Code of Conduct for Scrupulous Academic Practice and Integrity

Utrecht University’s core objective is to provide academic education to young people and carry out groundbreaking research. Scrupulousness and integrity are fundamental to academic practice and are important preconditions for the university being able to achieve these primary objectives. Utrecht University helps students get the best out of themselves and their study programmes. For students that means, among other things, that acquiring an understanding of scrupulous academic practice, integrity and how to participate in a critical debate is part of their curriculum. An organisational culture of scrupulousness and integrity is also essential for achieving good, groundbreaking research. This means ensuring that staff take a critical stance and feel able to address each other’s shortcomings and engage in open debate.

This Code of Conduct for Scrupulous Academic Practice and Integrity sets out what Utrecht University stands for. It describes the basic principles of the culture of scrupulousness and integrity we strive for in our teaching and research and how we achieve and monitor that as a university community. Utrecht University's aim is for this to encourage students and staff to behave with integrity and scrupulousness.

The Code of Conduct for Scrupulous Academic Practice and Integrity has been formulated partly in response to debates with staff and students over the past three years. Specific rules of behaviour are set out in the Utrecht University Code of Conduct, the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Academic Practice, the Education and Examination Regulations and Utrecht University’s principles in relation to partnerships under indirect funding and contract funding. The complaints regulations and whistleblowers regulations also apply as a way of enforcing the code and dealing with complaints related to academic practice.

What does Utrecht University stand for?

1. Utrecht University maintains an organisational culture in which quality takes precedence over quantity.

2. Within Utrecht University, the onus is on all staff, students and other stakeholders in teaching and research to uphold scrupulous academic standards and integrity.

3. All study programmes within Utrecht University (Bachelor's/Master's/PhD) and all research focus on the importance of scrupulousness and integrity.

4. At Utrecht University, safety and trust provide the basis for a teaching atmosphere where there is room for discussion, doubt and questions, and for an open and transparent research atmosphere where researchers share data and discuss issues related to the scrupulousness and integrity of academia.

5. Utrecht University provides accessible and readily understandable information on scrupulousness and integrity in academia.

6. Researchers at Utrecht University are transparent in the way in which data is stored and research results are achieved.

7. Partnerships with third parties are encouraged where they bring added value to academic research and teaching. Utrecht University has formulated basic principles for partnerships with third parties to ensure that the academic interests of the university and its scholars and scientists are safeguarded.
What does this mean?

1. Culture of quality

Utrecht University always prioritises quality above quantity with regard to its teaching and research. High-quality teaching is paramount: student numbers are not the only focus. In the field of research, the pressure to publish, government spending cuts, competition for resources, the importance of quantitative data and increasing levels of competition have resulted in too much focus being put on quantity (number of publications, h-indices etc.) Within various domains, a study is conducted to determine which quality indicators can be used to assess research in a way that does justice to various publication cultures.

What action is the university already taking?
- Recruitment of talented students and the training of high-quality academics and researchers is the key priority. Naturally, efficiency criteria are also important.
- During recruitment and selection of professors, quality is the highest priority: we look at more than simply quantitative indicators such as h-indices, number of publications etc. Education and social relevance/valorisation are also part of the selection criteria.

What additional action will the university take?
- A university programme will be set up that focuses on reinforcing the culture of quality amongst research directors.
- Attention will be paid to quality at every stage of the Planning & Control cycle: quality will be the basis of performance reviews, the assessment and development interview, Planning & Control interviews within the department, faculty and university and of reports to the Supervisory Board.
- Assessment and improvement criteria will be closely examined in every faculty and adjusted if necessary. This involves paying attention to issues such as education and valorisation careers and quality indicators (e.g. the recruitment committee reads the candidate's best publication rather than just looking at the number of publications). The rector and dean will discuss this matter with research leaders from the faculty no later than the first half of 2015.

2. Everyone has their own responsibility

A careful and integral teaching and research climate is achieved via the conduct of staff and students. Research leaders, PhD supervisors, directors of education, lecturers and Board members play an exemplary role: they are key to creating a safe teaching and research environment within which everyone has their own individual responsibilities. The university expects all staff – both junior and senior – to carefully read and comply with both the Utrecht University Code of Conduct and this Code of Conduct for Scrupulous Academic Practice and Integrity. The university and faculties will facilitate this and will take measures to raise everybody’s awareness.

What action is the university already taking?
- In the letter of appointment, every employee is referred to the Utrecht University Code of Conduct and this Code of Conduct for Scrupulous Academic Practice and Integrity. By signing the letter of appointment, the employee states that they have read these codes and commit themselves to them.
- Discussion meetings are organised to increase awareness and initiate dialogue (rector with employees and deans with employees).
- Naturally, the issue of scrupulous academic practice and integrity is part of the introduction process for new employees.
- Attention is paid to the exemplary role that supervisors play with regard to taking responsibility during leadership training (such as Academic Leadership, Educational Leadership, Research Leadership and Support and Administrative Staff Leadership).
- On the PrOUt PhD day, a course will be given on scrupulous academic practice and integrity.
What additional action will the university take?

