



# **CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

**International Research Institute of Stavanger AS  
(IRIS)**

Approved by the Board of Directors on 24<sup>th</sup> October  
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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. To Whom Does the Code of Professional Conduct Apply?

The code of professional conduct described in this document applies to all employees in IRIS (*including part time employees*) and hired manpower in IRIS and its subsidiary companies (*referred to hereafter as IRIS*).

IRIS' code of professional conduct applies to the whole company including its boards and other steering and control bodies.

## 1.2. IRIS' Ethical Values

IRIS is a research and academic organisation that engages in research and knowledge based value creation mostly in cooperation with organisations and individuals.

IRIS, being a beneficial research organisation to society, is completely dependent on the trust and confidence of customers, contractors, public authorities and the public at large. Trust and confidence cannot be adopted by resolution or demanded; it has to be earned. It is therefore essential that all members of our organisation conduct themselves with care and integrity. The conduct of employees forms the basis for how IRIS as an entity is viewed by others.

IRIS' ethical values are about its relationship to society, owners, employees, customers, competitors, the environment and others.

In all our activities we are obliged to practice and promote important basic values such as:

- integrity, honesty and openness
- involvement and responsibility
- generosity and solidarity

Our conduct and activity must be in accordance with these and other basic values drawn up in IRIS' steering documents and must conform with and adhere to all relevant legislation and regulations in society including generally accepted scientific methods and standards of business ethics and regulations.

This will create a corporate culture characterized by creativity, responsibility, and performance as well as welfare, cooperation, trust and flexibility.

IRIS and its employees have a responsibility in society and the company must therefore take into account generally accepted norms and expectations. It must be understood that good practice in Norway is not always the same as in other countries, and one must respect common practice in the countries and cultures we come in contact with.

IRIS respects that employees and cooperating partners may adhere to different sets of values . Mutual understanding of this and the consequences this may have is expected. IRIS and its employees must not be involved in work activities that are in conflict with the organisation's basic values and code of professional conduct.

## 1.3. Main Criteria for Correct Ethical Decisions

Before ethical decisions are reached, the following questions should be asked:

- Will this decision increase risk to life, health or safety that would exceed what is already known and deemed to be acceptable?
- Will this decision endanger or injure the environment, other people or companies?

- Is it legal?
- Would I or anyone else in IRIS obtain unlawful personal financial benefits from this decision?
- Does it feel right and honest?
- Can I exclude the possibility that this decision will not in any way undermine my or IRIS' trustworthiness and integrity?
- Can this decision be defended in the public arena?

If in any doubt, the matter should be discussed with your immediate superior or reported to the relevant authority (*see chapter 5*).

## **2. IRIS' Business Practice**

### **2.1. Relationship to Contractors, Partners and Customers**

Based on this code of professional conduct, IRIS shall conduct all its activities in a manner that ensures that suppliers, partners and customers have trust and confidence in us and vice versa.

### **2.2. Expertise**

IRIS' comprehensive expertise is essential for our existence. It comprises, among other elements, knowledge, experience, ideas, networks, structure and work methods. These intangible values should be protected and administered in the best interests of IRIS.. We shall also respect the values of others.

### **2.3. Fair Competition**

IRIS will compete on a fair and ethical basis within the framework of current rules of competition. We will not prevent others from competing with us.

### **2.4. Corruption**

No form of corruption shall take place in our research and business activities.

Corruption occurs when someone in a position of trust or on duty in private or public service sets aside the responsibility of that position or duty and abuses the authority of that position or duty to gain either a private benefit or remuneration or illegally gain a benefit for his or her own organisation or company.

Some of the characteristics of corruption are:

- Abuse of authority inherent in the position held in the company
- The abuser is offered unjust benefits (*bribery*)
- The agreement between the parties is secret

Corruption undermines trust in the constitutional state and democratic institutions, weakens ethical and moral values, hinders rationalization and efficiency and undermines every form of business activity and free competition.

## **2.5. Accurate Information, Accounting and Reporting**

Business information about IRIS must be communicated accurately and in its entirety both internally and externally. Accounting information must be correct, registered and quoted in accordance with laws and regulations including accounting standards.

## **2.6. Commercialisation in IRIS**

IRIS shall develop new and profitable companies and products derived from its activities and employees' expertise. Commercialisation, patenting and company establishing are important processes. IRIS has established IRIS-Research Invest Ltd to manage commercialisation and establishment of new companies.

There are principles and regulations that apply to these complex processes and their management. These are vital to ensure that the processes are properly conducted ethically and in accordance with good business practice.

