

# Policy for research integrity, freedom of research and responsible conduct of research at Aarhus University

## Preamble

Aarhus University is a world-class university with an international reputation for excellent research, outstanding research-based degree programmes and value-adding collaboration with private businesses and public government agencies and institutions.

The highest quality demands credibility in all of the university's research activities, with respect for freedom of research and in a research climate characterised by lively, open and critical academic discussion within and across different fields of research and research traditions.

Aarhus University endorses the [Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#), which is based on international declarations and principles for research integrity, freedom of research and responsible conduct of research. This means that Aarhus University:

- Safeguards the freedom of research of the university and the individual researcher
- Has clear standards for responsible conduct of research, including ensuring the credibility and integrity of the research performed
- Instructs in and advises on research integrity, freedom of research and responsible conduct of research
- Has clear rules and procedures for handling cases regarding research misconduct, questionable research practices and pressure on freedom of research.

The policy encompasses all academic fields and contributes to a common understanding of research integrity, freedom of research and responsible conduct of research.

## 1. Research integrity

Research is the foundation for all activities at Aarhus University. For this reason, Aarhus University strives to ensure reliability and a high level of integrity in research by continuously ensuring the best possible framework for maintaining and developing the principles of research integrity.

Everyone involved in research at Aarhus University must integrate into their work the basic principles for research integrity that form the foundation for all research. These principles apply in all phases of the research process, and include honesty, responsibility, reliability, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, openness, transparency and responsible management of entrusted resources, among others.

Ultimately, the lack of respect for, and protection of, freedom of research can compromise these fundamental principles to the extent that research integrity is threatened.

## 2. Freedom of research

Aarhus University considers freedom of research to be an essential prerequisite for the independence, quality and legitimacy of research. For this reason, Aarhus University safeguards the university's fundamental autonomy, the university's and individual researchers' freedom of research and research ethics.

Aarhus University has academic autonomy and is independent of special interests in its work. It is crucial that Aarhus University ensure freedom of research in relation to the political or commercial interests of internal or external operators.

Individual researchers at Aarhus University have freedom of research within their academic field of employment, with the obligations arising from the employment relationship and within the university's research strategy framework.

Within this framework, individual researchers are free to choose and develop their methodology, approach and topic.

**Freedom of research refers to the freedom to:**

- **Choose a research topic**
- **Define research problems**
- **Choose the material and methods necessary to discover the answers**
- **Ø Present and discuss results and reasoning in public.**

Individual researchers have freedom of speech and cannot be subject to a duty of confidentiality in addition to those dictated by legislation or binding contracts.

The same research ethical and qualitative requirements apply as for all other research in connection with research-based public sector consultancy and contractual assignments, in that the date of publication may be postponed for a limited period of time by agreement, if there are significant reasons for this. With respect to research-based public sector consultancy and contractual assignments, clear contracts must be made defining the task to be performed. The contracts must reflect the framework in which the researchers work, including the independence of researchers and their right and duty to seek to have results published, regardless of their findings.

It is crucial for Aarhus University that both the independence and the integrity of researchers are beyond question. Any researcher who experiences pressure on his or her freedom of research can seek confidential and anonymous advice from responsible conduct of research and freedom of research advisers at each faculty.

### **3. Responsible conduct of research**

Clear standards for responsible conduct of research at Aarhus University are intended to help individual researchers and research groups initiate, execute and complete research projects transparently and credibly. Responsible conduct of research is an integral part of the work of researchers, and of the management's responsibility in relation to the individual researcher.

Aarhus University endorses the [Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#), which contains common standards for responsible conduct of research within the individual steps of the research process:

- Research planning and conduct
- Data management
- Publication and communication
- Authorship
- Research collaboration
- Conflicts of interest

#### **3.1. Research planning and conduct**

Research at Aarhus University must be carried out with due respect for the generally recognised methods of the research area in question, codes of research ethics and other professional requirements.

At Aarhus University, the individual researcher or research group is obligated to describe the design and execution of the planned research in a research strategy, plan or protocol in accordance with current practice within the research area in question.

The faculties are responsible for ensuring that rules exist for all fields regarding the execution of research plans and protocols and amendments to these, as well as procedures for obtaining any required approvals and permits for research activities.