- The Boards of Studies of graduate schools will ensure that the Utrecht University Code of Conduct is an integral part of the Education and Guidance Plan. Furthermore, consideration will be given to whether requiring PhD candidates to take an oath will help raise awareness of their personal responsibility regarding scrupulous academic practice and integrity.
- Professors are an example to their employees, which is why their appointment letter will refer them to the Utrecht University Code of Conduct and this Code of Conduct for Scrupulous Academic Practice and Integrity, as well as remind them of their obligation to comply with the codes and to set a good example.
- Visiting staff and exchange students will be informed about scrupulous academic practice and integrity, the Code of Conduct and other such information.
- In their annual report, the Executive Board and faculties will explain the action they have taken on this issue and which target groups the action focuses on.

3. Scrupulous academic practice and integrity in teaching and research

Within the teaching provided in all Bachelor’s, Master’s and PhD programmes, attention is paid to the basic principles of academic practice, as well as to fraud and plagiarism. The theme has been incorporated into each programme’s learning pathways. The content of the teaching in this area is compatible with the current phase of the student’s education. During PhD programmes, attention is also paid to social and institutional interests and dilemmas in the academic process, such as balances of power, collaboration versus competition, authorship, research financing etc. This is done at the start of the PhD process in order to ensure that even PhD students taught elsewhere are given the basics. Monitoring takes place via the existing quality-control cycles.

What action is the university already taking?

- Bachelor’s, Master’s and PhD students are offered courses in a variety of areas (such as the LERU-related summer school ‘Doing the right things right’ – Research Integrity in a Complex Society, and within Utrecht University via the Ethical Institute’s cross-disciplinary e-course on academic integrity and a course on researchers’ integrity and responsibility to society (7.5 ECTS)). The courses include a range of games and simulations (lab games, handling ethical dilemmas etc.) about scrupulous academic practice and integrity or certain aspects of this issue.
- Within the university’s quality-control process, monitoring is conducted to ensure that attention is paid to scrupulous academic practice and integrity in both teaching and research.
- Integrity is a part of external research assessments conducted in accordance with the new Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP).

What additional action will the university take?

- The theme of scrupulous academic practice and integrity will have been demonstrably incorporated into all programmes. This theme will also be included in the internal certification process for programmes and in the Academic Skills.
- Information about best practice will be offered via a website and discussion meetings for directors of education and lecturers. In the autumn, the rector will hold discussions with the directors of education about how scrupulous academic practice and integrity can be implemented into the training programme.
- Within the Basic Teaching Qualification, explicit and structural attention will be paid to scrupulous academic practice and integrity within the teaching provided.
- In their welcome package, students will be provided with information about scrupulous academic practice and integrity.
- Every Master’s student and PhD candidate will be given general training at the start of their programme. This is already standard practice at some graduate schools.
- Every faculty will draw up guidelines for authorship/co-authorship that are compatible with the research and publication culture.

4. A climate of safety, trust and transparency for teaching and research

The teaching and research climate within Utrecht University is characterised by safety, trust and transparency. Within this climate, there is room for discussion, doubt and questions. This applies to
students and staff, both within and between the two groups. Students can discuss questions with
lecturers with regard to scrupulous academic practice and integrity.
The university sets standards regarding research publications and authorship. Transparency about
financing of the research, agreements with the financier (including when the university is involved),
data management, presentation of the results, the actual contribution made by the various authors
and the authors’ relevant ancillary activities.

What action is the university already taking?
- Once every four years, the Executive Board evaluates employee satisfaction via the
Employee Survey and the PhD Candidate Survey. The surveys are used to give an
indication of the research climate.
- Professors state their ancillary activities on their profile page, and if relevant, also in their
publications.

What additional action will the university take?
- All academic staff members will state their ancillary activities on their profile page, and if
relevant, also in their publications (all professors have already included all of their ancillary
activities on their profile page).
- Faculties will anonymously ask PhD candidates about sharing data of research groups,
avoiding/ignoring discussions about dilemmas, conflicts of interest etc.
- Every faculty will have at least one contact person for scrupulous academic practice and
integrity whom students and staff can approach if they have any questions. This contact
person can, as a colleague, give advice and, if desired, refer the person in question to the
university’s integrity committee or confidential advisor.

5. Accessible and readily understandable information
The university strives to make all information regarding facilitation of scrupulous academic practice
and integrity accessible and readily understandable and to disseminate it amongst staff and
students. For the benefit of third parties, Utrecht University also strives to show how it handles the
issue of scrupulous academic practice and integrity.
Effective connection of all existing regulations, guides and procedures is crucial. For this purpose, a
communication plan has been set up. An important element of this is accessibility via the intranet.