## **2.7. The Public and the Media**

IRIS has an obligation to participate in the public debate with the knowledge it possesses as a research institute. Our communication with the public shall be characterised by honesty, openness and accessibility.

We acknowledge that *confidential information* must be kept confidential and that the communication of *knowledge* must be undertaken with due care when the underlying details are confidential.

## **2.8. Equality and Multiplicity**

IRIS desires multiplicity and an inclusive work culture characterised by equality and tolerance.

Everyone is appreciated equally in IRIS. No form of discrimination will be accepted whether on grounds of culture, ethnicity, sex, religion, sexual orientation, age or on for any other reason.

# **3. Personal Conduct in IRIS**

## **3.1. Good Research and Professional Ethical Conduct**

All research and scientific activity is based on trust. Researchers should be able to have confidence in that the results and observations of others are trustworthy, and society at large must be able to have confidence that research is an honest attempt to accurately and objectively describe and analyse.

For IRIS to achieve its goals as a research institute, it is dependent on having and maintaining this trust. Our scientific activities must, therefore, be based on internationally recognized research methodology and on applicable regulations. Should deviation from this practice arise, it must be clearly stated and the grounds given.

Researchers and other employees in IRIS are obliged to be acquainted with and live up to the general main requirements for good ethical conduct that apply to research and research related activities.

These main requirements comprise of the following:

### **Compliance**

Research must be verifiable to ensure quality. Methods and findings must be documented in their entirety in a form that is intelligible. Choice of methods must be substantiated and in accordance with scientific methodology.

### **Honesty**

Research results must be presented as they are in an honest and professional way. When other people's results are used, permission to use them must first be granted and the source always quoted.

### **Generosity**

Researchers are dependent on each other's thoughts and ideas. Credit must be given to those whose shoulders you lean on and it is expected that others will afford you the same courtesy .

### **Resolution and integrity**

Pressure from clients or others to modify choice of methods, findings or conclusions may arise. This kind of pressure must be withstood and, if necessary, discussed with your immediate superior.

### **Openness**

Publication is proof of membership in the international research community. Within the boundaries of confidentiality and secrecy, every effort must be made to publish and disseminate results in the public domain.

## **3.2. Scientific Integrity**

All research is fundamentally based on trust in those involved. The production of research data must be done in accordance with honest, objective and scientifically re-examinable methods. Any kind of faking, manipulation or forging of research data is objectionable and totally unacceptable. We demand and have confidence in that employees are fully aware of where the line of demarcation runs between acceptable and unacceptable conduct in this area.

An accusation of dishonest scientific conduct can easily become a cumbersome liability for the suspected/accused researcher or research community. Everyone, therefore, has an ethical responsibility to never contribute to the spreading of unfounded suspicion or exaggeration of cases (*see chapter 4.1*).

Persons suspected of improper scientific conduct have the right to honest, fair and ethically correct procedures.

In this context, the definition of scientific dishonesty and unacceptable conduct includes:

- Forging and faking research data
- Plagiarism of other's academic work or research results
- Unlawful or unauthorised use of other's scientific material or research results
- Unjustified destruction of scientific material
- Dishonesty in connection with project proposals and applications
- Deliberate misuse of research funds
- Unwarranted discrediting and belittling other researchers and their results

Suspicion of serious infringements of these rules must be reported in confidence to your immediate superior, who is obliged to act in accordance with the regulations herein (*see chapter 4.2*).

In cases where it may feel uncomfortable to report to the immediate superior, a report may be made in accordance with chapter 5.

### **3.3. Publication, Authorship and Co-authorship**

Employees who write or contribute to the writing of scientific research results for publication are obliged to be acquainted with and follow the regulations for authorship and co-authorship that are generally accepted in the research community.

The general regulations for authorship and co-authorship in medicine were initially defined by the Vancouver Group in 1995 and since then have attained wide acceptance within other disciplines. The Vancouver Statement has been modified several times and publishing will also, no doubt, be practiced with variations in different disciplines and countries.

After the Statement was revised in 2000, a person's right to authorship or co-authorship of scientific articles is based on three main criteria (*a, b and c*) all of which must be met in order for the authorship to be legitimate and the same applies in IRIS:

- a) Essential contribution to idea and forming *or* data acquisition *or* analyses and interpretation of data
- b) Compilation of the manuscript *or* essential parts of the manuscript *or* critical revision of the article's intellectual content
- c) Approval of the article version to be published

A co-author must have participated in the work to the extent that he/she can be responsible to the public for that particular part of the contents. Additionally, at least one of the authors of the article must take the responsibility for the integrity of the comprehensive work from planning to publishing.