### **3.2. Data management**

**Within all fields, management and storage of research data must be carried out in accordance with the current rules in order to ensure transparent and credible research.**

For research carried out at Aarhus University:

- Generation and use of research data should be carefully planned in connection with the initiation of a new research project.
- All primary material (e.g. biological material, notes, interviews, texts and literature, digital raw data, registrations, etc.) and data (detailed records of the primary material which forms the basis for the analysis that leads to the results) must be stored securely and appropriately at Aarhus University, where servers, archives etc. will be made available.
- All experimental protocols, plans and strategies for experiments/studies, notes, laboratory records, data and primary material must be stored for a period of at least five years after the publication or completion of the project, unless this is in conflict with other academic standards and legislation. There must be open access to the material forming the basis of publications ([Fair principles](#)), unless this is in conflict with contractual obligations and/or other legal rules concerning e.g. ethics, confidentiality or protection of personal data or intellectual property rights.
- All primary research material and data derived from research belongs in principle to Aarhus University and can only be shared with or used by a third party or former employees outside Aarhus University following written agreement with the head of department, unless otherwise specifically authorised by legislation and/or an agreement.
- Research data and other primary research material from Aarhus University must be disposed of in a safe and secure manner with due regard for any ethical considerations and in accordance with current legislation.

Aarhus University has drafted instructions for storage and management of research data.

### **3.3. Publication and communication**

Publication and other forms of communication are a prerequisite for disseminating, evaluating and discussing research results. Such communication must be honest, clear and accurate.

Anyone contributing to research activities at Aarhus University must seek to openly and honestly communicate their research and research results by presenting and discussing data, research method and process as well as research results with fellow researchers and the general public.

Aarhus University is responsible for supporting researchers in this through education and training and by ensuring that staff and others understand and respect freedom of research and the special duty and responsibility of researchers.

Aarhus University endorses the [Universities Denmark principles for good research communication](#) Danske Universitetes principper for god forskningskommunikation.

### **3.4. Authorship and copyright**

Authorship is of considerable academic, social and economic importance. Correct attribution of authorship contributes to the credibility and transparency of research and is thus a central element in the development of responsible conduct of research.

Aarhus University recognises that the traditions and principles of designating authorship vary between different fields. The university's policy is that university researchers are to be cited as authors if they have contributed

significantly to the academic publication in question, that the contribution has been recognised by all other authors, and that the contribution can be specified as a minimum to include:

- 1) Substantial contributions to the conception or design, data collection, analysis or interpretation of data, and
- 2) Significant contributions to the preparation of the publication.

Authors must approve the final research publication, and Aarhus University expects anyone who accepts authorship to also assume responsibility for the academic integrity of the overall work. The degree of responsibility of each author is to be assessed in relation to their individual role in the research project and in relation to their expertise, experience, seniority, supervisory role and other relevant factors.

In general, copyright on research articles and scientific or scholarly books in which research results are published belongs to the author in question, provided that this does not constitute an obstacle to Aarhus University's ability to live up to its obligations in connection with contracts, grants or other agreements with third parties.

Copyright on computer programs and patent or utility model rights to inventions and utility models produced in an employment relationship at Aarhus University are regulated by the Danish Copyright Act and the Act on Inventions at Public Research Institutions. This means that the copyright on a protected computer program is immediately transferred to Aarhus University, and that Aarhus University may decide to take over an invention in order to submit patent or utility model notification with a view to commercial exploitation of the results of the research, and to postpone publication of these results for a limited period of time.

### **3.5. Research collaboration**

Research collaboration within and between fields and with external partners is an important dimension of research in general, and Aarhus University wishes to promote it.

Research traditions vary across disciplines, sectors and fields. For this reason, Aarhus University must ensure that a common understanding of the principles for responsible conduct of research develops as early as possible in research collaboration, including procedures, duties and responsibilities related to responsible conduct of research within the framework of the research collaboration.

### **3.6. Conflicts of interest**

In the performance of research, both the individual researcher and the university must be independent of special interests. Responsible conduct of research includes disclosure of all potential conflicts of interest. This is necessary in order to assess whether financial or other conditions may potentially compromise an evaluation or action performed in connection with a research activity.

All parties involved with research activities, whether as researchers or as evaluators of the research activities of others, are thus expected to be open and honest regarding any possible conflicts of interest.

These rules enter into force on 28 August 2019.