



DRIVE DEVELOPING RESEARCH
AND INNOVATION CAPACITIES IN ALBANIA AND KOSOVO

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Universiteti · University
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Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics

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INTRODUCTION

Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics is a fundamental action of the DRIVE Project “Developing Research and Innovation Capacities in Albania and Kosovo – DRIVE” granted under the Erasmus+. The Consortium is composed of 9 partners that represent the diversity of European as well as the diversity of Western Balkan social and cultural environments. It includes the following:

1. POLIS University
2. European University of Tirana
3. Polytechnic University of Tirana
4. University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”
5. University of Gjakova “Fehmi Agani”
6. Universum College
7. Hamburg University of Technology, Germany
8. Politecnico di Milano, Italy
9. Aalborg University, Denmark

The general objective of DRIVE project is to contribute in the development of the research and innovation capacities of HEIs in Albania and Kosovo by enhancing their institutional capabilities, staff skills and networking.

Specifically, the project intends to:

1. Enhance the teachers’ capacities and their methodologies so that they effectively equip the students (graduate level and beyond) with the skills to conduct independent research;
2. Enhance the mentors’ capacities to effectively guide the students in their research activity;
3. Enhance the research capacities of the academic and managerial staff through study visits and tailored trainings;
4. Strengthen the managerial capacities for research activities and innovation in institutional level by setting or strengthening dedicated research and innovation support structures (RISS);
5. Promote research excellence and innovation by developing a network that eases the interdisciplinary and cooperation among local and international actors.

These objectives have been designed to directly address the needs identified in the proposal, namely:

- The need to improve the HEIs capacities for research and innovation;
- The need to foster the links and cooperation among the actors in the innovation ecosystem.

Respectively the first need corresponds to the specific objectives 1-4 which consist in developing the capacities for research of the target groups within the higher education institutions, whereas the specific objective 5 corresponds to the identified need to strengthen the cooperation among the higher education institutions as such with other entities such as businesses and local and international partners. The objectives also serve as a basis to identify the target groups that require capacity building actions. Therefore, the set of activities that contribute to capacity development such as trainings, study visits, new structures, development of guidelines, etc. are grouped into work-packages that focus respectively on the identified target groups within the institution. While in response to the second need, a network among researchers, institutions and other actors will be established at country and regional level.

DRIVE Project do support **Code of Research Conduct** and **Research Ethics**.

Acknowledgement and disclaimer

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Foreword

Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics of the University “Fehmi Agani” Gjakovë provides a comprehensive framework for good research conduct and the governance of all research carried out across the University. The Code underpins the University’s commitment to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, rigour and excellence in all aspects of our research and for all research to be conducted according to the appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks and standards.

The Code is a fundamental component of the research environment, which is characterised by our culture of research integrity, good research practice, and the development and training of researchers at all stages of their careers. The Code outlines the duty of researchers including their responsibilities towards all participants of research including humans, animals, the environment and cultural materials, and it provides a basis for the transparent and appropriate communication and dissemination of research findings.

We will monitor and, where necessary, improve the Code in order to further strengthen the integrity of research carried out across the University

To whom, and to what, does the Code apply?

The University “Fehmi Agani” Gjakovë requires all staff and students engaged in research to maintain the highest standards of rigour and integrity in the conduct of that research. This Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics provides a framework for the governance of all research throughout the University and requires that all researchers adhere to the highest standards of performance and ethical conduct, and to all applicable statutes and Government guidelines in carrying out their research.

The Code seeks to ensure that academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial and unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges. The Code applies to all employees, students, visiting and emeritus researchers, whether they are working on the University’s premises or elsewhere.

The University expects all of its staff and students to follow the ethical behaviours set out in the Seven Principles of Public Life outline. Those are:

- selflessness,
- integrity,
- objectivity,
- accountability,

- openness,
- honesty and
- leadership.

These Principles underlie the University's Ethical Framework and are incorporated into this policy.

The Code applies to all research deliverables and outputs in whatever form, and to all research activity, irrespective of how it is funded.

