

University of Iceland Code of Ethics

Accepted at the 11th University General Forum 7 November 2003

Introduction

This Code of Ethics is approved by the University General Forum on behalf of the University Community. Writing the Code puts down in words the major factors of the ethical responsibility which is an integral part of all work at the University of Iceland, in order to encourage and assist the staff in performing their work well and efficiently. Rules of procedure also provide a path for confidential, unbiased and factual complaints of defects and encourage an objective solution of disputes.

Any position within the University of Iceland, each in its own way, aim at fulfilling its purpose in the best possible manner, and according to article 1 of the Act on the University of Iceland it shall be an institution of research and instruction providing its students with an education to work on independent scientific projects and be employed in various posts in society. The framework for this purpose is set by many statutory rules where the legal responsibility for the academic operation is stipulated along with formal penalties in case of misconduct. Such rules do, however, not cover all behaviour. A written Code of Ethics corresponds to various legal rules and it is preferable, due to the nature of the case, that there be a maximum accord between the two. The most important purpose of a written Code of Ethics is to provide a more general criteria on behaviour and professional responsibility than required in legislation, as they apply beyond the scope of the statutory rules. Similar views form the basis for instructions on good practice, which the University of Iceland has adapted, i.a. for teaching and exams.

The ethical responsibility of each job depends on its nature and purpose. The Code of Ethics is therefore in two main parts, first a general part that applies to all of academia (staff and students) and then a specific part for academic work (teaching, studies and research). Provisions concerning teaching apply to all who teach, fixed salaried professors, part-time teachers and students working as teacher assistants. Provisions concerning research apply to all who undertake research and provisions concerning administration and service apply to all who have administrative duties or work in administration.

Rules should be made clarifying specifically the different responsibilities of those who work and study in the university's different faculties and departments, for instance the responsibility in research in various fields of research. Further definitions are work for the faculties, departments and other operating units within the University as well as professional associations but not for the academic society as a whole.

Code of Ethics

1 General Provisions

1.1 Responsibility towards those who seek the services of the University of Iceland

Fundamental duty

1.1.1 University staff provides parties inside and outside with service and perform it well and conscientiously.

Equality

1.1.2 University staff does not discriminate against its clients, e.g. on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality, religion or opinion. It does not provide special treatment on the basis of personal relations.

Confidentiality

1.1.3 University staff observes confidentiality regarding its clients. It ensures that personal information is only used for factual purposes and that access to such information is limited to that respect. It observes strict caution wherever and whenever client issues are discussed.

Reliability

1.1.4 University staff makes certain that information provided by it is correct and as accurate as possible. It does not make unfounded statements and recognises when its knowledge is limited, obtaining the desired information or referring questions to an appropriate party.

1.2 Responsibility towards the University of Iceland

Fundamental duty

1.2.1 University staff carries out its work with diligence.

Objective criticism

1.2.2 University staff and students are free to criticise the University's policy and procedures in an objective fashion.

Loyalty

1.2.3 University staff and students try not to damage the University's reputation. They avoid taking on tasks that do not accord with their duties towards the University.

Ambition

1.2.4 Staff and students endeavour to see that the University fulfils its role and that its Code of Ethics is observed.

Personal responsibility

1.2.5 Teachers, specialists and students publish their research findings in their own name or the name of the respective institution within the University. No one can express the opinion of the University of Iceland other than a University General Forum, University Council or the Rector as authorised by them.

Appropriation of funds and other valuables

1.2.6 The University staff and students are careful in their use of funds and other valuables with which they are entrusted or have at their disposal in relation to their work or studies and do not use them for their own private interests.

1.3 Responsibility towards other university members

Fundamental duty

1.3.1 Staff and students of the University show each other respect in behaviour, speech and in writing.

Equality

1.3.2 Staff and students of the University do not discriminate against each other, e.g. on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality, religion or opinion. They do not persecute each other and are on guard for evidence thereof.

Factual debate

1.3.3 University staff and students exchange views in a factual manner.

Cooperation

1.3.4 University staff and students work together with integrity and avoid letting personal relations and interest influence their cooperation.

2 Research, teaching and studies

2.1 Responsibility with regard to the discipline

Fundamental responsibility

2.1.1 Teachers, specialists and students work in the spirit of the general truth that knowledge is valuable in itself in addition to its value for individuals and society. They are bound beyond anything else to practice scientific methods, seek the truth and present it according to the best of their knowledge.

Competence

2.1.2 Teachers, specialists and students seek to preserve and enhance their professional competence. Their work shall demonstrate that they are concerned about good work practice in their own discipline.

