Guidelines for promoting responsible research practice

Determined by the Academic Council at the Faculty of Social Sciences

Published: 28.03.2020 (Last revised: 22.04.2020)Print as pdf

På dansk

Content

RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH PRACTICE

The Faculty of Social Sciences wants to promote research of the highest quality within the framework of a vibrant, productive and critical research culture based on freedom of research and trust between research and society. In this connection, the Faculty adheres to the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, and all researchers at the Faculty must thus live up to their duties and responsibilities as formulated in this code of conduct.

At the Faculty of Social Sciences, responsible research practice is defined in accordance with the general framework of the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and based on discipline-specific rules and regulations as well as the international rules and declarations in force.

The Danish Code is a code of conduct for research integrity. The Danish Code describes common principles and standards for responsible research practice, thus aiming to ensure quality, credibility and integrity in Danish research.

The Danish Code focuses on three basic principles for integrity in research:

- Honesty

The honesty of the individual researcher when reporting objectives, methods, data, analyses, results, conclusions etc. is a precondition for ensuring credibility in research.

According to the Code, this requires accurate and balanced reporting when:

- presenting and interpreting research
- making claims based on research results
- recognising the work of other researchers
- applying for research funding
- assessing and evaluating research

- Transparency

Transparency in all phases of research helps to ensure the credibility of academic reasoning and also to ensure that academic considerations are consistent with practice in the relevant research field.

In the Code, this is described as openness when reporting:

- conflicts of interest
- the planning of research
- applied research methods
- results and conclusions

- Responsibility

In order to ensure reliable research, all parties involved should be held responsible for the research conducted. This requires that researchers and institutions take responsibility for the research they conduct with regard to:

- the correctness and reliability of research results
- compliance with all relevant provisions
- building and maintaining a culture that supports integrity in research, through teaching, training and supervision
- ensuring appropriate management of breaches of responsible research practice

PRINCIPLES OF RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH PRACTICE

The Danish Code implements six standards for responsible research practice that serve as a non-exhaustive list of recommendations for how research should be conducted from initiation to completion of specific research activities. The six standards relate to 1. research performance and practice, 2. data administration, 3. publishing and dissemination, 4. authorship, 5. research collaboration and 6. conflicts of interest.

The six standards are general standards that must be further developed by the individual institutions in accordance with the traditions and practices of the various disciplines. In order to promote integrity and credibility in research and based on the Danish Code's six standards for responsible research practice, the following principles apply to responsible research practice at the Faculty of Social Sciences. The principles should be observed as guidelines and support for researchers and research groups with a view to promoting high quality, integrity and credibility in research. Thus, the intention is to provide a framework that can serve as support in all research activities. The principles are based on, further develop and supplement national standards and thus do not constitute an exhaustive discipline-specific list.

Research performance and practice

- The researcher(s) responsible for the research must report the performance of research activities in a design or method description that complies with the standards of their discipline
- The research must be conducted in accordance with the methodological requirements that apply in various social science disciplines
- The research must be conducted in accordance with the documentation requirements applying to the disciplines, including documentation of data analyses, data runs etc., whenever possible
- All relevant data must be reported

- Consent must be secured from those involved, in accordance with the recommendations in force.
- Necessary approvals and permissions must be obtained before the research is conducted and in connection with relevant changes in the research activities.

Data administration

- Data must be stored securely, in accordance with national and international regulations and using the university's storage facilities
- Aalborg University's contracting unit advises academic staff on the data protection practice in force
- To the extent possible, data must be stored in a way that allows re-use and secondary analyses of data
- Access to data by third parties must be ensured to the furthest extent possible

Publication and dissemination

- Research results must be published and presented honestly, transparently and accurately
- All relevant organisations or individuals who have taken part in or contributed to the performance of the research activities must be credited and mentioned explicitly
- When using work, data or material from other sources in their publication, the author must cite the necessary references

Authorship is (according to the Vancouver declaration) based on the following:

- The author has contributed significantly to the core ideas, design, collection, analysis or interpretation of the research, and
- the author has contributed to the manuscript by supplying drafts or critical academic revision, and
- the author has approved the final manuscript, and
- the author is responsible for all aspects of the research work and has ensured that all issues of accuracy or integrity have been adequately investigated and resolved.

