



IN ACCORDANCE WITH Law no. 240/2010;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the current Statute of the University of Palermo;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the resolution of the Board of Governors no. 1636/2024 – protocol no. 208948 of 05.12.2024;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the resolution of the Academic Senate no. 603/2024 – protocol no. 217451 of 17.12.2024;

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the resolution of the Academic Senate no. 156/2025 – protocol no. 59502 of 08.04.2025;

HEREBY ENACTS

the following:

CODE OF ETHICS FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Section I

Fundamental Principles of Scientific Research

Art. 1

General principles

1. Research is both a right and a duty of all researchers at the University of Palermo. It is carried out freely and may be conducted individually or in teams. In every area and at every stage, it must be guided by respect for the dignity of all those involved, by responsibility, fairness, diligence, and transparency.
2. Research must aim to increase knowledge for the benefit of society, without causing harm, and must be conducted in accordance with these goals.
3. The dignity of human beings and the welfare of any other living beings involved in the research must be respected in line with applicable laws and the standards set by the Animal Welfare Body and the Bioethics Committee.
4. To ensure these objectives are upheld, the University of Palermo adopts this Code of Ethics for Research Activities (hereinafter “the Code”) in accordance with the University’s existing Code of Ethics and regulations. The Code sets out the principles of ethical and professional responsibility, honesty, and integrity that must be respected throughout the research process, whether conducted individually or collaboratively.

Article 1.1

Definitions

1. For the purposes of this Code:
 - a) **Researcher:** any member of the academic community engaged in research, in any capacity and discipline. This includes, but is not limited to: tenured professors and researchers; fixed-term researchers; research fellows; PhD candidates, postgraduate



medical trainees, and scholarship holders; students involved in research projects; technical-administrative staff participating in research projects or activities; and external collaborators or volunteers engaged in University research projects.

- b) **Serious misconduct:** behaviours that significantly breach research integrity, such as plagiarism, falsification or fabrication of data, misappropriation of results or ideas, and deliberate manipulation of images or scientific information. Such conduct constitutes serious violations and is subject to sanctions.
- c) **Questionable practices:** behaviours not fully aligned with standards of good scientific practice but not amounting to serious misconduct, such as failure to cite relevant sources, improper attribution of authorship, lack of transparency in managing conflicts of interest, or negligent data handling. If repeated or intentional, such conduct may lead to warnings or sanctions.

Art. 2

Recognition of the profession and free circulation of researchers

- 1. All researchers engaged in the promotion or generation of new knowledge are recognised as professionals and treated accordingly.
- 2. In line with the recommendations of the *European Charter for Researchers*, the free and responsible movement of researchers is encouraged. The value of geographical, inter-institutional, intersectoral, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary mobility is recognised as a key tool for enhancing knowledge and supporting professional development at all stages of a research career.

Art. 3

Research results and evaluation

- 1. Data collection and analysis methods, research results, and, where applicable, the detailed information relating to such data must be made accessible for internal and external review, including at the request of competent authorities.
- 2. Researchers shall carry out activities related to research evaluation and peer review of research projects, scientific publications, CVs, and similar, in compliance with the principles set out in this Code.

Art. 4

Inclusion, non-discrimination, and internal relations within the research community

- 1. Researchers are committed to fostering inclusive, fair, and respectful environments, free from all forms of discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, language, disability, religion, age, or personal beliefs.
- 2. The value of diverse backgrounds and life experiences within research teams is recognised as a source of enrichment for the quality and social relevance of research.
- 3. Relationships within the scientific community, especially between supervisors and early-career researchers, must be based on respect, transparency, fairness, and the promotion of scientific and professional growth.



