Good Research Practice Guidelines
at the Silesian University in Opava

This manual aims at explaining the rules of good research practice at the Silesian university in Opava.

The basic principles for work and study at the university are set forth in the Code of Ethics of the Silesian University in Opava, which is binding for all employees and students of SU and treats all aspects of work and study at the university. The goal of the current document is to provide simple guidelines for complying with this code in the area of research activity.

This document strives to be informative rather than prescriptive, and to offer assistance to researchers in helping them to determine how to apply the internal regulations and norms of the university, as well as wider legal and other requirements, to the concrete situations in everyday practice of research.

The university welcomes feedback on the content of these guidelines. Comments and suggestions can be sent to prorektor-vyz@slu.cz.

1. General framework

SU's Code of Ethics is based primarily on the *Ethical Framework of Research* drafted by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic in 2005, on the *Code of Ethics for University Academics* approved by the Council of Higher Education Institutions in 2007, on the *Code of Ethics for Researchers at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic* approved in 2016, and on the European Commission documents *European Charter for Researchers* and *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers* from 2005.

In addition to the above, many funding institutions have their own policies, such as the Ethics Code for Investigators of Projects of the Czech Science Foundation (GA ČR). Funding organizations may also impose various obligations and restrictions on the use of their funds, such as requiring that research findings be disseminated in an "open access" publication model or that the purpose of the research not be a direct commercial or private gain. Researchers should familiarize themselves with these ethical or other obligations and seek advice from the relevant funding body if necessary.

Researchers should also disclose and manage any conflict of interest, both financial and professional. Similarly as in the previous paragraph, researchers should also be cautious to abide by any conflict of interests requirements stipulated by funding organizations.

2. Publication ethics

Listed below are various examples of unacceptable practices connected with what is probably the most important element of research work, namely publication and dissemination of results of research.

- Fabrication is making up results and presenting them as if they were real.

- Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment or processes or changing, omitting or suppressing data or results without justification.

- Plagiarism is using other people's work and ideas without giving proper credit to the original source, thus violating the rights of the original authors to their intellectual outputs.

These "official" definitions (adopted by the ALLEA European Code for Research Integrity from 2017) are the three most serious forms of violation of research integrity (traditionally referred to as

"research misconduct"). In addition to these, other unacceptable practices in publication ethics are represented by, but not confined to, the following.

- Re-publishing substantive parts of one's own earlier publications, including translations, without duly acknowledging or citing the original ('self-plagiarism').
- Citing selectively to enhance own findings or to please editors, reviewers or colleagues.
- Expanding unnecessarily the bibliography of a publication.
- Exaggerating the importance and practical applicability of findings.
- Unnecessarily dividing results into multiple publications in order to artificially increase the number of research outputs.
- Deliberately omitting references to substantial works that are not in accordance with one's own results and conclusions.

A major problem in the current scientific world is represented by so-called predatory practices, when authors are offered the possibility of making their scientific work visible in the form of publication in a journal, publication of a monograph, participation in a conference, etc., for a fee, while there is no actual peer review process or other control of the credibility and quality of the published work results. This is a clearly negative phenomenon that threatens one of the basic principles of scientific research – good-quality review management and the need to successfully defend one's results in front of colleagues in the field ("peer review"). At the same time, the aforementioned practices are constantly being improved by their masterminds, and it is often difficult to detect them in time and avoid them, especially with the current ever-increasing emphasis on making available the results that were financed from public sources in the form of so-called open access. A brief guide that tries to summarize at least the basic recommendations in this respect can be found at this link.

3. Authorship issues

A person may be listed as the author or co-author of a publication only if he/she has contributed creatively to its creation, e.g. by designing and conducting the studies and experiments, performing the analysis, interpretation, theoretical processing or modelling of the data, or contributing creatively to the process of writing the publication, and if he/she agrees to be a co-author.

Examples of unacceptable practices in manipulating authorship or denigrating the role of other researchers in publications are especially the following.

- Purposeful omission of junior colleagues, postdocs or students who have creatively contributed to the creation of the publication.
- Purposeful omission of those who have contributed in a significant way, but were subsequently excluded for formal reasons (e.g. termination of employment contract).
- Purposeful omission of persons who may be in a conflict of interest (e.g. industry partners).
- Including authors who have not actually contributed to the publication, e.g. the head of the department, the formal leader of the team, the supervisor of a student author or mentor of a postdoc author, etc.

