

Rules of procedure for the Ethics Council

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Responsible administrative unit	Research Support Office
Responsible administrator	Jonas Åkerman

Description:

The purpose of these rules of procedure is to ensure that the Ethics Council's investigations are conducted in accordance with applicable laws and guidelines, and to contribute to transparency in these investigations. The main recipients are the Ethics Council and others affected by its investigations.

1. Introduction

The Higher Education Act (ch. 1, 3 a §) prescribes that scientific credibility and good research practice must be safeguarded in higher education institutions. Compliance with good research practice is essential to maintain high quality in education programmes, as well as maintaining public confidence in research. Requirements for high quality in scientific activities are also laid down in the Higher Education Act (ch. 1, 4 §).

Any suspicion of scientific misconduct in research must be reported immediately and investigated promptly. The obligation of the university to investigate suspected scientific misconduct is laid down in the Higher Education Ordinance (ch. 1, 16 §).

In 2007, the Association of Swedish Higher Education and the Swedish Research Council published “Proposals for managing suspected scientific misconduct” (“Förslag till hantering av misstänkt vetenskaplig oredlighet”). These proposals are the basis for the rules of procedure adopted by Stockholm University and presented below.

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2. The Ethics Council

2.1 Duties

The Ethics Council at Stockholm University was established 2014-07-01 by the President, and has the university-wide responsibility for investigating suspicions of scientific misconduct and submitting proposals for decisions to the President. The Council operates autonomously under the President.

The Ethics Council advises the University leadership on ethical matters and works at the President’s request. The Council shall facilitate education and dissemination of information in the field of ethics, and should, in doing so, strive for a high level of knowledge and awareness about the importance of good research practice across the whole University.

The Ethics Council is further responsible for the application of the University’s procedures for handling issues of scientific misconduct, and other relevant internal documents.

2.2 Council members etc.

The Ethics Council consists of the three Deputy Vice Presidents, the Deans within the Human Science Area, the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Science, and the University Board teacher representatives. A person serving any of these functions automatically becomes a member of



the Ethics Council. If necessary, the President can appoint additional members for a limited period.

The Ethics Council may co-opt persons with attendance and speaking rights.

The Ethics Council is led by a Chair. This position will alternate between the Deputy Vice Presidents every six months. During an ongoing investigation into allegations of research misconduct, the chairmanship should be held by one of the Deputy Vice Presidents whose disciplinary domain is not related to the case. The Chair is appointed by the Ethics Council in accordance with these principles.

A research officer from the Research Support Office and a legal counsel from the Office of the President serve as a secretariat with administrative and operational responsibilities.

3. The Ethics Council's Routines

3.1 Meetings

The Ethics Council convenes when necessary, but at least twice a year. In urgent cases, the Chair can decide to hold a meeting. The meetings are normally scheduled in connection with the meetings of the Interdisciplinary Council (Områdesövergripande rådet).

The secretariat proposes an agenda which is then determined by the Chair.

A member who cannot attend a meeting reports this to the secretariat.

3.2 Preparing cases

The Ethics Council's cases are normally prepared by the Chair and the secretariat. In cases concerning suspicions of scientific misconduct, the chair shall normally decide whether the case is to be sent to the person reported in order to allow him/her to make a statement. If required, the Ethics Council may invite persons to be heard. The rules about conflicts of interest in the Administrative Procedure Act (2017:900) 16-18 §§ should be taken into consideration during the process. Anyone who feels there may be a perception of conflict of interest must report this to the Ethics Council.

3.3 Summoning

The secretariat is responsible for sending the summons, the agenda and material in the case to the members of the Council before each meeting. This is normally done via e-mail one week before the meeting.

3.4 Reporting

Cases shall be determined subsequent to reporting by the Research Support Office or the Office of the President.

3.5 Decision

A quorum at a meeting of the Ethics Council is established when at least half of its members, including the Chair, are present. Decisions are made by acclamation, unless a vote is requested. Voting must be open, in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act 29 §. The result is determined by simple majority. The Chair's vote is decisive in case of a tie. In cases processed in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, each member is obliged to vote for one of the alternatives.

3.6 Deviate opinion

A member participating in the Ethics Council's decision can, in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act 30 §, make a reservation against the decision by registering a deviate opinion. A member who does not make such a reservation is considered to have supported the decision. The minute taker and other officials present during the final process without participating in the decision have the right to have a deviate opinion registered. A deviate opinion must be reported before the decision is dispatched or otherwise announced. If the decision is not to be announced, the deviate opinion must be registered at the latest when the decision is finalized through the approval of the minutes or similar.

3.7 Minutes

The decisions taken at the meeting of the Ethics Council are recorded by the secretariat. The minutes are approved in close connection to the meeting by the Chair and the person appointed attestant by the Council at each meeting. If the dispatch of a certain case is urgent, the relevant decision point can be approved immediately.

3.8 Dispatch of the Council's decisions

The secretariat is responsible for dispatching decided cases to concerned parties after approval of the minutes.

3.9 Urgent cases – decision per capsulam

In urgent cases, when there is no time to call a meeting and when no member objects, the case may be determined by the Chair's conveying a proposed decision to all members. However, all members must support the decision. The decision must be reported at the next meeting.



3.10 Remuneration for services

The Ethics Council's members are not remunerated. Remuneration can be made to experts appointed by the Council.

3.11 Special rules concerning research funded by the USPHS

Cases concerning research funded by the United States Public Health Service, must also be processed in accordance with the rules stated in U.S. Federal Regulations 42 CFR, parts 50 and 93, insofar as they are applicable and do not contradict binding Swedish law. However, insofar as following these rules requires deviation from the internal process described above, the U.S. Federal Regulations will be given priority.