I. RESEARCH CONDUCT

Foundations and specific requirements for research practice

Everyone involved in research in the University owes a duty of accountability to society, to their profession, to the University, to all participants in the research and to its funders. Staff must accept full responsibility for their own conduct of their research and the activities of all staff, students and others under their direction or supervision.

Researchers must be honest and lawful in respect of their own actions in research and in their responses to the actions of other researchers. This applies to the whole range of research work, outputs and deliverables, including applying for funding, experimental design, generating and analysing data, publishing results, and acknowledging the direct and indirect contribution of colleagues, collaborators and others. Plagiarism, deception or the fabrication or falsification of results shall be regarded as research misconduct and a serious disciplinary offence. Researchers should declare and manage any real or potential conflicts of interest. The training needs of researchers at all career stages should be considered to ensure that research project management skills reflect best practice in the sector, and discussion of these should be included within the Personal Development and Personal Review process for academic staff or training plans for students.

1. The ethical basis and design of their research projects. Researchers must ensure that research projects are ethically sound and have received the approval of the relevant ethics committee(s) and all relevant statutory regulatory authorities before they commence;
2. The safety of all involved in the research process, ensuring that the research is carried out in accordance with health and safety policies and legislative requirements;
3. Ensuring that research is conducted in a suitable working environment with appropriate equipment and facilities;
4. The probity of the financial management of all research projects, and for seeking to provide the optimum value for the public or private funders who have invested in them

- including effective project management to agreed project plans and appropriate quality standards, as well as the timely delivery of any scheduled tangible outcomes;
5. Undertaking professional development appropriate to the research;
 6. Ensuring that all personal records of research progress, including authorized laboratory books, are maintained to the recommended or required standards, and that the falsification of results does not occur. Laboratory books must be signed and dated by the researcher, and signed off by the supervisor;
 7. Ensuring confidentiality in order to achieve protection of intellectual property rights where appropriate;
 8. Ensuring that research findings are suitably disseminated;
 9. Except in the case of covert research that has been appropriately approved, ensuring that research participants participate in a voluntary way, free from any coercion;
 10. Avoiding harm to participants and minimizing any adverse effect that the research may have on people, animals and the natural environment and property.

Researcher's attitude

Researchers have to demonstrate attitude of an objective, cognitive, reflective and moral manner during the collection of data and the organization of the activities of their research.

1. Cognitive attitude: Researchers need to show curiosity and a desire to know and discover. They also need to show an open attitude to the process of learning and a willingness to investigate the essence and truth of things, facts, phenomena, situations or problems of different nature and complexity;
2. Reflective attitude: Researchers need to act with critical thinking, critical sense and critical spirit in the analysis of sources and in the detection and selection of research problems, to be in a position to make personal contributions and propose impact approaches to future research;
3. Objective attitude: Researchers need to demonstrate a positive and optimistic disposition to study and focus on the sources of knowledge as they occur in reality;
4. Moral attitude: Researchers need to assume the tasks and research activities with responsibility.

Data

Distinction shall be drawn between personal and research data. Personal data is any data by which possession of could identify an individual. Research data are the metrics collected as part of the research and solely by which an individual cannot be identified. Personal data may also be research data.

Researchers must adhere to the principles of research data management, whereby research data should be made freely and openly available with as few restrictions as possible in a timely and responsible manner; and as such published research papers should include a short statement describing how and on what terms any supporting research data may be accessed. In case compelling legal or ethical reasons exist to protect access to the research data, these should be noted in a statement included in the published research paper.

Some central issues for researchers are:

Storage and processing of personal data

The storage and processing of personal data must take place in compliance with current national and international legislation and with internal UFAGJ regulations.

The processing and storage of the personal data of the participants enrolled in the study must preferably take place in an anonymous/coded form.

- All staff and students using personal data in research have a duty of confidence to the individuals concerned;
- Unless there are ethically and legally justified reasons for doing otherwise, researchers must ensure that they have each study participant's explicit informed written consent to obtain, hold and use their personal information;
- Only personal information pertinent to the research should be collected;
- Data security arrangements must be sufficient to prevent unauthorised breaches of confidentiality;
- Personal data should not be kept for longer than is necessary.