Art. 5

Research sustainability

1. Recognising the crucial role that universities play in implementing the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and acknowledging the commitment and good practices promoted by the Italian Network of Universities for Sustainable Development (RUS) and the European Commission's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Green Charter, the University of Palermo affirms the essential contribution of research in advancing sustainability through the development of knowledge, innovation, and strategies needed to achieve the SDGs. Researchers are expected to give particular attention to sustainability issues in the planning and development of their research, contributing to solutions for global challenges and promoting their dissemination in line with open science principles.
2. Researchers are encouraged to help create working environments that foster collaboration, resilience, personal and professional growth, health and wellbeing, and mutual care and support. They are also committed to sharing knowledge and good practices in service of the communities in which they operate, enabling active contribution to sustainable development.

Collaboration across institutions and disciplines is recognised as essential to accelerating collective action for the advancement and implementation of sustainable development practices, inspiring international dialogue, debate, and the dissemination of best practices for the benefit of society as a whole.

Section II

Duties and conduct of scientific research

Art. 6

Duties

1. Researchers at the University of Palermo have a duty to clearly state their affiliation and role within the University in all relevant contexts, including scientific publications and public communications.
2. Researchers must use communication tools (including social media) responsibly, and avoid having their personal opinions attributed to the University or the academic community of the University of Palermo. The term "academic community" refers to all students, PhD candidates, research fellows, researchers, academic staff, and technical, administrative and library personnel. When researchers mention their affiliation with the University of Palermo, or when such affiliation is otherwise evident from their online presence, they have a specific duty to:
 - a) not damage the reputation of the University of Palermo or its academic community;
 - b) not disclose confidential information or violate laws protecting personal data, intellectual property, or industrial property;
 - c) not post insulting, defamatory, or discriminatory content;
 - d) not share or promote illegal activities;
 - e) not express or encourage offensive or provocative comments.



3. In accordance with the University of Palermo's Code of Ethics, researchers must refrain from any behaviour that is discriminatory or harmful to the dignity of others, and must build relationships founded on respect for all individuals, without any form of discrimination.
4. Researchers have a duty to stay informed about relevant national and international regulations and University rules concerning their field of research. The University, in turn, is responsible for providing up-to-date, complete, and easily accessible information, and for promoting researcher training in this area.
5. Researchers must be familiar with the funding mechanisms that govern research activities. They are responsible for following the administrative procedures for proper access to and use of resources, securing all necessary authorisations before beginning scientific activities, and ensuring financial management is guided by transparency, efficiency, and soundness. Within this framework, researchers must cooperate with the University, funding bodies, and other public or private organisations, including ethics committees, particularly in relation to any authorised audits or evaluations.

Art. 7

Research design and planning

1. Research must have scientific, academic, and/or social relevance. In cases where it may have an impact on research subjects or, more broadly, on society, the environment, or the biosphere, such impact must be responsibly assessed and documented accordingly. Researchers must consider the most up-to-date scientific evidence and adopt appropriately justified methodologies capable of achieving the stated objectives.
2. Researchers have a duty to disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest—personal or professional—towards the University, funding bodies, research participants, or society at large. Any influence that could potentially compromise the objectivity of the research must be declared and managed with integrity.
3. In group research projects, the design phase must be discussed with all involved parties, with a clear agreement in advance on roles, responsibilities, and tasks. These may be revised during the project, provided changes are transparent and duly justified. All members of the research team, especially the project lead, are expected to foster an environment of mutual cooperation, avoid all forms of discrimination, and acknowledge individual contributions appropriately.
4. In collaborations with external partners, researchers are responsible for ensuring that the research can be carried out in accordance with ethical and integrity standards. Researchers must initiate collaborations only with partners who provide sufficient guarantees in this respect, formalised through written agreements.
5. Each research group must designate individuals responsible for managing and preserving the research materials and data produced, including, where applicable, raw data.