All authors of the publication should agree on the order of authors in the publication.

All authors must be properly informed and consulted about submission of the publication and choice of the publication outlet (specific journal, conference proceedings, etc.).

Each author is responsible for giving his/her correct affiliation(s) and acknowledging all sources of his/her funding that supported the research which led to the publication.

4. Responsibility

Anyone listed as an author of a publication accepts <u>responsibility</u> for ensuring that he/she is familiar with the contents of the publication and can identify his/her contribution to it. He/she is responsible for the quality and authenticity of his/her results, for their completeness and verifiability and for interpreting them without distortion.

To this end, an author is also responsible for retaining any relevant <u>primary data</u> and documentation of all significant results for the period which is usual in the particular discipline, unless otherwise required by other obligations or regulations.

All authors are fully responsible for the content of a publication, unless otherwise specified.

If an author discovers an error or another flaw in his/her published work, he proceeds without undue delay to publish the necessary correction or to retract the publication.

5. Openness

While recognizing the need for researchers to protect their intellectual property rights, SU encourages researchers to be as open as possible in discussing their work with other researchers and with the public.

It is a breach of ethical standards to unnecessarily withhold any non-confidential results of research supported from public funding. Authors should ensure that their work is made available to colleagues in a timely, open, transparent, and accurate manner, unless otherwise agreed, and are honest in their communication to the general public and in traditional and social media.

As outputs of "work made for hire", SU is officially the owner of all intellectual property rights created by its employees within their work for the university. It is a criminal offence to provide the results of the creative activities achieved on the premises of the university using its technical, administrative, or financial background to third parties for personal gain.

An increasing number of public funding agencies require that results of research be published in one of the so-called <u>open access</u> models, where the publication is made available free of charge to anyone. Two most widespread examples are the Gold Open Access model, where usually the author bears all the publication expenses ("Article Processing Charges"); and the Green Open Access model, where no fees are charged but the publisher makes the paper available only after a certain "embargo" period (typically ranging from 6 months to 5 years). While SU encourages its researchers to use open access models for their publication, especially in the case of the Gold Access Model extreme care should be exercised to avoid "predatory" journals mentioned above.

As mentioned above, according to the Czech legislation the intellectual property rights to all results obtained within work for the university belong, as "work for hire", to SU (exempting the personal rights of the author). For this reasons, researchers are required to archive the latest versions of their papers submitted for publications (before any processing on the side of the publisher) in <u>SU's repository</u> at <u>https://is.slu.cz/auth/publikace/edit</u>. The "access rights" need to be assigned in accordance with the valid licence of the publisher; when in doubt, allow access only for "no one" (this is the default).

6. Intellectual property

SU is the official owner of property rights of all <u>intellectual property</u> created by its employees within their work for the university; the author retains his/her personal rights to such property. In case of intellectual property that has potential for commercial use, it is the obligation of the author to inform his/her immediate superior about such results within 30 days; the university then takes the necessary

further steps to ensure the appropriate protection of the rights to the result (patent application etc.). In case of results in the form of a publication, the author as well as his/her immediate superior are authorized to conclude, on behalf of SU, the necessary license agreement with suitable publisher. All these rules are somewhat different for intellectual property created by students; details can be found in Rector's Directive on Dealing with Results of Intellectual Activity. When in doubt, consult the vice-dean for research of your faculty, or vice-director for research of your institute.

7. Non-disclosure of information and GDPR

All employees of SU are required by the Work Rules of the university to maintain confidentiality about the facts that they learned during the performance of their work and which cannot be disclosed to other persons in the interest of the employer; this does not apply if the employee is exempted from this obligation by the Rector or an authorized member of the university management, unless a special legal regulation stipulates otherwise. This applies also to all aspects of research work. Failure to comply with this obligation (in particular, any unauthorized collection of information about the activities of the employer, private and personal matters of employees and personal matters of students), or passing such information to third parties, represents a serious breach of work rules and is a legal reason for termination of job contract.

The preceding paragraph applies, in particular, also to any personal data that the researcher may encounter in course of his/her research (or other) work at SU. The rules for handling, processing and handing over such data are stipulated by the General Data Protection Regulation of the European Parliament; the details about the implementation of this directive at SU can be found on this webpage (in Czech only), where a general manual about GDPR and research data is also available. In case of doubt or if more detailed information is needed, it is possible to consult the GDPR commissioner of SU at gdpr-dpo@slu.cz.