### **3.4. Employees' Business Activity Practice**

All employees must follow rules and regulations and practice their work in accordance with IRIS' requirements and standards. IRIS expects each individual employee to treat all those they come in contact with either at work or through work related activities with courtesy and respect.

Everyone must refrain from conduct that may have a negative effect on colleagues, the working environment or the company and must not conduct themselves in a way that can be interpreted as offensive to local traditions and culture.

#### **3.4.1. Property**

Employees must protect IRIS' material and intangible property against loss, damage, illegal access and misuse.

#### **3.4.2. Professional Secrecy**

We have an obligation to maintain secrecy about business affairs and other affairs so that unauthorised third parties do not gain access to confidential information. By default, all business affairs that are not published are subject to professional secrecy.

Caution must be taken when discussing IRIS' affairs and internal affairs in the presence of unauthorised third parties. Professional secrecy applies also to colleagues who do not need confidential information for their work.

Meanwhile, the obligation to maintain secrecy does not prevent colleagues informing their immediate superior or that person's immediate superior or in accordance with chapter 3.5 of circumstances or incidents that have occurred in the company that may be in breach of the applicable current regulations.

### **3.4.3. Legal Competence**

No one may participate in or seek to influence decision-making when there are circumstances that may impair trust in that person's neutrality. No one may participate in decision making of issues that have special or prominent personal or economic significance for one's self or any close relative or acquaintance. In cases where legal competence can be questioned, it is essential that the process is open and that notification be given to the nearest immediate superior as soon as one is aware that there can be a conflict of legal competence. When legal incompetence is ascertained, the person concerned must withdraw from any further involvement in the case.

### **3.4.4. Gifts and Loans**

Caution must be taken when giving or receiving gifts or other services over and above that which is of symbolic value and that which can influence business decisions. The employee shall always obtain approval of gifts/services from his/her immediate superior. Common courtesies are permitted. Be aware of local customs.

Employees must not take up loans or accept benefits from IRIS' connections in a work context. The exception is normal private customer relations with banks, insurance companies etc.

### **3.4.5. Bribery and Trading in Influence**

In IRIS we neither accept nor give bribes. Bribery occurs when someone on the grounds of their position, duty or commission is the object of an attempt to exert influence by the proffering of services entailing undue advantage. Trading in influence occurs when someone is offered an undue advantage in order to influence the execution of a third party's position, duty or commission.

The ban on bribes and trading in influence affects those who give, those who offer and those who demand, receive or approve of an undue advantage. For the circumstance to be illegal, it is sufficient that a demand or an offer of an undue advantage has been made, irrespective of whether the undue advantage is intended for the person the offerer seeks to influence or not. The ban on bribes and trading in influence applies to both the public and private sectors. Bribes and trading in influence are punishable under the Criminal Code.

### **3.4.6. Representation and Travel**

Representation for IRIS must be characterized by sobriety. No employee or paid associate may arrange or participate in a dining arrangement or any other representation that may be perceived as disproportionate. Employees representing IRIS must conduct themselves in a manner that maintains trust and dignity. Exercise moderation when drinking alcohol. Employees are obligated to abstain from buying and selling sexual services and to conduct themselves in a manner that is not, in any way, detrimental to IRIS' reputation and interests.

Employees may not travel or participate in activities paid by contractors or clients when legal competence can be questioned. The same applies to invitations from companies and organisations that clearly compete with IRIS. The participant's immediate superior must always approve participation in such arrangements in advance.

### **3.4.7. Other Work-related Matters**

#### **Ownership Interests, etc**

Employees with considerable ownership interests in enterprises that have a client or contractor relationship with IRIS must report this to his/her immediate superior. This also applies to persons close to the employee. If the ownership can raise doubt concerning the employee's loyalty or neutrality, a deadline may be set to terminate the ownership or client/contractor relationship.

## **New Enterprises**

One of the IRIS' goals is to create new enterprises through the commercialisation of research achievements. Employees may receive incentives in accordance with the regulations set down by IRIS-Research Invest and may have board membership in these companies subject to prior approval being obtained from the employee's immediate superior.

## **Commercialisation**

In IRIS-Research Invest (*owned 100% by IRIS*), there are principles and guidelines for commercialisation that contain the rights and duties for all of IRIS' employees and subsidiaries. The guidelines may be requested directly from IRIS-Research Invest

In connection with the implementation of EU's patent directives, Norway has established a committee for the assessment of the ethical aspects when patenting in biotechnology. The ethics committee for patenting is under the National Ethics Research Committee for Science and Technology (*NENT*)

In the area of patenting and commercialisation, there are many ethically applicable problems and challenges. It is, therefore, of vital importance that IRIS and its employees endeavour to proceed in an orderly manner in all phases of the processes. As an example, the occasion may arise when there is a conflict between the need for early publication of research results and the need for secrecy for the sake of possible patenting. In cases of this nature, colleagues need to be observant and cautious and, if necessary, get advice from leaders and others to find the best solution.