Accuracy and integrity

2.1.3 Teachers, specialists and students are critical of themselves and careful in their judgements. They do not falsify or distort information, data or research findings. They make sure that published results do not provide a unilateral and misleading picture of the subject. They avoid any kind of mistakes and errors in research. In the event of a mistake they admit to it and do all they can to put it right.

Honesty

2.1.4 Teachers, specialists and students do not present the intellectual property of others as their own. When they use the intellectual property of others they always cite the source according to accepted scientific methods.

Freedom of research

2.1.5 Teachers, specialists and students avoid letting connections with interested parties limit their freedom of research and restrain accepted scientific working procedures. They inform of existing connections with interested parties.

Cooperation and frankness

2.1.6 Teachers, specialists and (as applicable) students publish their research findings in a public venue. They do not hide results, methods, ideas or technology unless obliged by urgent and generally accepted reasons. They are open to criticism, cooperation and new ideas.

Protection of research participants

2.1.7 Teachers, specialists and students respect the rights of those participating in research

and make certain that their interests are protected in full. They apply humane methods in animal research.

2.2 Mutual responsibility of teachers and students

Fundamental responsibility of the teacher

2.2.1 Teachers encourage student education with careful guidance, appropriate demands, encouragement and good example.

Equality

2.2.2 Teachers take care not to discriminate against students and students not to discriminate against teachers, e.g. due to gender, race, sexual preference, age, disability, nationality, religion or opinions. They do not harass each other and are on guard for evidence thereof.

Guidance

2.2.3 Teachers train their students in integrity in speech and writing. They conduct their teaching, guidance and training in accordance with the utmost demands of quality work within their discipline. They also refer to practices acknowledged by the University in their teaching and conducting exams.

Respect

2.2.4 Teachers respect the rights of their students and are guided by their interests.

Confidentiality

2.2.5 Teachers observe confidentiality with respect to students. They observe strictest caution whenever their issues are discussed and make certain that no unauthorized parties gain access to documents concerning students.

Reliability

2.2.6 Teachers provide students with timely and correct information concerning the demands they or the University make of students. They honour their obligations with regard to students. They deliver grades and assignments as soon as possible.

Fairness

2.2.7 Teachers make fair demands of students and provide quality assessments. If there is suspicion of foul play by students they pursue the case.

Recognition

2.2.8 Teachers recognise student contribution to research in a fair manner.

Responsibility in a position of power

2.2.9 Teachers recognise their position of power in their interaction with students and make certain not to misuse it.

Student responsibility

2.2.10 Students are polite to their teachers, are considerate and abide by their fair instructions and are honest in their interaction with them. They avoid doing any wrong and observe the University's directions on good work practice for teaching and exams.

2.3 Responsibility of teachers and specialists with regard to other academic staff, both inside and outside the University

Fundamental responsibly

2.3.1 Staff and specialist show mutual respect in attitude, speech and in writing.

Equality

2.3.2 Staff and specialists do not discriminate against each other, e.g. on the basis of gender,

race, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality, religion or opinion. They do not harass each other and are on guard for evidence thereof.

Professional solidarity

2.3.3 Teachers and specialists defend the freedom of each other for research and expression of their theoretical conviction.

Recognition

2.3.4 Teachers and specialists recognise each others contribution to research.

Objectivity

2.3.5 Teachers and specialists are aware of the inherent responsibility of being a part of a panel of judges, criticism and other peer assessment. In that respect they rely on professional views not personal ones.

2.4 Responsibility with regard to society

Fundamental responsibility

2.4.1 Teachers, specialists and students endeavour to strengthen research in society as a free, factual and critical exchange of opinions.

Professionalism

2.4.2 Teachers, specialists and students taking part in a public debate or participating in social or political work do so based on their personal conviction. At the same time they keep in mind their responsibility as academicians.

Collective awareness

2.4.3 Teachers, specialists and students think responsibly of the results of their teaching and research for society, environment and nature.

3 Reaction to violation of the Code of Ethics of the University of Iceland

3.1 University staff is aware of respecting the University's Code of Ethics. If an employee realises that the Code has been violated he notifies thereof by sending a letter to the Rector or the University of Iceland Ethics Committee. A logically founded complaint of violation of the Code must never harm the submitting party.

3.2 It is up to the University of Iceland Ethics Committee to decide whether the University's Code of Ethics has been violated. The Committee receives complaints from parties both inside and outside the University but does not initiate cases itself.

3.3 The Ethics committee operates according to working rules confirmed by the University Council. The rules describe case treatment before the Committee, including how the Committee gathers evidence and comments from parties to a case and how it solves cases and publishes its findings. Treatment is based on judicial procedures and case processing by public authorities, intended to ensure an unbiased and objective treatment.