Research data

- Data must be recorded in a durable form with appropriate references;
- Data must be retained intact for a period of at least seven years from the date of any publication which is based upon them. Data should be stored in their original form – i.e. tapes/discs etc should not be deleted and reused, but kept securely as outlined.
- Institutions must have procedures for the retention of data. These procedures must be made known to all of their staff and students, who must comply with them;

- Confidentiality provisions relating to publications may apply in circumstances where the University or the researcher has made or given confidentiality undertakings to third parties or confidentiality is required to protect intellectual property rights. It is the obligation of the research leader to inform researchers as to whether confidentiality provisions apply and of researchers to enquire of their research leader whether there are any obligations with respect to these provisions.

Sensitive data

Research that involves investigations using sensitive data, such as “sensitive personal data” as:

- the racial or ethnic origin of the data participant;
- his/hers political opinions;
- his/hers religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature;
- whether he/she is a member syndicate;
- his/hers physical or mental health or condition;
- his/hers sexual life;
- the commission or alleged commission by him/her of any offence; or
- any proceedings for any offence committed or alleged to have been committed by him/her, the disposal of such proceedings or the sentence of any court in such proceedings.

Confidentiality

Individual participant personal information obtained as a result of research is to be considered confidential and disclosure to third parties is prohibited with the exception of statutory notification as applicable to the particular research. Participant confidentiality should be ensured by utilising identification code numbers to correspond to research data in any research paperwork and computer files.

Publications

For the purposes of the Code, publications include reports and technical reports in printed and electronic form, where these are related to a programme of research (including internally and externally funded research), even where these have a limited circulation and have been prepared to report on progress of the research.

Researchers are encouraged to disseminate their research and research findings in an appropriate form, usually as papers in refereed journals. Publication and wider dissemination

of research and research findings must be carried out responsibly and with an awareness of the consequences of dissemination in the wider media.

- A publication must contain appropriate reference to the contributions made by all participants in the relevant research;
- The research funder should be notified in advance when research might be published, publicized or disseminated;
- Any person who has not participated in a substantial way in conceiving, executing or interpreting at least part of the relevant research is not to be included as an author of a publication derived from that research;
- In addition to meeting the requirements of the points above, an author must ensure that the work of research students, research assistants, research officers, and technical officers is recognized in all publications derived from research to which they have made a contribution;
- A publication which is substantially similar to other publications derived from the same research must contain appropriate reference to the other publications;
- A researcher who submits substantially similar work to more than one other publisher should disclose that fact to the publishers at the time of submission;
- Publication and dissemination of work electronically or on the Web should be treated with the same degree of integrity as every other form of publication;
- Individuals who are or have been the participant of the research should not be identified or identifiable in any publication. Measures should be taken to disguise the identity of research participants unless explicit consent is given by them for revealing their identity.

In addition to publications, all external communications, whether through websites, e-bulletins, press releases, media briefings, or events should be undertaken with the core principles of openness, transparency and accountability.

Anti-Plagiarism objectives

Raising awareness of the importance and transcendence of respect for intellectual property in the university environment.

Promoting the development of an ethical culture in original intellectual production, learning and research, as well as knowledge of the causes, consequences and forms of prevention and eradication of the crime of plagiarism.

Promoting the development of skills of academic staff and students for the correct preparation of citations, footnotes and bibliographical references of printed or digital information resources during the preparation of academic work and scientific research.

Preventing, sanction and progressively eradicate acts of plagiarism in any of its forms.

Contributing to the continuous improvement of academic-professional quality at the university.

Intellectual Property

The University has specific policies arising from Intellectual Policy and these must be adhered.

