Stockholm University

Research integrity and ethics policy

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Description:
The main purpose of this policy is to clarify the overall view of Stockholm University as regards protecting and promoting good research practice. The policy introduces the foundations for this work as well as the distribution of responsibilities within the organisation. In combination with making the policy known, this will contribute to ensuring responsible behaviour and compliance in the area of research integrity and ethics. The aim of this, in turn, is to protect individuals, society, animals, the environment, etc., and to protect the credibility of science, trust in research and the University as an institution. The policy is directed primarily to those who conduct or participate in research or similar activities, but also to other staff and students. The policy is also intended to give people from outside the University a picture of the University's overall approach to this work.

This is a translation of a governing document. In case of a discrepancy between the Swedish and the English versions, the Swedish version will prevail.

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1 Introduction

Stockholm University protects the quality, integrity and independence of research, and this requires research to be carried out in accordance with good research practice. There are research integrity and ethics guidelines aiming to codify ethical principles and practices which have evolved within the research community, but there is no exact definition of "good research practice". Two examples of descriptions are "the moral practice developing in the dialogue between and critical reflection of different research actors and the surrounding society on the research enterprise"[1] and "the collective ethical criteria on how good research should be conducted"[2].

The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2017), published by All European Academies (ALLEA), emphasizes the research community's own responsibility for furthering good research practice. The main purpose of the ALLEA Code is to contribute to realising this responsibility and to provide a framework for self-regulation within the research community. The Code presents fundamental principles and descriptions of good research practice in various contexts, offering a picture of what it means to protect, promote and follow good research practice. An understanding of what constitutes good research practice requires an understanding of how these principles and descriptions can be applied in the practical and legal contexts where research is carried out.

The ALLEA Code also presents an established view on what constitutes particularly serious deviations from good research practice. This view is reflected in the definition[3] of "research misconduct" in the Act on responsibility for good research practice and the examination of research misconduct (lag (2019:504) om ansvar för god forskningssed och prövning av oredlighet i forskning, hereafter referred to as LAO): *a serious deviation from good research practice in the form of fabrication, falsification or plagiarism that is committed intentionally or through gross negligence when planning, conducting or reporting research.*[4]

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[1] *God sed i forskningen* (SOU 1999:4), p. 24. Swedish Government Official Reports (SOU series). Only in Swedish.
[2] *Good research practice*, Swedish Research Council (2017), p. 17.
[3] See also the definition in *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity* (2017), section 3.1.
[4] According to Section 7 LAO, suspicions of deviations from good research practice are to be investigated by the National Board for Assessment of Research Misconduct (Nämnden för prövning av oredlighet i forskning), whereas, in accordance with Chapter 1, Section17 of the Higher Education Ordinance (Högskoleförordningen 1993:100), the University shall investigate suspected deviations from good research practice other than those which are to be investigated specifically according to

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2 Good research practice

2.1 Fundamental principles

All research at Stockholm University is to be carried out in accordance with good research practice.[5] Assessments of what constitutes good research practice are based on well established research integrity and ethics guidelines, taking into account relevant differences between research areas. Central documents in this context are Good Research Practice (2017) from the Swedish Research Council and The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2017) published by All European Academies (ALLEA).[6] Those who conduct or participate in research or similar activities must be familiar with the basic principles introduced in these documents, and understand how these principles are applied in their specific research areas. The following fundamental principles are specified in the ALLEA Code:

LAO. See also *Procedure for handling suspicion of deviation from good research practice* (see Governing Documents – Rules & Regulations).

[5] See Sections 4 and 5 LAO and Chapter 1, Section 3 the Higher Education Act (Högskolelagen 1992:1434).

[6] The ALLEA code has been translated into Swedish. However, since some differences in meaning between the original and the Swedish translation can be detected, it is recommended to use the English version in this context. More expansive discussions concerning this matter can be found in *Yttrande avseende förslaget till rekommendation av kodex för forskningens integritet, definitioner av avvikelser från god sed i forskning samt hanteringsordning för misstankar om avvikelser från god sed* (SU FV-1.1.3-3073-19). Only in Swedish.

