statements from experts within the case's subject area. In addition, case management is regulated by the Public Administration Act.

(2) Normally, a case is processed in writing, but the committee can, depending on the circumstances, decide on an oral submission. The parties in a case processed orally in the committee are allowed assistance by assessors.

§ 11. When a case has been processed, the committee prepares a written report with a justified position on the case, as well as a recommendation regarding potential sanctions. The report, etc., is submitted to the Vice-Chancellor and sent to the parties in the case.

§ 12. The committee's position must indicate whether it has been reached unanimously. If the committee cannot come to an agreement, the position must also include the opinion of the minority.

Sanctions for cases of questionable research practice

§ 13. If the committee in a case establishes that there is behaviour in violation of good research practice, the committee can, taking into account the gravity of the circumstances, recommend to the Vice-Chancellor

1. that the circumstances open to criticism are addressed vis-à-vis the person concerned (reprimand/warning),
2. that the Vice-Chancellor considers consequences regarding employment for the person concerned,
3. that the relevant scientific work is sought to be retracted,
4. that any offended parties are notified,
5. that any private or public collaboration partners are notified,
6. that other relevant public authorities within this area are notified,
7. that the matter is reported to the police if it is deemed that a criminal offence has taken place.

Entry into force

§ 14. Approved by the Executive Board on 26 April 2018.

See: The Danish Committee on Research Misconduct