

Code of ethics for employees at NTNU

Approved by Rector 14 April 2015 (last updated 26.1.2017)

NTNU's code of ethics applies to the way that staff members perform their roles as:

- employees and leaders,
- managers, service providers and contractors,
- researchers, supervisors and teaching staff.

1. Values

As employees at NTNU, we aim to contribute to society through research, education, innovation, dissemination and outreach in accordance with [NTNU's strategy 'Knowledge for a better world – NTNU, internationally outstanding'](#).

Our conduct must reflect NTNU's fundamental values. We will:

- perform our work in a *creative, constructive and critical* way and
- treat our colleagues and collaborative partners with *respect and thoughtfulness*.

2. Ethical dilemmas and choices

Ethics involve questions of what is right and wrong. Laws and regulations define the boundaries for right and wrong in many areas, but often we must exercise judgement. Not all ethical issues are governed by regulations. Choices are at the heart of ethics – choices based on standards, values, and individual judgement. *If you are in doubt, you should speak to your immediate superior to discuss the right thing to do.*

Ethical dilemmas that we often face at NTNU are described in the Ethics Portal's [10 focus points](#). Here, you can also find references to relevant guidelines and regulations where they are available.

This document introduces ethical issues that are important in *the role of an employee* at NTNU in interaction with colleagues, students and external partners. In addition, for researcher and supervisor roles, specific codes of ethics apply at NTNU, nationally and internationally.

3. General guidelines for employees – personal conduct

NTNU's employees have a personal responsibility to comply with the *laws and regulations* that apply at the university and to perform their work in an unselfish and ethically sound way. NTNU is bound by the [Ethical Guidelines for the Public Service](#):

- Employees must follow good *administrative practices* and use their *professional independence*, knowledge and judgement as the basis for their work.
- Managers must be good role models, and their management decisions must be *loyally* followed unless they have illegal or unethical implications or they violate academic freedom.
- All employees must have a conscious attitude to the way our conduct both on and off the job can influence *trust* in NTNU as an organization in public administration as well as an education and research institution.

3.1 Trust in NTNU

Impartiality

Employees must not participate in or seek to influence a decision if they might have a personal interest in the result, and their independence might be questioned. A conflict of interest can arise even if the situation is not directly affected by the impartiality rules in the Public Administration Act [*forvaltningsloven*]. The employee's manager must be notified of possible conflicts of interest. Spouses, cohabitants or close relatives who both work at NTNU should not be in a direct reporting line where the responsible manager's decisions regarding the individual might be questioned. Special care must be taken in the appointment of examiners, assessment committees, and expert committees for appointment and promotion to ensure independent assessment of candidates.

See the [ethical dilemma 'conflicts of interest'](#)

See [Innsida on 'impartiality'](#)

External work

NTNU follows State regulations for external work. Employees may not accept positions that would reduce trust in NTNU or that are incompatible with NTNU's interests. There must be transparency about positions that may have implications for NTNU. Usually, there is no problem in combining employment at NTNU with other jobs or roles outside NTNU. In some cases, external work may be in conflict with the position at NTNU. In such cases, the external work must be approved.

See [ethical dilemma 'acceptable and unacceptable relationships' and 'handling conflicts of interest'](#)

See [Innsida on 'regulations regarding second jobs'](#)

Gifts and other favours (corruption)

Employees must not, either for themselves or on behalf of others, receive or give *gifts, discounts, travel and similar* that might influence their actions. Hospitality, socializing and tokens of appreciation in moderate forms are recognized as generally accepted and courteous behaviour. Particular care is required in relation to suppliers and external partners.

See [Innsida on 'gifts and perquisites'](#)

See [Ethical guidelines for the public service](#), Sections 4.5 and 4.6

See the [ethical dilemma 'conflicts of interest'](#)

Confidentiality and privacy

All employees must be cautious about how they deal with *sensitive information* internally as well as externally. Employees should use discretion even if they are not bound by confidentiality requirements. Information about individuals, intellectual property and collaborative partners must be treated with particular caution.

See [NTNU's regulations on the treatment of personal data in research and student projects](#)

3.2 Openness towards the media and the public

The public

Employees are to give *open and reliable information* to the media, employees, students and collaborative partners. NTNU is to practice the principle of public access according to the Freedom of Information Act.

See the [ethical dilemma 'transparency and confidentiality'](#)

See [NTNU's Publishing Policy](#)

See [NTNU's Communication Policy](#) (in Norwegian)

Freedom of expression

Employees' *freedom of expression* and academic freedom are fundamental rights at the university.