Intellectual Property (IP) and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

IP is defined as: "The products of creative effort". It includes, but is not limited to, the results of research in the form of data, inventions, notes, records, books, papers, designs, art work, music, software, business methods, schemes for processing and assessing information and mathematical formulae. IP Rights are the legal rights that protect IP from inappropriate use or exploitation by others. The forms of IPR are limited and consist of the following:

- Patents;
- Copyrights;
- Database rights (form of copyright);
- Registered and unregistered design rights;
- Plant breeders rights;
- Registered and unregistered trademarks.

Intellectual Property Ownership and the University

IP generated by University employees belongs to the University if it was made in the course of normal duties or during circumstances where an invention might reasonably be expected to take place. Unfettered IP (not owned by a third party) generated by students belongs to the student. If the inventorship is shared with a member of staff and the University elects to protect the IP, the University will request the student to assign their rights to the University. If you believe that you have generated IP during the course of your research, you should contact the IP Office who will send an IP assessor to take details of the IP or 'disclosure'. The University will assess the IP and determine whether or not to protect and commercialise the IP. If the University elects not to proceed it will assign its rights to the inventor(s). Full details

of the University's policies on and procedures for IP and IPR can be found on Regulation of intellectual property at the University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani"¹ .

II. RESEARCH ETHICS

Origins of Research Ethics

Consideration of ethical issues has long been a feature of medical research and most notable has its origins in the Nuremberg Code 1947, following the trials of the Nazi war criminals. It is the most important document in the history of the ethics of medical research and the first of its kind to ensure the rights of participants. The Nuremberg Code includes such principles as informed consent and absence of coercion; properly formulated scientific experimentation; and beneficence towards research participants.

The Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects first issued in 1964, is the policy-statement of the World Medical Association.

Although this text was written primarily for medical practice, many of the principles have general application; for example regard for human dignity; care for human and animal welfare, consideration of risk, and informed consent of human participants in research projects.

The Declaration of Helsinki enunciated the principle of independent assessment of experimental procedures involving human participants. In full this section (B13) reads:

“The design and performance of each experimental procedure involving human participants should be clearly formulated in an experimental protocol. This protocol should be submitted for consideration, comment, guidance and where appropriate, approval to a specially appointed ethical review committee, which must be independent of the investigator, the sponsor or any other kind of undue influence. This independent committee should be in conformity with the laws and regulations of the country in which the research experiment is performed. The committee has the right to monitor ongoing trials. The researcher has the obligation to provide monitoring information to the committee, especially any serious adverse events. The researcher should also submit to the committee, for review, information regarding sponsors, institutional affiliations, other potential conflicts of interest, and incentives for subjects.”.

¹ <https://uni-gjk.org/upload/dokumentet/1612795990-Regulation%20of%20Intellectual%20Property%20at%20the%20University%20of%20Gjakova-Fehmi%20Agani-.pdf>

University Ethics Committee

As the importance of ethical scrutiny of research projects has grown, the value of having ethics committees in other institutions has been recognised. The University has a central University Research Committee².

The purpose of ethical approval within the University is positive and threefold:

- The University is committed to following good ethical practice, as a principle in itself and as a means by which the public can be assured of confidence in the work of staff and students of the University.
- The provisions for ethical review and approval assist researchers in the identification of ethical issues and to address them in the structuring of research protocols. The resultant development of good practice is expected to cascade down to students and inform their own emerging practice at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.
- The approval process acts as a safeguard to researchers, supervisors and students who can be confident of the ethical propriety of their project once it has been approved.

Research involving human participants

For the purposes of this Code, research involving human participants is divided into non-medical research and medical or clinical research.

Non-medical research

Non-medical research involving human participants are reviewed by internal review via the individual Faculties' ethics committee or through its agreed designated reviewing process through another Faculties' committee. In exceptional circumstances when a School committee is unable to agree on ethical review such cases are referred to the University's Ethics Committee.

Medical or clinical research

Medical or clinical research NOT involving the use of an Investigational Medicinal Product (IMP) or medical device and involving the participation of healthy volunteers only is reviewed by the Medical Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

² <https://uni-gjk.org/upload/dokumentet/1571297649-Komisioni%20per%20Kodin%20e%20Etikes.pdf>