## **Other Paid Work, etc Outside IRIS**

We presuppose that work at IRIS is the employee's main occupation when the employee has his/her principal occupation in IRIS. All other work and business activities must be agreed with the employee's immediate superior. Employees may not have other paid work or run business activities of a substantial size (*substantial size meaning work over several months that exceeds 15% of fixed monthly salary*). Meanwhile, IRIS would like employees to have the position of professor II or associate professor II. This also must be agreed on with the employee's immediate superior. University or university college censoring is not subject to these regulations.

Employees must not have honorary posts or financial interests in business activities without approval from the employee's immediate superior. Such cases must be filed in a register. Cf. the employment contract and applicable regulations in the handbooks.

### **3.4.8. Personal Convictions and Reservations in Relation to Work Tasks**

Employees have the opportunity to refuse to participate in projects with a content that is in conflict with the employees' religion or ethical conviction. Employees, who on these grounds, cannot participate in substantial parts of the tasks in their department, thus making it difficult to employ these persons, must accept that their refusal may have consequences. However, IRIS will make every effort to find other tasks that the employee is qualified to take.

### **3.4.9. Employees and Public Debates**

Employees are encouraged to participate in the social debate with scientific substantiated arguments, cf. chapter 2.7.

Researchers must refrain from using their professional authority outside their own special field. No one in such cases may use their title or position in IRIS in a way that a third party might presume that IRIS as an organisation supports the opinions expressed.

### **3.4.10. Insider Trading**

In our business activities, we may obtain insight into information or affairs that, if publicly known, may significantly affect the value of securities. Such information shall never be passed on or used for private gain.

### **3.4.11. Information Technology**

Employees' use of computer systems, information and particularly Internet services must be motivated by business-related needs. Employees must only install software with valid licence. Information that could be perceived as offensive or improper must never be downloaded, stored or spread. Information stored on IRIS' servers outside private areas is IRIS' property. Cf. IRIS' data discipline instructions that obligates all employees

### **3.4.12. Spouses/Partners/Close relatives**

Spouses, partners or close relatives that work in IRIS cannot be in a direct line of report. It is a premise that they do not allow private affairs to influence their actions or attitudes at work, including the handling of confidential information.

## **3.5. Reporting**

In accordance with the Working Environment Act §2-4, employees have the right to report censurable affairs in the company. The regulation applies both to internal and external affairs.

Censurable affairs are not limited to criminal offences but include breach of statutory law and regulations, breach of the company's ethical guidelines, general ethical standards broadly accepted in society.

The right of reporting must be justified by a common sense judgement on the different interests involved. As a rule, employees have the right to express themselves and any restrictions must be explicitly explained and made applicable only in special cases.

Pursuant to with the Act, the employee's procedure when reporting must be creditable. This rule protects the employer's/company's factual and weighty interests which, in special cases, should not be subjugated to the right to free expression.

IRIS must not initiate sanctions against employees who, in a respectable way, have reported to the authorities or informed the public arena of a serious breach of IRIS' code of professional conduct. This notwithstanding it is emphasised that all persons employed by IRIS have an overriding ethical responsibility to refrain from contributing to the spread of unwarranted suspicions or the exaggeration of cases or incidents (*see chapter 3.2*).

If an employee wishes complete confidentiality when reporting, full provision for this is given in that the matter can be discussed directly with IRIS' Auditor.

## **4. Procedures for Deviation**

### **4.1. Employee's Role and Responsibilities**

When ethical issues arise of a less serious character, as a rule, employees involved get together themselves to try to arrive at a solution that is acceptable for all parties. The code of professional conduct may, in such cases, be of help. Additionally, relevant and clarifying information may be found in IRIS' handbooks.

If the employees are unable to reach an agreement themselves, the nearest immediate superior must be engaged (*see chapter 4.2*).

In cases of a more serious character, the immediate superior must always be engaged. See the next chapter.

If the character of the issue is such that it is unfitting to engage the nearest immediate superior, the employee can report directly to a superior management level or even to the board of directors (*for example through the employees' representative in the board*) or even to the Research Ethical Committee at the University/IRIS (*for example through IRIS' representative in the committee*) or to the auditor.

In extreme cases, if the character of the issue requires it, the employee may, *in a careful manner*, notify relevant public authorities (*see also chapter 3.5 Reporting*).