See the [ethical dilemma 'freedom of expression and loyalty'](#)

Media relations

Academic staff are encouraged to share their expertise through the media and other communication channels. If you would like to serve in the role of an expert, you should use discretion about making statements in individual cases, to avoid future problems with conflicts of interest. In matters relating to NTNU as an institution, media relations should be left to NTNU's management at the relevant level.

Employees are encouraged to contribute to the professional debate through new communication channels such as social media, as long as this is consistent with the code of ethics for the public sector, freedom of expression and media relations.

See [NTNU's Publishing Policy](#)

See [NTNU's Communication Policy](#) (in Norwegian)

3.3 Human rights and the environment

External relations and human rights

As a State university, NTNU follows Norwegian policy in its institutional relationships. NTNU's values and mission in society form the basis for entry into agreements with universities and the business community. Employees can decline to participate in collaborative relationships that are contrary to their ethical convictions.

See [State universities binding collaboration](#) (Directive F-07-13, in Norwegian only)

See [Corporate social responsibility in a global economy](#) (Abridged version of Report No. 10 (2008-2009) to the Storting)

See [Business cooperation abroad](#) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs – guidelines and tools)

See [the Council on Ethics for the Government Pension Fund Global](#) (Ministry of Finance)

NTNU wants to help promote universal human rights through international cooperation in education and research according to the principles in [United Nations Academic Impact](#).

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Human rights include the right to education, non-discrimination, freedom of organization and freedom of expression as well as health- and work-related rights.

See the [ethical dilemma in 'international cooperation' \(in Norwegian\)](#)

Managers must set requirements for acceptable working and environmental conditions at our suppliers based on internationally recognized UN and ILO conventions.

See [NTNU's guidelines for ethical trade \(in Norwegian\)](#)

Non-discrimination

NTNU does not accept any form of *harassment*, *discrimination* or other improper conduct towards colleagues or other people to whom staff members relate as an NTNU employee. No one is to be discriminated against during appointment, training and promotion on the basis of gender, social origin, ethnicity, political opinions or other factors.

See [NTNU's booklet on sexual harassment](#)

See [NTNU's procedures for reporting unacceptable behaviour - harassment and conflict](#)

During working hours and on work trips, employees must refrain from actions regarded as offensive, including arranging or buying/selling sexual services.

See [government guidelines prohibiting purchase of sexual services \(in Norwegian\)](#)

Work environment

Managers and staff must show respect and care for each other. Everyone is responsible for contributing to a positive environment for work and learning characterized by participation, targeted development and workplace safety.

Employees must be careful with alcohol and must not be intoxicated when representing NTNU at home or abroad. Employees must show consideration for colleagues and others who for various reasons do not drink alcohol. Abuse of drugs or alcohol that affects work is not accepted.

See [NTNU's HSE guidelines on prevention of alcohol and drug abuse \(in Norwegian\)](#)

See [NTNU's rules for the use of premises \(in Norwegian\)](#)

Environmental awareness

Employees must be aware of how their behaviour and decisions might affect the external environment and sustainable development, in terms of research, education, operations or administration.

See [Environment and social responsibility at NTNU](#) (NTNU's environmental goals, in Norwegian)

3.4 Use of NTNU's resources and property

Effective use of resources

Employees must contribute to *effective use of NTNU's resources* in compliance with the prerequisites of funding authorities, clients and others. We must also contribute to a positive working environment, taking care of the health, safety and environment for students and staff.

Use of NTNU's equipment

As a general rule, employees must use NTNU's equipment and property, including computer equipment and office supplies, for *work-related purposes*. Personal use must not be at the

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expense of job performance. Use that could be regarded as offensive (such as downloading pornography) must not take place on NTNU's premises or using NTNU equipment.

See [NTNU's IT regulations](#)

Use of NTNU's premises

NTNU's premises are to be used for activities and events under the university's direction and by the university's student associations. Events organized in partnership with the business community must not be at the expense of the university's integrity, and must be consistent with NTNU's strategy and priorities. The organizer responsible must strive to ensure that no organization which is responsible for serious violations of human rights and international law, severe environmental degradation, gross corruption or illegal arms sales is invited or participates.

See [Business cooperation abroad](#) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs – guidelines and tools)

See [the Council on Ethics for the Government Pension Fund Global](#) (Ministry of Finance)

NTNU's areas may not be used for production of goods or services, but may by agreement be used for innovation projects, as long as this is not at the expense of the university's other activities.