3.4 The conclusion of the Ethics Committee is both argued and explicit. The Committee does decide penalties for violation of the Code of Ethics, but it does state the seriousness of the violation and whether it was a repeated offence.

3.5 The conclusion of the Ethics Committee on violation of the Code is final and cannot be appealed. If the Committee's conclusion indicates that the violation is a professional misconduct under law the Committee refers the case to the Rector who takes the appropriate measures according to the law. In case of a disagreement or violation of laws, subject to parties outside the University the Committee dismisses the case.

Rules of procedure for the University of Iceland Ethics Committee

Approved at the 11th University General Forum on 7 November 2003
with amendments approved at the 21st University General Forum on 17 November 2006.

Article 1

General provisions.

The University of Iceland has an Ethics Committee which rules on whether the Code of Ethics of the University of Iceland has been violated.

The Ethics Committee receives written complaints on alleged breach of Code of Ethics from named parties within or outside the University. The Committee does not initiate cases for treatment.

The work of the Ethics Committee shall, as applicable, be based on the principles of objectivity and thorough treatment, i.a. with respect to the parties' position and regard to their interests.

In order to safeguard the interest of parties to a case the Ethics Committee can decide that documents and conclusions of individual complaints be kept confidential. The Ethics Committee can also, in special circumstances, decide that the plaintiff be anonymous, provided that it is demonstrated that treatment of the complaint would otherwise harm him.

Article 2

Appointment of the Committee.

The Chairman of the Ethics Committee is appointed by the University Council according to the Rector's nomination. The Association of University Teachers and the Association of Professors each appoint one Committee Member. Upon presentation of a complaint of a violation of the Code of Ethics the Rector may appoint two additional Members, according to the nature of the complaint, for treatment of the complaint with the Chairman and the representatives of the teachers' associations. On behalf of the University Council the Rector appoints these two Members after receiving nominations from the Committee's Chairman.

The period of appointment of the Chairman and the teachers' associations' representatives is three years, the appointment of other Members is limited to the relevant issue.

The Rector appoints a secretary to the Committee from the University staff.

Article 3

Committee Members' competence.

A Committee Member may not treat a complaint if he does not meet the competence requirements of Article 3 of the Administrative Procedures Act No. 37/1993. Then the Rector appoints another Member in his stead on behalf of the University Council.

Article 4

Case Grounds

The Ethics Committee examines whether the presented complaint concerns the University of Iceland Code of Ethics. The Committee rejects complaints that do not concern the Code or are unfounded. The Committee may also reject complaints if they concern alleged violation of statutes that can be referred for decision to the authorities or the courts.

Article 5

Data Collection

The Ethics Committee collects necessary data in order to decide on the complaint. The Committee shall have unhindered access to data relevant to the complaint in the University of Iceland archives or the archives of the faculties. Discussion of Committee Members with

those concerned shall be registered whenever possible. In the case of audio recordings these shall be made with the interviewed person's consent. What is registered shall be approved by the interviewed person.

Access to information gathered by the Committee and its conclusions are subject to provisions of the Information law.

Article 6

Right to Object

Before the Ethics Committee reaches a decision on a complaint a party shall have the opportunity to express himself on the presented complaint, all data collected and the position of other parties if there are such.

Article 7

Conclusion

The Ethics Committee's conclusion on a complaint shall be justified and clearly state whether the University of Iceland Code of Ethics has been violated. If the Committee does not reach a clear conclusion due to lack of information on case circumstances the complaint shall be rejected. If Committee Members cannot agree whether there is a violation, the conclusion shall be the opinion of the two Members in the majority. When the matter of complaint concerns a dispute between persons the Committee shall, as applicable, encourage parties to reach an agreement.

The Ethics Committee does not decide upon penalties for violations it concludes on, but it shall express an opinion on the seriousness of the violation and whether it shall be regarded as a repeated violation.

Article 8

Publication of conclusion

The Ethics Committee conclusion on a complaint is written and announced by letter to the parties. The conclusion is also sent to the Rector for information and archiving.

As far as the Committee's conclusion is based on an interpretation of the Code of Ethics, the Committee shall prepare an abstract of its debates and publish it as an example of the relevant provision of the Code on the University's website. This shall however not apply if it is decided that the Committee conclusion shall be held confidential.

Article 9

Reactions to the Committee conclusion.

The conclusion of the Ethics Committee on violation of the Code of Ethics is final and cannot be appealed. If the Committee conclusion indicates that the violation is a professional misconduct under law the Committee shall point this out to the Rector.

The Ethics Committee is authorized to point out to the Rector faults in the rules governing the University of Iceland.