Art. 8

Conducting research

1. Researchers undertake their roles with diligence and responsibility, adhering—especially in group research settings—to what has been previously agreed upon.
2. Research activities and any results progressively achieved must be recorded truthfully, precisely, and in sufficient detail to allow for critical review and potential replication by third parties.
3. Researchers must show the utmost respect for all individuals involved in the research, and must not compromise the health, wellbeing of the community, safety, or environmental quality of the settings in which they work. Research involving animals must comply with current animal protection regulations and be conducted in accordance with the guidelines and responsibilities of the Animal Welfare Body.
4. Where research involves biological samples, viruses or other pathogens, or chemical substances, all national and regulatory standards concerning biological, chemical, or radiological risk must be strictly followed.

Art. 8.1

Research data storage and access

1. Researchers must accurately document their activities and preserve primary data, protocols, results, and all information relevant for verifying and replicating the research, along with related documentation (such as lab notebooks, protocols, software code, questionnaires, recordings, etc.).
2. Data must be stored securely and protected, in compliance with personal data protection laws, and according to the FAIR principles: Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reusability. Data must be retained for a minimum of five years following the conclusion of the project or the publication of the results, unless otherwise required by legal or disciplinary provisions.
3. Access to data may be granted to third parties in compliance with confidentiality requirements, subject to evaluation by data controllers, and in accordance with University regulations and project agreements.
4. The University promotes data sharing through institutional repositories and encourages responses to well-founded requests from the scientific community or competent authorities.

Art. 9

Dissemination and evaluation of research results

1. Researchers must make every effort to ensure the widest possible sharing and dissemination of the results achieved. Dissemination must be honest, transparent, and complete. The University condemns false citation of sources, fabrication of results (even partial), and falsification or manipulation of findings.
2. Research results must be shared in a way that respects the confidentiality of the individuals involved. If, for scientific reasons, anonymity cannot be guaranteed, informed consent and authorisation for the processing of personal data must be obtained in advance from the individuals concerned.
3. Researchers who are inventors of a patent must comply with current legislation and University regulations on industrial property.



4. Scientific outputs must acknowledge and appropriately credit the contributions of all research team members. All individuals who have made a significant scientific contribution must be listed as co-authors, in line with principles of merit recognition and non-discrimination. In collective publications, the order of authorship must be agreed upon in advance, and no one who has not made a scientifically significant contribution should be listed as a co-author.
5. An “open science” approach is encouraged, aimed at maximising the dissemination of research outcomes. Research data should be made available through internationally recognised repositories or by responding promptly to access requests.
6. Researchers involved in **peer review** or **evaluation** activities must act with impartiality, confidentiality, and responsibility. They must avoid any improper use of the information received and declare any conflicts of interest.

Section III Final provisions and sanctions

Art. 10 Dissemination of the Code of Ethics

1. The University is responsible for promoting the widest possible dissemination of this Code through communications, publications, conferences, training activities, and any other appropriate means.
2. Heads of Department are required to share this Code with all members of their department using methods deemed most suitable for encouraging broad and collective implementation.

Art. 11 Violations and Reporting

1. Any breach of this Code—particularly with regard to the behaviours described in Article 1.1, points (b) and (c)—may result in measures proportionate to the severity of the misconduct, in accordance with the University’s Code of Ethics, Statute, and applicable regulations.
2. Any person (whether internal or external to the University) who has well-founded reasons to believe that a violation of research integrity has occurred within the University may submit a written and detailed report. Reports must be handled with confidentiality and fairness, ensuring due process and protecting the good-faith whistleblower.
3. Upon receiving a report, the University will promptly initiate a confidential preliminary inquiry. If necessary, the Rector will appoint an ad hoc Investigation Committee, normally composed of 3 to 5 members with appropriate expertise and impartiality. The Committee is responsible for gathering evidence, hearing the parties involved (the whistleblower, any accused person, relevant witnesses or experts), and producing, within a reasonable timeframe, a confidential report containing the findings and a reasoned assessment of whether the alleged violation has occurred. This report is



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submitted to the Rector, who makes a final decision regarding the validity of the report and any resulting measures.

4. The University is committed to establishing transparent bodies and procedures for handling reports and continuously monitoring compliance with research integrity standards.

Signed **THE RECTOR**
Prof. Massimo Midiri

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