Individuals who meet the above criteria should thus be recognised as authors.

Research collaboration

- As early as possibly in the process of their collaboration, researchers should create a common understanding of the roles, responsibilities and obligations of the parties in order to ensure responsible research practice.
- When researchers collaborate, all parties involved are obliged to secure responsible research practice, to the extent possible.
- Where deemed relevant by researchers or the management, the parties involved in research collaboration must enter into agreements on, for example, the use, sharing and ownership of data and intellectual property rights, including rights of results, and confidentiality.
- When external parties are included in the collaboration, collaboration agreements must be made, and these must be approved by Aalborg University's patent and contracting unit.

Conflicts of interest

- Potential conflicts of interest which may cause doubts about the credibility and integrity of the research must be declared explicitly when publishing and in other ways disseminating the research results

- In connection with assessment work, including peer review, openness of relevant interests (personal as well as professional) is encouraged, so that no questions can be raised about the neutrality of the assessment.

Management and staff are jointly responsible for ensuring responsible research practice in all research activities at the Faculty. All academic staff are encouraged to attend courses and training in responsible research practice, and all research environments are encouraged to take an active part in discussions on responsible research practice and to seek advice if any doubt is raised as to whether the standards and guidelines in force are being complied with. It should be emphasised, however, that the continuous work of ensuring responsible research practice is rooted with the personnel managers at the Faculty departments.

It is thus the responsibility of the individual personnel manager that responsible research practice is observed by the Faculty researchers, and that the competences of each researcher are developed in connection with research at the Faculty of Social Sciences. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the individual personnel manager to focus on responsible research practice in human resource development and in their dialogue with members of staff.

BREACH OF RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH PRACTICE

At Aalborg University, the competence to treat cases of breach of responsible research practice rests with the Practice Committee, which either takes cases under active consideration or undertakes preliminary treatment before the case is referred for treatment by the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct, depending on the nature of the case.

The Practice Committee has been established to help ensure that cases of questionable research practice are handled at Aalborg University and to ensure a coordinated dialogue with the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct, cf. the Danish Act on Research Misconduct.

The Practice Committee is primarily responsible for treating cases of suspected questionable research practice. Cases of questionable research practice are defined as cases involving a scientific product developed as part of research conducted at Aalborg University, but which the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct, has rejected, or which do not fall under the competences of the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct.

It is also the task of the Practice Committee to forward cases of suspected fabrication, forgery or plagiarism falling under the competences of the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct for treatment by the committee, in agreement with the Danish Act on Research Misconduct.

Generally, the further treatment of cases of breach of responsible research practice (research misconduct, questionable research practice etc.) takes place at the Faculty or department, involving the relevant management.

Cases which do not fall under competences of the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct or the Practice Committee are handled at the Faculty or department, depending on the nature of the case.

PROMOTION OF RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH PRACTICE

At the Faculty of Social Sciences, a number of initiatives are taken to promote responsible research practice and prevent the breach of responsible research practice due to lack of knowledge regarding the rules, directions, code of conduct and procedures.

Information material

The website of the Faculty of Social Sciences contains information about responsible research practice and is currently updated regarding news, changes in practice, new legislation etc.

Members of staff at Aalborg University are required to study and keep updated of any legislation and rules applying to the performance of their work.

It is also the responsibility of individual personnel managers to ensure that new members of staff are introduced to the guidelines for responsible research practice and code of conduct.

The Faculty of Social Sciences gives a high priority to ensuring responsible research practice, and our aim is to ensure that all research conducted at the Faculty of Social Sciences complies with the requirements and rules stipulated in the Danish Code and other regulations.