As emphasised previously, all IRIS' employees have a personal responsibility never to contribute to spreading unwarranted suspicions in ethical and research ethical issues or exaggerate trivial issues.

## **4.2. Immediate Superior's Role and Responsibilities**

When conflicts of a less serious character arise between employees, the nearest immediate superior must, as soon as possible and preferably immediately, get engaged in the issue.

Immediate superiors have a duty to allow the persons implied to present their opinions before any decision is made or action taken.

Proposals for solutions to ethical conflicts must be in accordance with the contents and procedures in the code of professional conduct and IRIS' handbooks.

Whenever considerable breach of the code of professional conduct is suspected, the immediate superior must, as soon as possible, consult the employee(s) involved and gather information that may lead to resolve the issue before a possible unnecessary escalation.

It is the immediate superior's duty to, as soon as possible, ALWAYS inform the suspected employee(s) no matter how serious the issue/suspicion. If the matter is going to be reported, information must be given BEFORE reporting, the reason being that clarifying information may avoid unwarranted escalation.

The duty to inform applies only to the involved parties, always bearing in mind the obligation to maintain secrecy (*except in management line reporting cases, see below*).

In cases of extreme deviation from or breach of the code of professional conduct or warranted, substantiated suspicion of infringements, the immediate superior must always report to a superior management level.

## **4.3. CEO's Role and Responsibilities**

The CEO is the chief line manager and formally the one ultimately responsible for the compliance of the code of professional conduct in the company.

The CEO can personally or on request from anyone in IRIS, address issues on possible breaches of the code of professional conduct.

It is the CEO's duty to, whenever necessary, seek expert help from the Research Ethics Committee at UiS/IRIS (*see chapter 4.4*) and other regional and national research ethics committees where applicable, cf. <http://www.etikkom.no/English> for further information on research ethics and diverse regulations.

In cases of extreme deviation from or breach of the code of professional conduct or warranted and substantiated suspicion of infringements, the CEO must appoint an independent committee composed of persons with relevant expertise.

The CEO must designate appropriate mandate to the independent committee, give them the right of inspection and sufficient resources to speedily examine the issue. The committee will draw up suggestions to concrete actions to be delivered to the CEO.

The CEO will inform the board of directors on the conclusions and advice the independent committee has arrived at before any appropriate action is taken.

It is the CEO's formal duty, as the chief person in charge, to involve the police and the prosecuting authority (*and any other relevant public authorities*) if the issue's character demands it.

It is the CEO's duty to inform the press and the media of extreme ethical issues in IRIS unless this responsibility has been delegated to another.

Each year, the CEO must present a statement on occurrences of ethical and research ethical issues to the board of directors.

#### **4.4. Board of Directors' Role**

IRIS' board of directors must process and pass IRIS' code of professional conduct.

Ethical issues may be put before the board of directors by employees and all members of the board.

When the board has processed and made a decision on ethical issues, they can order the CEO to take concrete action.

Each year, the board will be presented with a statement on occurrences of ethical and research ethical issues from the CEO.

#### **4.5. The Research Ethics Committee's Role**

The Research Ethics Committee in UiS and IRIS is an institutionalised collaboration, cf. attached description.

The Research Ethics Committee can accept cases for discussion from all employees at any level in IRIS, cf. chapter 4.1.

The committee has a consultative role in relation to the CEO in ethical and research ethical issues and, in this connection, has the right of speech to the CEO.

#### **4.6. Consequences of Infringements**

Obvious and substantial infringements of the code of professional conduct can have consequences for conditions of work and, in serious cases, infringements may result in dismissal.

It must be stressed that the reoccurrence of a similar infringement must induce the same reaction, quite independent of one's position in the organisation.

In cases of this nature, labour and the working environment laws and regulations shall apply.

### **5. Statement of Responsibility**

This document does not create rights for customers, contractors, competitors, shareholders or any other person or unit.

## **6. Revision and Maintenance of the Code**

The board, CEO and all other line managers shall continually evaluate this code, its contents and appropriateness. When revision is necessary, the CEO will appoint a work group to propose suggestions to code amendments preceded by discussions in the organisation. The revised code shall be approved by the board.

## **Attachment 1    Research Ethics Committee and Research Ethics Guidelines at UiS**

Attached is a letter concerning the Research Ethics Committee at UiS

The UiS does not at present have its own Research Ethics Guidelines, but implements the national research ethics guidelines of 2005, see <http://www.etikkom.no/English>

Meanwhile, the Research Ethics Committee is in the process of drawing up a proposal to guidelines and these will become part of this document.