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- **Reliability** in ensuring the quality of research, reflected in the design, the methodology, the analysis and the use of resources.[7]
- **Honesty** in developing, undertaking, reviewing, reporting and communicating research in a transparent, fair, full and unbiased way.
- **Respect** for colleagues, research subjects[8], society, ecosystems, cultural heritage and the environment.
- **Accountability** for the research from idea to publication, for its management and organisation, for training, supervision and mentoring, and for its wider impacts.

These principles set guidelines for working and dealing with the practical, ethical and intellectual problems which arise when research is carried out. For more developed descriptions and discussions on good research practice, see the ALLEA Code and the abovementioned publication from the Swedish Research Council.

Good research practice includes following applicable regulations and guidelines and securing necessary permissions, e.g. for research on humans or research involving animal testing. If research is done outside Sweden, it is necessary to ensure that both Swedish and foreign regulations and guidelines are followed to the extent that they are applicable. In case foreign regulations or ethical guidelines allow activities, which are not permitted according to Swedish regulations and guidelines, an adequate level of protection for humans and animals must still be ensured, primarily through applying the Swedish standard also abroad.[9]

All research involving animals[10] is subject to the 3Rs principles (Replace, Reduce, Refine). This means replacing animal experiments with methods not using animals when this still permits answering the research question (Replace), using as few animals as possible to answer

[7] The reference to "use of resources" in this context should be understood as pointing to the need to use resources responsibly. The Code particularly emphasizes the importance of proper and conscientious use of research funds (section 2.3) and that failure to follow good research practices constitutes a waste of resources (section 3).

[8] In this principle, we have replaced the term "research participants" with "research subjects" (the latter is an established term, which is also used in section 2.4 in the ALLEA Code). Research subjects are people who participate in activities such as observational studies, interviews or surveys, or whose personal data or tissue or cell samples are used for research purposes.

[9] Swedish regulations on good research practice and research misconduct apply no matter where the research is carried physically, in case the material involved is owned by Stockholm University.

[10] This includes research involving vertebrates and cephalopods, research which requires specific ethics permission. However, all experiments should be designed so as to avoid distress and unnecessary pain and suffering for the animals**.**

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the research question (Reduce), and continually improving the conditions for animal welfare as well as designing experiments so as to inflict as little distress as possible (Refine).

2.2 Promoting good research practice

The University's work on protection and promotion of good research practice shall be pursued in close relation with the researchers and the research environments, in a way that stimulates open and well-informed collegial discussions about research ethical matters. Measures taken in the area of research integrity and ethics should be in keeping with the trust-based governance which characterises the University's activities, i.e. a clear, simple, collegially based line organisation with strong departments. Staff are to be offered advice and support in questions of good research practice and deviations from such practice.[11]

The work on securing compliance in the research integrity and ethics area should primarily be focused on creating good conditions for effective collegial monitoring. This is done mainly by offering support, training, information and clear internal governing documents, as well as by promoting good research environments. There may, however, be cases which necessitate more direct action, e.g. investigations of suspicions of problematic research environments or measures in order to stop unethical research which may cause harm.

High quality research requires adherence to good research practice. Protecting and promoting good research practice is therefore also part of the University's quality assurance activities.[12] The University provides administrative support contributing to finding feasible ways of conducting research within the framework of guidelines and regulations. In cases where regulations or implementation thereof complicates research activities to an unreasonable or disproportional degree, the University should work towards changing the regulations or the way they are implemented.