8. Reviewing and evaluating

When performing any "peer review" tasks, such as assessment of manuscripts, examination of students, evaluation of work of others, assessment of applications, acting as thesis or habilitation opponent, or giving an expert opinion, the following are considered as violations of ethical standards at SU.

- Delegating the task on another colleague instead of doing it yourself in person.
- Using the results or data contained in the evaluated documents for any other purpose than the preparation of the expert opinion or providing them to a third party.
- Purposefully prolonging the evaluation in order to achieve your own benefit or benefit for a third party.
- Providing the expert opinion without disclosing any potential conflict of interest on your side.
- Providing your expert opinion on a matter which is outside your field of expertize or on which you do not have sufficient knowledge.

Needless to say, all the tasks mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph should be done objectively and honestly, and without yielding to any external pressure.

9. Funding

Researchers are responsible for the efficient and effective use of funds and human resources provided for their research. In particular, care should be taken not to duplicate research carried out elsewhere, unless it is necessary to verify, supplement, or compare the results.

All sources of funding should be appropriately acknowledged when publishing research outputs. On the other hand, persons who only provided funding for research (sponsors, project staff, etc.) are not eligible to be listed as co-authors of such publications, unless they have creatively contributed to its creation

10. Discipline-specific issues

Some ethical issues which are specific for certain disciplines only are nor addressed in SU's Code of Ethics, which is intended to include just the general standards common to all science fields cultivated at the university. Examples of such discipline-specific issues are ethical practices in research involving human participants, human tissue and personal data, or in research involving animals, research with active involvement of patients or consumer groups, and similar. Issues of this kind are addressed in codes of ethics of the relevant constituents of SU – currently, this is only the Ethics Code of the Faculty of Public Policies (in Czech only). Researchers should always consult these discipline-specific codes whenever relevant and adhere to the stipulations there.

Researchers must consider any risks that their research will generate outcomes that could be misused for harmful purposes both when setting up research collaborations, communicating results and teaching. In particular, this applies to transfer, by any means, of goods, technology, software or knowledge that could be used for military purposes, weapons of mass destruction, cyber war, and similar.

11. Violations of research integrity

Failing to follow good research practices damages the research processes, degrades relationships among researchers, undermines trust in research and its credibility, wastes resources and may expose research subjects, users, society or the environment to unnecessary harm. Researchers are expected to adhere to SU's Code of Ethics themselves, as well as require this adherence from their colleagues and students. Suspected violations of the Code by an employee or student of the university should be reported in any one of the following ways.

- Filing a complaint, notification, or suggestion in a written, oral, or electronic form to a superior at any level.
- Filing a complaint, notification, or suggestion in a written, oral, or electronic form to the relevant filing office ("podatelna"): either in Opava (see here) or in Karvina (see here).
- If the violation cannot be resolved within the relevant workplace (department, institute, faculty) or if the researcher is not satisfied with the conclusions reached at the workplace, a complaint should be filed directly to the Ethics Committee of SU. This can be done either through SU's "whistleblower portal" at https://www.slu.cz/slu/cz/oznameni, or by sending an email to etickakomise@slu.cz, or again through one of the filing offices of the university. Complaints filed to the Ethics Committee should possess requisites specified in the Rules of Procedure of the committee.
- Researchers at SU may also seek advice or assistance of the university ombudsman should they have doubts about the observance of their rights or of the ethical principles of the Code.

If you find yourself a victim of research misconduct by a person outside SU, there may be similar options to follow at the institution of the perpetrator. In case of plagiarism, the editor-in-chief of the relevant journal should be contacted and retraction of the offending publication required. Respectable journals have fair and expedient procedures to deal with such cases.

Key resources referenced or used in the preparation of this document

Code of Ethics of the Silesian University in Opava

Ethical Framework of Research of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (in Czech only)

Code of Ethics for University Academics of the Council of HEIs (in Czech only)

Code of Ethics for Researchers at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

European Charter for Researchers and *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*

ALLEA European Code for Research Integrity

Good Research Practice Guidelines of the University of Cambridge

Ethics Code for Investigators of Projects of the Czech Science Foundation (GA ČR)

Last update of this document: March 16, 2023