



# Research Ethics Policy

Decision-maker	The Vice-Chancellor
Responsible unit	Research and Innovation Services
Decision date	2025-01-16
Period of validity	Reviewed for relevance by 2028
Summary	<p>This document is an English translation of the Research Ethics Policy decided by the Vice-Chancellor. In the event of ambiguity, the Swedish version always applies. All research conducted at the University of Gothenburg must adhere to good research practice and be guided by ethical considerations. This policy clarifies rules, guidelines, and codes applicable to research at the university. Any necessary approvals must be obtained in accordance with relevant legislation, and research must comply with the university's data protection guidelines. Responsibility is delegated, and all individuals engaged in research are responsible for staying informed about relevant rules, codes, and governing documents in the field.</p>

## Introduction and Purpose

The University of Gothenburg conducts world-leading, high-quality research across multiple disciplines. The university is committed to the integrity, independence, and quality of research, which requires adherence to good research practice and ethical considerations. Responsibility for this lies with both the leadership and individual researchers. The Higher Education Act (1992:1434) stipulates that universities must safeguard the credibility of science and good research practice, and that activities should be adapted to ensure high-quality research.<sup>1</sup> Research must be carried out in accordance with the fundamental values and principles established in national and international regulations.

Research enjoys strong public and legislative trust, allowing for significant academic freedom, including exemptions from data protection and confidentiality regulations in favor of research. However, this trust carries a significant responsibility for the university and individual researchers to uphold credibility and public confidence in research. The purpose of this policy is to support researchers within the university and clarify the university's position on good research practice to the public.

## Good Research Practice

All research conducted at the University of Gothenburg must follow *good research practice*. While this concept lacks a legal definition, the Swedish Research Council's publication "Good Research Practice 2024" describes it as the ethical norms and procedures developed through dialogue between researchers and society. These norms and procedures are largely codified in ethical guidelines, legislation, and other regulatory frameworks that together define good research practice.<sup>2</sup>

Key fundamental principles of good research practice are outlined in "the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity" by *All European Academies (ALLEA)*. These principles entail that research is of high quality, conducted and reported truthfully, respects societal values, and that researchers take responsibility for their work and its consequences.<sup>3</sup>

A core element of good research practice is balancing different legitimate interests, such as research interests, protection of subjects, transparency, and public trust. These interests can sometimes conflict, requiring ethical reflection and prioritization. Ethical considerations in human research must always include assessments of physical, psychological, and privacy risks for participants, while animal research must adhere to the *3R principle* (Replace, Reduce, Refine).

The field of research ethics is dynamic, with new issues arising due to technological advancements, such as AI<sup>4</sup>, and legislative changes. It is therefore important to maintain an active, critical, and ongoing discussion on good research practice.

## Compliance with Regulations

Good research practice includes compliance with relevant regulations. Research involving humans and animals is regulated by the Ethical Review Act (2003:460)<sup>5</sup> and the Animal Welfare Act (2018:1192)<sup>6</sup>, as well

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 1, sections 3a and 4 of the Higher Education Act (1992:1434)

<sup>2</sup> Good Research Practice 2024, Vetenskapsrådet

<sup>3</sup> The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, 2023, All European Academies (ALLEA)

<sup>4</sup> Living guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research, European Commission, 2024

<sup>5</sup> Ethical Review Act (2003:460)

<sup>6</sup> Animal Welfare Act (2018:1192)

as fundamental ethical guidelines and international codes such as the ALLEA Code and the Declaration of Helsinki<sup>7</sup>. These ethical requirements must be followed regardless of whether they are legally binding or not.

When conducting research outside Sweden, both Swedish and foreign regulations and guidelines must be followed. The University of Gothenburg adheres to the Swedish Association of Universities and Colleges (SUHF) guidelines on research ethics abroad, which require research conducted internationally to meet at least the same high ethical standards as in Sweden.<sup>8</sup>

### **Research Requiring Permits**

In certain cases, approvals must be obtained before conducting research. This can apply to research involving humans or animals. Research involving humans under the Ethical Review Act is reviewed by the Ethical Review Authority, while animal research is reviewed by the Gothenburg Animal Ethics Committee via the Swedish Board of Agriculture. Additional permits may be required from other authorities, such as in clinical drug trials. Approval must be obtained before a project starts and updated if necessary. In uncertain cases, an application for ethical review should be submitted to ensure compliance.