2.3 Deviations from good research practice

Suspicions of deviation from good research practice in the course of the operations of the University shall be noted and handled in a legally secure, transparent and purposive manner. This handling is regulated in *Procedure for handling suspicion of deviation from good*

[11] Chapter 1, Section16 The Higher Education Ordinance (Högskoleförordningen 1993:100).
[12] Cf. *Utredning avseende Stockholms universitets kvalitetssäkring av forskning* (SU FV-1.1.2-0767-17) and *Utredning avseende Stockholms universitets åtgärdsbehov inom det forskningsetiska området* (SU FV-1.1.2-2987-18). Only in Swedish.

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research practice (see Rules and Regulations – Governing Documents). The University has also set up a special procedure for handling deviations within animal experiments.[13]

3 Responsibility for good research practice

3.1 Overall responsibility

The University has the overall responsibility for ensuring that research carried out within the operations of the University is conducted in accordance with good research practice and that scientific credibility and good research practice are safeguarded.[14] This overall responsibility involves striving for a high level of awareness and knowledge of good research practice, as well as a good research and working environment characterized by openness and respect. This entails, among other things, the responsibility to ensure that

- all who carry out research or participate in research or similar activities[15] are given sufficient and continuous information and training in good research practice and regulations in force, as well as other resources required in order for them to be able to fulfil their individual responsibility (see 3.2 below) and the particular responsibility which comes with specific roles (se 3.3. below)
- there are clear internal governing documents within the research integrity and ethics area
- there are adequate structures for promoting good research practice, including compliance in the research integrity and ethics area (this comprises structures for support, control and follow-up).

3.2 Individual responsibility

The fact that the University has an overall responsibility for ensuring that research carried out within the operations of the University is conducted in accordance with good research practice does not mean that individuals at the University are exempt from responsibility. Each individual researcher is responsible for following good research practice in their research[16] and everybody at Stockholm University is obliged to stay informed about and to follow applicable rules and guidelines within the research integrity and ethics area. In order for

[13] *Avvikelsehantering vid Stockholms universitets försöksdjursverksamheter* (SU FV-1.1.2-1472-20). Only in Swedish.
[14] Section 5 LAO and Chapter 1 Section 3 a the Higher Education Act (Högskolelagen).
[15] This includes staff in research, teaching, technical and administrative capacities, as well as doctoral students and other students.
[16] Section 4 LAO.

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measures taken as part of the overall responsibility to be effective, everyone must fulfil their individual responsibility by e.g.

- continuously acquiring/participating in information/training in good research practice when this is offered
- keeping up to date with relevant rules, guidelines, governing and policy documents in the research integrity and ethics area
- acting responsibly and following relevant applicable rules and guidelines within the research integrity and ethics area, including internal governing documents and decisions
- contributing to a good research and working environment and to collegial discussions about research integrity and ethics questions
- when necessary, seeking advice and support concerning good research practice.[17]

3.3 Special responsibility tied to certain roles or tasks

The head of department/equivalent has an overall responsibility (cf. 3.1 above) for ensuring that research at the department/equivalent is carried out in accordance with good research practice. This includes a responsibility for creating good research environments, providing everybody at the department with favourable conditions for fulfilling their individual responsibility (for instance by making sure that everybody is offered information, training, advice and support in matters concerning good research practice)[18], and rectifying potential organizational deficiencies which may lead to insufficient compliance. In case of uncertainty about these questions, the head of department/equivalent shall turn to or refer to the ethics support function at the Office for Research, Engagement and Innovation Services (see 3.4 below). The head of department/equivalent is also responsible for taking measures to prevent research which requires approval from the Swedish Ethical Review Authority in accordance with the Ethical Review Act[19] from being carried out without such approval or in conflict with conditions communicated in connection with such approval. Heads of department/equivalent represent the University vis-à-vis the Swedish Ethical Review Authority and the Ethics Review Appeals Board.[20]

The deans have an overall responsibility to ensure that research at the faculty is carried out in accordance with good research practice. Consequently, they are responsible for ensuring that

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[17] Advice and support are available through administrative support units, see 3.3 and 3.4 below.
[18] See *Delegation av uppgifter om etikprövning av forskning som avser människor* (SU FV-5.5.1-2126-20), and the corresponding decisions delegating tasks in the respective faculties. Only in Swedish.
[19] The Act (2003:460) on the Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans.
[20] See *Delegation av uppgifter om etikprövning av forskning som avser människor* (SU FV-5.5.1-2126-20), and the corresponding decision delegating tasks in the respective faculty. Only in Swedish.