See [Guidelines for innovation at NTNU](#) (in Norwegian)

4. Whistleblowing and violations

Whistleblowing

If employees believe that violations of laws, regulations or ethical norms or other serious circumstances have occurred that could harm the university or society at large, NTNU's whistleblowing procedures should be followed in the interests of the employee's legal protection and NTNU's reputation. The manager who is notified has a duty to investigate the matter and to help resolve unacceptable situations.

See [NTNU's whistleblowing procedures](#)

Violations

Violation of NTNU's code of ethics is a breach of the public trust in employees. Breach of impartiality rules may mean that decisions must be declared invalid. Unethical acts or omissions at work may lead to sanctions under the Civil Service Act [*tjenestemannsloven*], and may be punishable by law in serious cases. Unethical behaviour may also be a factor in the evaluation of suitability for a position at the university where there are reasonable grounds for requiring compliance with the university's code of ethics.

5. Specific guidelines for research

Responsibility for research ethics

NTNU's academic leadership is responsible for ensuring that research is conducted in accordance with laws and regulations, ethical codes of conduct and the agreed framework from external funding sources.

The individual researcher has an independent responsibility to ensure that research takes place in accordance with good research practice, recognized scientific and ethical principles, and agreed internal and external frameworks.

NTNU's academic leaders and researchers have a special responsibility to fulfil our obligations in reporting and financial management.

Ethics and good research practice

NTNU follows international guidelines for good research practice and ethical practice as described by

[The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees](#) in the form of:

- [general guidelines for research ethics](#) and
- guidelines specific to subject areas for:
 - [medicine and health](#)
 - [science and technology \(pdf\)](#)
 - [the social sciences, law and the humanities \(pdf\)](#)
 - [internet research](#)

NTNU has additional guidelines for research involving humans.

See [NTNU's regulations on the handling of personal data in research and student projects](#)

NTNU follows the [code of ethics](#) from the International Council of Museums in the management of natural and cultural heritage in our collections and exhibitions.

Academic communities and supervision

NTNU's researchers are encouraged to develop a *collegial community* for review of methods and results, as well as further development of their own academic skills.

Academic supervision of younger researchers should take place generously and without exaggerated protection for the supervisor's own professional interests, but with respect for the ownership of ideas and results.

See Section 6.1 below on NTNU's code of ethics for teaching and supervisory relationships

See the [NTNU PhD Handbook](#) (pdf) on the supervisor's role in PhD programmes.

Publishing

NTNU's researchers are encouraged to communicate their results to their peers and the public. NTNU follows the rules for academic publishing and co-authorship in the respective academic fields. Colleagues and sources of knowledge of significance for research findings must be acknowledged appropriately. To clarify any conflicts of interest, funding sources, as well as ownership of results if relevant, should always be stated. Candidates in NTNU's organized research training are expected to specify NTNU as the author's address in their publications.

See [NTNU Publishing Policy](#)

See [Innsida on 'publishing'](#)

See [The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees' guidelines on co-authorship](#) (in Norwegian)

See [UHR's recommended guidelines for crediting academic publications to institutions](#)

Accept academic dissent, but not dishonesty in research

NTNU's researchers are to have broad academic freedom. This includes the right to choose research topics, methods, and forms of communication for the research results. At the same time, academic freedom entails a responsibility to contribute to a research culture in which there is room for academic disagreement, where researchers show personal respect for colleagues and loyally follow management decisions.

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NTNU's researchers also have a shared responsibility to create a culture in which students and younger researchers receive guidance in good research practice and ethically sound practice. If there is any suspicion of dishonesty in research, the Head of Department should be notified, or the Dean if the immediate superior is disqualified due to a conflict of interest. Such cases are handled by a [Research Ethics Committee](#). The committee can also make statements in more general matters. [NTNU's whistleblowing procedures](#) can also be used.

Notification requirement and publication rights

To protect NTNU's social responsibility, NTNU shall generally own all intellectual property created using NTNU's resources. Employees have a notification requirement for results that have commercial potential, but can themselves choose how and when results are to be published. For scientific theses, a short-term postponement of publication can be arranged to enable protection of rights.

NTNU's employees may not enter into agreements with third parties that violate the university's academic freedom and responsibility to make results from NTNU available so that they can be used as widely as possible in society and industry.

See [NTNU's policy for the protection and management of intellectual property rights and physical material](#)

Externally funded projects - financial compliance

Research managers and researchers must be able to account for their management of the funding made available for the research. For NTNU's reputation, it is important that externally funded projects are conducted according to the agreed scientific and financial framework.