The UU complies with a number of regulations and codes:
- The VSNU’s Netherlands Code of Conduct for Academic Practice.
- The Education and Examination Regulations (the consequences of fraud and plagiarism for
students).
- The Utrecht University Code of Conduct (for conduct within the whole university).
- Utrecht University’s principles in relation to research partnerships under indirect funding
and contract funding (for collaborations with third parties).
- Utrecht University Academic Integrity Complaints Procedure and Whistleblowers
Regulations.

A number of other regulations also include agreements regarding scrupulous academic practice and
integrity:
- Utrecht University Education Guideline
- Doctoral Degree Regulations Utrecht University

A Committee for Academic Integrity has existed at Utrecht University for years, providing advice to
the Executive Board regarding complaints about academic integrity. The Utrecht University
Academic Integrity Complaints Procedure set out the performance requirements for this committee.
In 2012, the role of chair of this committee was separated from the role of Academic Integrity
Counsellor.

The Netherlands Code of Conduct for Academic Practice states that all academic practitioners are
obliged to report their ancillary activities. In the Utrecht University Code of Conduct, it was agreed
that all professors would be obliged to report their ancillary activities on the university’s website.
The Utrecht University profile pages are the appropriate location to do this.

What action is the university already taking?
- Periodically, Utrecht University evaluates its guidelines and codes of conduct and adjusts them if necessary.
- The document ‘Utrecht University’s principles in relation to research partnerships under indirect funding and contract funding’ is being revised.
- Coordination/updating of Utrecht University’s Fact Sheet/Q&A for press briefing with regard to news about scrupulous academic practice and integrity.
- The contact details (telephone number, email address and, if applicable, visiting address) and role of the Academic Integrity Counsellor are displayed on the profile page.

What additional action will the university take?
- *The accessibility and awareness of the Confidential Advisor and Committee for Academic Integrity will be evaluated and, if necessary, improved.*
- *A communication plan will be created for various target groups (staff, students) regarding regulations, codes of conduct and the Academic Integrity Counsellor and Committee for Academic Integrity.*

6. **Researchers at Utrecht University are transparent in the way in which data is stored and research results are achieved.**

Transparency is the basic principle for how research results are achieved and the data is stored. The university develops guidelines for data storage. There will be a framework for handling research data in due course. This will include agreements about data storage, archiving and access.

What action is the university already taking?
- The university develops principles and tools for data storage.

What additional action will the university take?
- *The university will have a Research Data Guideline for staff and students.*
- *The university will set up an infrastructure for transparent data storage.*
- *A data plan will be a fixed part of every research plan, including those for students' Bachelor's theses.*
- *Faculties will conduct audits with regard to availability of research data.*

7. **Collaboration with third parties**

The increasing collaboration with the business sector and the government provides many new opportunities, but also involves risks and dilemmas for individual researchers, lecturers and university institutions with regard to the issue of (the suggestion of) independence and impartiality. The main principle is to be as transparent as possible about the parties financing the research. The principles of UU regarding research collaborations with third parties are explained in *Utrecht University’s principles in relation to research partnerships under indirect funding and contract funding.*

What action is the university already taking?
- Every faculty ensures that a double-check is conducted regarding contracts with external parties.
- The university has created a checklist and standard internship contracts for students.
- Researchers/lecturers will report who is funding the research (if applicable).

What additional action will the university take?
- *Every faculty will make a plan regarding evaluation of contract funding and conflicts of interest. This can be done by, for example, appointing an ethics committee for contract funding.*
How is this monitored?

To the greatest possible extent, monitoring of activities is conducted within existing accountability cycles. The most important of these are the university’s quality-control cycles for teaching and research.

1. Attention will be paid to quality and scrupulous academic practice and integrity at every stage of the Planning & Control cycle, from the Assessment and Development interview via Planning & Control interviews within the department, faculty and university to reports to the Supervisory Board.

2. In their annual report, the Executive Board and faculties will explain the action they have taken on this issue and which target groups the action concerns.

3. Within the university’s quality-control process, monitoring is conducted to ensure that attention is paid to scrupulous academic practice and integrity in both teaching and research.
   - Integrity is a part of external research assessments conducted in accordance with the new Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP).
   - Scrupulous academic practice and integrity will be included in the internal certification process for programmes.

4. Once every four years, the Executive Board evaluates the research climate via the Employee Survey and the PhD Candidate Survey (HR department and Academic Affairs Office).
   - Faculties will anonymously ask PhD candidates about sharing data from research groups, avoiding/ignoring discussions about dilemmas, conflicts of interest etc.

5. Periodically, Utrecht University evaluates its guidelines and codes of conduct and adjusts them if necessary.
   - The accessibility and awareness of the Confidential Advisor and Committee for Academic Integrity will be evaluated and, if necessary, improved.

6. Faculties will conduct audits with regard to availability of research data.

7. Every faculty ensures that a double-check is conducted regarding contracts with external parties.