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the heads of department/equivalent have the authority, competence and resources necessary to fulfil their overall responsibility. The President in turn is responsible for ensuring that the deans have sufficient authority, competence and resources necessary to fulfil their overall responsibility.

Teachers/researchers who supervise doctoral students/students whose work include research or similar activities have a special responsibility to inform them about regulations, guidelines and governing and support documents, as well as to ensure that they participate in training about good research practice. The role of the supervisor also includes contributing to creating good environments and to provide the doctoral students/students with guidance on matters concerning good research practice. In cases of uncertainty about such matters, the supervisor shall get in touch with the ethics support function at the Office for Research, Engagement and Innovation Services (see 3.4 below). The doctoral students/students in turn have an individual responsibility to acquire such information and training, and to follow the instructions given by the supervisor, so long as this does not entail deviations from good research practice. If necessary, doctoral students can also turn to the ethics support function directly (see 3.4 below).

The responsibilities of the University's License holder for animal experiments involve ensuring that activities involving animal experiments are given sufficient personnel and resources to be carried out in accordance with applicable regulatory provisions. The researcher who is responsible for carrying out an animal experiment also has to make sure there is an ethical approval, that the experiment is done in accordance with this approval and that all unnecessary suffering is prevented. All personnel who carry out or design animal experiments, or are involved in taking care of or killing laboratory animals, also carry an individual responsibility for the wellbeing of the animals and shall have the training required by the regulations and general advice on laboratory animals from the Swedish Board of Agriculture (SJVFS 2019:9, L150, Chapter 6).

3.4 Administrative support concerning good research practice

Administrative support in matters concerning good research practice (with the exception of animal welfare, see below) is provided by the ethics support function at the Office for

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Research, Engagement and Innovation Services[21] and to some extent by the Council for Good Research Practice.[22]

When necessary, the ethics support function interacts with other administrative units in order to ensure qualified support in matters which require special competence e.g. concerning legal matters, archiving and data management. Special protection and support in relation to the handling of suspicion of deviation from good research practice is the responsibility of the faculty concerned.[23]

Administrative support in matters of animal welfare is the responsibility of the University's animal welfare body, which is made up of a director, a veterinarian, researchers and staff who take care of the animals. The animal welfare body performs the tasks specified in the regulations and general advice on laboratory animals from Swedish Board of Agriculture (SJVFS 2019:9, L150) and acts in accordance with the action plan for the University's animal welfare body (SU FV-1.1.2-1462-20). The animal welfare body is responsible for giving advice for improvement of animal welfare. The general information responsibility towards researchers at Stockholm University about animal testing lies with the Licence holder office.

4 Legal context: guidelines, regulations and policy documents

The most important general guidelines in terms of research integrity and ethics in Europe and Sweden respectively are the following (cf. 2.1 above):

- *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*, All European Academies (ALLEA), 2017
- *Good Research Practice*, the Swedish Research Council, 2017.

The following (Swedish) laws and ordinances are (among others) relevant in this context:

- The Higher Education Act (Högskolelagen 1992:1434), which contains provisions that higher education institutions shall uphold academic credibility and good research practice

[21] As described in part 3.3 above, heads of department have a designated responsibility to ensure that everybody at the department shall be given information and training as well as advice and support in matters relating to good research practice. Advisors have a specific responsibility towards students involving guidance in matters of good research practice. Both heads of department and advisors can in turn address the ethics support function for advice and support in these matters.
[22] For information about the Council for Good Research Practice, see *Rules of procedure for the Council for Good Research Practice* (see Governing Documents – Rules and Regulations).
[23] See also *Procedure for handling of suspicion of deviation from good research practice* (see Governing Documents – Rules and Regulations).

