

Guidelines for processing of questions regarding research ethics at UiT the Arctic University of Norway

Stipulated by Rector by authority from the Board of the University of Tromsø The Arctic University of Norway (UiT)		Dato 29 January.2018	
Under the provisions of	Act relating to Universities and University Colleges to Section 9-1 (1) of 1-5 and Act on Ethics in Research section 6, third subsection.		
Responsible unit	Department of Research and Development (AFU)	Arkivref.	2017/3011
Replaces	Guidelines for handling of questions regarding research ethics from 14.February 2008.	Arkivref.	2006/2792-17

This is an unofficial translation of the Norwegian version of the guidelines and is provided for information purposes.

I. Purpose

1. The guidelines shall regulate the processing of cases where standards of research ethics may have been breached. They shall ensure that the research and related work at UiT are in accordance with the norms, promote consciousness about questions concerning research ethics and facilitate good scientific practice by increasing knowledge about, interest in and the debate about ethics in connection with the university's activities.

II. Research ethical norms

2. Research ethics covers ethical aspects of both the researcher's role and the research process. Research ethical dilemmas can also arise at the meeting point between research and other activities such as teaching, innovation, communication of results, expert activities, subject and institution management and engagement in other activities.
3. At UiT, approved research ethical norms, as presented in local, national and international guidelines for research ethics, shall be used as a basis for ensuring good research practice. The most central guidelines are published by the National Research Ethics Committees (<https://www.etikkom.no/en/>).

III. Responsibility

4. The management has the responsibility to ensure that teaching, research and academic and artistic development work is carried out according to approved research ethical principles, cf. *Act relating to universities and university colleges* (lov om universiteter og høyskoler) section 1-5 first subsection and *Act on ethics in research* (forskingsetikklova) section 6.
5. It is part of the academic responsibility and personnel responsibility of leaders to ensure that research ethical norms are well taken care of. Academic leaders at all levels have a responsibility to ensure good practice for research ethics and assess any questions relating to possible breaches of principles within their area of responsibility.
6. Each researcher and student have a responsibility to familiarize him-/herself with and follow the guidelines for good research ethics in research/studies and connected activities. He/she shall act careful to ensure compliance that research ethical norms are followed, cf. *Act on ethics in research* section 4.

IV. Procedure

7. The University director shall determine what form a complaint or report about a suspected breach of research ethical guidelines by an employee or a student shall have, and where the administrative procedure shall be carried out.
8. A leader who is aware that there may be a breach of research ethics guidelines in his/her area of responsibility, has the duty to initiate investigation of the case.
9. As a main rule, cases shall be settled and followed up at the unit – faculty or equivalent – where the subject/s of the report is an employee or a student. The academic leader of the unit – dean or equivalent – is responsible for following up notifications concerning suspicion of breach of research ethical guidelines. This applies both to faculty and department level.
10. The Public Administration Act, chapter IV on preparation of cases concerning individual decisions and chapter V concerning the administrative decision, applies for the processing of the cases.
11. When a case is reported, the party/parties must be informed and receive copies of the documents as soon as possible and no later than three weeks after reception of the case.
12. At the opening of a case, possible conflicts of interest (*inhabilitet*) must be considered. Should such be present, the administrative procedure must be carried out at a superior level (Public Administration Act, sections 6-10).
13. The case officer may seek advice from one or more person(s) with expert knowledge on the subject.
14. A party and / or an academic leader may request a case to be presented for the Research Ethics Committee for a statement, cf. section 17 regarding the committee's mandate.
15. The conclusion in a case shall be based on a specific assessment of documents and evidence being presented, any statement from the Research Ethics Committee at UiT and alike. The conclusion shall adduce documents assessed, and facts taken into account.

The conclusion shall state whether there has been a breach of research ethical guidelines, and if so,

- whether the researcher / student has acted scientifically fraudulently according to the *Act on Ethics in Research* Section 8 second paragraph or not
- whether there is a system failure at the institution
- whether there are scientific works – papers etc. – connected to the case that should be corrected or withdrawn

16. Upon conclusion in a case, the faculty or equivalent must assess what consequences it shall have, and follow up accordingly. The party/parties must be informed. If the conclusion is that a researcher has acted scientifically fraudulent according to the the *Act on Ethics in Research* section 8 second paragraph, he/she shall be informed that the decision may be appealed upon to the National Commission for the Investigation of Research Misconduct, cf. section 7 second paragraph.

V. Research Ethics Committee – composition, administrative procedure etc.

17. UiT is to have a central committee on research ethics and integrity called *The Research Ethics Committee of UiT (Forskingsetisk utval ved UiT)*. The committee may be asked to make statements on cases where there is doubt about whether research ethical norms have been

breached. The committee may also address an issue of its own initiative, and make statements about general questions relating to research ethics, follow-up of cases, education etc.

18. The Research Ethics Committee of UiT is appointed by the University Board. The Committee shall consist of five members with personal deputies. The chairperson and the personal deputy for the chairperson shall fulfil the legal requirements for a presiding judge and district court judge. Three of the members must be employed in academic positions at the university. One member shall not be employed at UiT. He/she must have competence as a researcher. At least one of the members shall be an expert on ethics. In case the chairperson is not employed at UiT, the other four members shall be employed in academic positions at UiT.

In cases relating to studies, there shall also be two student representatives.

The student representatives shall be appointed for a one-year period, while the other members are appointed for a three-year period.

19. The University Director determines which unit will be the secretariat for the Research Ethics Committee.
20. Part IV about procedure apply for the committee insofar as they are relevant for cases submitted to the committee.
21. A committee member and his/her personal deputy remains in office until a replacement member and deputy are appointed, even though their term of office has expired. A committee member must also remain in office until the closure of cases already started.
22. At the start of each meeting of the Research Ethics Committee, the chairperson shall remind the members of their obligation to assess possible conflicts of interest (*inhabilitet*). A member who has participated in the preparation of a case, or previously ruled on it, may not be involved in the handling of the case.
23. As a main rule, decisions about a statement, including the arguments, shall take place during meetings. The committee may decide on a statement when the chairperson or his/her deputy and two other members are present.
24. When the committee has reached a conclusion in a case, the statement must be forwarded to the faculty or equivalent and the he party/parties.

VI. Taking effect

25. These guidelines take effect from 29 January 2018. From the same date, *Guidelines for handling of questions regarding research ethics* of 14 February 2008 are repealed.

11 October 2018