Obligatory courses for PhD students

The course "Applying the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity to your research" is obligatory for PhD students at the Faculty of Social Sciences. The course ensures that PhD students are introduced to the Danish Code, and that they include good academic practice in their work.

Reference check of provisional PhD theses and PhD applications

At the Faculty of Social Sciences, all PhD theses must undergo a reference check before submission. The purpose of this is to ensure that PhD students receive guidance in case any issues in their thesis need to be amended prior to submission.

At the Faculty of Social Sciences, all PhD applications undergo a reference check in connection with the selection of suitable candidates. The purpose of this is to avoid the initiation of PhD projects based on plagiarised project descriptions, for instance.

Guidance regarding responsible research practice

Researchers at the Faculty of Social Sciences are encouraged to seek advice regarding responsible research practice if any doubt arises as to whether the standards and guidelines in force are being complied with.

The Faculty of Social Sciences does not have a guidance unit to take care of this guidance, and individual members of staff are therefore encouraged to seek advice and sparring in their research environment if they need general sparring on responsible research practice. In case of more specific queries, researchers are encouraged to contact their department management for sparring. The head of department is responsible for providing advice on responsible research practice, and for making sure that the research management is well prepared for providing advice to colleagues.

The AAU Practice Committee does not act as an advisory body and must, on their own initiative, address cases in which they have reasonable grounds to suspect breach of good academic practice to have occurred.

Academic Council's discussion of responsible research practice

According to Aalborg University's statutes, it is up to the Academic Council to discuss and establish guidelines for the promotion of responsible research practice. In its year plan, the Council has therefore included that all topics must be routinely discussed at least once a year. Moreover, the Council keeps a regular eye on the development and knowledge sharing regarding responsible research practice.

<u>Education</u>

The departments at the Faculty of Social Sciences are responsible for ensuring that the students are taught and guided in responsible research practice, and that the students receive research-based teaching. Aalborg University's rules concerning disciplinary measures apply to the students.

Origin, background and history

These guidelines are based on Aalborg University's statutes, section 24, sub-section 1(6), on the basis of which the Academic Council determines guidelines for the promotion of responsible research practice.

The guidelines were approved by the Academic Council at the Faculty of Social Sciences on 13 September 2018 and subsequently amended on 21 October 2019.

The guidelines are discussed once a year in the Academic Council at the Faculty of Social Sciences and are updated according to need. The Dean's secretariat at SAMF undertakes the amendment work and presents this to the Academic Council for approval.

Purpose and delimitation

According to Aalborg University's statutes, the Academic Council is responsible for developing and maintaining a high academic standard, which includes determining guidelines for promoting good scientific practice1.

The Academic Council at the Faculty of Social Sciences has determined the following guidelines, which are intended to:

- promote responsible research practice at the Faculty of Social Sciences
- spread knowledge and understanding of responsible research practice at the Faculty of Social Sciences
- prevent mistakes that occur because of the lack of knowledge of standards and principles for responsible research practice.

The guidelines for promoting responsible research practice apply to all academic staff including PhD students, and the guidelines are also applicable to all research conducted in affiliation with the Faculty of Social Sciences at Aalborg University.

Moreover, the guidelines must be complied with in connection with the assessment of scientific products at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The guidelines address a number of questions regarding responsible research practice; however, they do not constitute an exhaustive definition or description of responsible research practice.

Overall framework

Aalborg University's statutes

The Danish code of conduct for research integrity

The Danish Act on Research Misconduct.

Contact and responsibility

The Dean's secretariat at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Marie Louise Gram, mgm@adm.aau.dk, +45 9940 7920

Concept definitions

Responsible research practice/good academic practice:

- In these guidelines, no distinction is made between the concepts of responsible research practice and good academic practice. Responsible research practice is used as this is the concept appearing in the most recent and applicable Danish legislation.

Attachment

Aalborg University's statutes: http://www.haandbog.aau.dk/dokument/?contentId=345312

The Danish code of conduct for research integrity:

https://ufm.dk/en/publications/2014/the-danish-code-of-conduct-for-research-integrity