(Chapter 1, Section 3 a) and that the operations shall be arranged to ensure that high standards are attained in courses, study programmes and in research (Chapter 1, Section 4)

- The Act on responsibility for good research practice and the examination of research misconduct (Lagen om ansvar för god forskningssed och prövning av oredlighet i forskning 2019:504, LAO), which contains provisions that the researcher is responsible for compliance with good research practice in their research (Section 4) and that the entity responsible for research has overarching responsibility for research being conducted in accordance with good research practice (Section 5)
- The Higher Education Ordinance (Högskoleförordningen1993:100), contains provisions that a higher education institution must ensure that staff can obtain advice and support on issues relating to good research practice and deviations from such practice. It further provides (Chapter 1, Section 16) that a higher education institution must examine other suspected deviations from good research practice than those to be examined under LAO and that a higher education institution must draw up guidelines for the examination of suspected deviations from good research practice (Chapter 1, Section 17)
- The Act (2003:460) on the Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans (lagen om etikprövning av forskning som avser människor 2003:460) provides that certain research can only be conducted if it has been approved after an ethical review (by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority), that an approval may be subject to conditions and that the research principal responsible for the research shall take measures to prevent that their activities are carried out in violation of this legislation or in violation of a condition which has been communicated (Section 6)
- The Animal Welfare Act (Djurskyddslagen 2018:1192) provides that
    - a licence is required to use, breed, keep or provide laboratory animals (Chapter 7, Section 2)
    - whoever intends to use animals in animal testing needs an ethics approval from an ethics committee on animals, before using the animals (Chapter 7, Section 9)
    - for activities requiring a permit there must be one or more directors with responsibility for the operations and one veterinarian (or other qualified expert) to provide advice and instructions on how to perform the activities and to assist in the treatment of the animals. There must also be staff of sufficient number with the training and competence necessary for the activities, and an animal welfare body to advise the staff on matters of animal protection and to supervise the activities from an animal protection perspective (Chapter 7, Section 7).

In addition to this policy, the University has (among others) the following internal governing documents and decisions on delegation of tasks relating to good research practice (some of which are presently only available in Swedish):

- *Rules of procedure for the Council for Good Research Practice* (*Arbetsordning för Rådet för god forskningssed*) (see Governing Documents – Rules & Regulations)

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- *Procedure for handling suspicion of deviation from good research practice* (Handläggningsordning för hantering av misstanke om avvikelse från god forskningssed) (see Governing Documents – Rules & Regulations)
- *Delegation av uppgifter om etikprövning av forskning som avser människor* (SU FV-5.5.1-2126-20, a decision on the delegation of tasks concerning the ethical review of research involving humans) and the corresponding decisions at the respective faculty
- *Handlingsplan – Stockholms universitets djurskyddsorgan* (SU FV-1.1.2-1462-20, an action plan for the University's animal welfare body)
- *Avvikelsehantering vid Stockholms universitets försöksdjursverksamheter* (SU FV-1.1.2-1472-20, a document on the handling of deviations in animal experiments within the University)
- *Research data policy* (*Forskningsdatapolicy*) (see Governing Documents – Rules & Regulations)
- *Regler om bevarande och gallring av handlingar inom forskningsverksamhet vid Stockholms universitet* (rules on preserving and purging of research material) (see Styrdokument – Regelboken).

In addition to what has been presented in this section, there are guidelines, regulations and governing documents of relevance for research integrity and ethics which concern different parts of the University's operations to varying degrees (depending on e.g. area and focus), for example archiving, research data, processing of personal data, clinical trials, biobanks, public access and secrecy. However, these documents are not treated further in this policy.