### **Data Protection and Confidentiality**

The University of Gothenburg is responsible for all personal data processing within its operations. Research involving personal data is subject to the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which aims to protect individuals' privacy and is an important safeguard for research participants.<sup>9</sup> All research at the university must comply with its data protection policies and recommendations.

The university is a government agency and is therefore subject to the provisions of the Freedom of the Press Act and the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act regarding public documents and confidentiality. Researchers are bound by confidentiality obligations when handling classified information.

## **Deviations from Good Research Practice**

*Research misconduct* is defined as serious deviations from good research practice in the form of fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism (FFP) carried out intentionally or through obvious negligence during research planning, execution, or reporting. *Other deviations from good research practice* that do not constitute FFP are assessed based on the ALLEA Code principles.

At the University of Gothenburg, the *Council for Examination of Deviations from Good Research Practice* supports the Vice-Chancellor in handling cases of research misconduct or other deviations from good research practice. "The Procedures for Handling Suspected Deviations from Good Research Practice" establish the framework for addressing such matters.

## **Responsibility for Good Research Practice**

According to the Act on Responsibility for Good Research Practice and Examination of Research Misconduct (2019:504)<sup>10</sup> and the Higher Education Act (1992:1434)<sup>11</sup>, the university has an overarching responsibility to

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<sup>7</sup> World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki

<sup>8</sup> Guidelines regarding higher education institutions' responsibility for ethics in research abroad, Sveriges universitets- och högskoleförbund (SUHF), 2024

<sup>9</sup> The Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR)

<sup>10</sup> Act on Responsibility for Good Research Practice and Examination of Research Misconduct (2019:504)

<sup>11</sup> Higher Education Act (1992:1434)

ensure that its research adheres to good research practice and that measures are in place to prevent violations. The responsibilities at the University of Gothenburg are described in the following.

The departments form the foundation of the university's education, research, and collaborations with academic and non-academic partner. The head of department oversees daily overall operations and is responsible for the activities of the department. For example, the head of department (after delegation from the dean) is responsible for the application of the Ethical Review Act.

Individual researchers must be well-informed about relevant ethical rules, codes, and policies and ensure necessary ethical considerations in their research.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that doctoral students acquire competence and knowledge of research ethics and good research practice. Faculty boards must offer doctoral training courses in research ethics.

Research ethics advisors at the Research and Innovation Services, the Committee for Ethics in Research, and faculty-level research advisory services provide support on ethics and good research practice.

## Laws, Codes and Policy documents

### Laws

[Ethical Review Act \(2003:460\), Sveriges riksdag \(riksdagen.se\), \(in Swedish\)](#)

[Act on Responsibility for Good Research Practice and Examination of Research Misconduct \(2019:504\), Sveriges riksdag \(riksdagen.se\), \(in Swedish\)](#)

[Animal Review Act \(2018:1192\), Sveriges riksdag \(riksdagen.se\), \(in Swedish\)](#)

[Higher Education Act \(1992:1434\), Sveriges riksdag \(riksdagen.se\), \(in Swedish\)](#)

[Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act, \(2009:400\), Sveriges riksdag \(riksdagen.se\), \(in Swedish\)](#)

[Freedom of the Press Act \(1949:105\), Sveriges riksdag \(riksdagen.se\), \(in Swedish\)](#)

[The Regulation \(EU\) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC \(GDPR\)](#)

### Codes and other Guidelines

[The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity 2023, All European Academies \(ALLEA\)](#)

[Good Research Practice 2024, Swedish Research Council](#)

[Living guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research, European Commission, 2024](#)

[World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki](#)

[Guide to the Ethical Review of Research on Humans, The Swedish Ethical Review Authority, 2023](#)

[Guidelines regarding higher education institutions' responsibility for ethics in research abroad, The Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions, 2024](#)

### Policy documents

For related policy documents (only available in Swedish), see [Styrdokument | Göteborgs universitet](#), such as:

Delegationsordning för Göteborgs universitet

Arbetsordning vid Göteborgs universitet

Handläggningsordning vid misstanke om avvikelser från god forskningssed

Göteborgs universitets policy för djurförsök