See [procedures for sponsored and commissioned activity](#) (in Norwegian)

6. Specific guidelines for teaching and supervision

Ethics in teaching and supervision is a question of *education quality*. As teaching staff and supervisors at NTNU, employees must:

- use their authority in a *professional way*,
- offer good *learning forums* that set clear expectations for students, as well as
- giving students insight into relevant *subject and ethical issues* and experience in applying the discipline's methods and rules for *academic integrity* (see the Qualification Framework).

The general guidelines for employees' personal conduct also apply to education and supervision. Equitable treatment and good management practices are important in matters related to studies. Specific guidelines are given in the following areas where absolute limits and sanctions may be necessary: supervisor relationships, academic misconduct and plagiarism, suspension and exclusion.

6.1 Code of ethics for teaching and supervisory relationships

Professional distance

The supervisor and candidate must show mutual respect for each other's personal and professional integrity and not act in a way that comes across as offensive. The supervisor is responsible for the necessary *professional distance* in the context of supervision and teaching.

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However, the supervisor should be attentive and responsive to the student's personal situation related to work on the project or thesis. Disclosure of the supervisor's own confidences or discussion of colleagues is not appropriate in the supervisory relationship. The supervisor has a special responsibility to avoid initiating relationships that put the candidate in a vulnerable situation. Dual relationships in the supervision context should not occur.

Change of supervisor for personal reasons

If a personal relationship develops, one party feels subjected to unwanted sexual attention, or one party finds the supervisory relationship so difficult that *cooperation seems impossible*, the Head of Department is to ensure that a new supervisor is appointed.

Academic integrity

If the supervisor wants to use *the candidate's data material or research findings* in his or her own publications or research, the supervisor must obtain permission from the candidate and follow the rules of the academic field for citing sources and attributing credit. In research projects with commercial potential, the supervisor must ensure that the ownership of ideas by the candidate and the supervisor is clarified from the start.

The supervisor must not receive any fees for supervision beyond what has been agreed with the department. Supervision is normally included in the employee's required duties. The supervisor should consider the consequences of receiving *gifts or other favours in return* from the candidate.

6.2 Academic integrity in education – cheating and plagiarism

Students have an *independent responsibility* to familiarize themselves with the examination regulations on cheating (use of illegal support material during examinations and copying without reference to sources in examination questions).

Staff in a teaching and supervisory role at NTNU have an important role in *creating awareness* and must ensure that students are familiar with the rules of academic integrity.

Supervisors and examiners also have an oversight responsibility. Electronic text recognition and other methods can be used to detect possible plagiarism in submitted work. Suspicion of cheating and plagiarism in examinations is to be documented and reported to the Head of Department.

See Innsida on '[Cheating on exams](#)' (Guidelines for handling cheating and attempts at cheating on exams at NTNU)

See [NTNU's Central Appeals Committee](#)

6.3 Learning environment – expulsion, suspension and exclusion

Inclusion and mutual respect between staff and students must be a hallmark of NTNU's learning environment. At NTNU, students will be given the opportunity and are expected:

- to participate in relevant learning activities provided by lecturers with strong teaching skills and academic expertise,
- to participate in research-based teaching where students become familiar with research processes,

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- to work together with other students through a variety of work forms,
- to use up-to-date academic literature as well as digital teaching materials and media, and
- to receive quality-assured information about choosing a study programme, completion of studies and examinations.

NTNU's employees are to help to make it possible to achieve the objectives for NTNU's learning environment.

Employees who find that students are behaving in a way that disturbs their fellow students' work or other university activities must try to resolve the issue at the lowest possible level. In serious cases, students may be excluded from the university, see the [examination regulations Chapter 2 Section 11 Suspension, exclusion](#).

6.4 Suitability assessment

To be permitted to practice as a teacher, psychologist or doctor, students must be assessed as suitable for the profession. NTNU's teaching staff and supervisors must inform students in advance about the system for suitability assessment, and throughout the period of study they must conduct an *overall assessment of the student's professional and personal suitability* for practice of the profession. 'Fail' is used if students do not satisfy the examination requirements in subjects or practical training. In special cases, if there are serious doubts about a student's suitability and extended supervision does not result in the necessary change in behaviour, the matter is to be submitted to NTNU's suitability committee. NTNU's Central Appeals Committee determines whether a student is not suitable for the profession or is to be excluded from the programme of study.

See [Innsida on 'Suitability assessment'](#) and the [Regulations for suitability assessment \(in Norwegian\)](#)