

Research Code of Ethics of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration

Ethics Committee FEB 2015-01-22 / Scientific Research Committee FEB 2015-03-12 / Faculty Council FEB 2015-03-18

- **Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration**

The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, referred to below as "Ethics Committee", provides advice on ethical issues related to research and assesses whether a research protocol is ethically conformable at the request of the person responsible for the research at the Faculty.

The Ethics Committee follows the *Code of Ethics for Scientific Research in Belgium*, the text of which is given below. A number of additions and clarifications in relation to its application at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration have been recorded in the form of footnotes, preceded by the indication "FEB".

All research at the Faculty has to be in accordance with this code. When in doubt about the conformity of his research the researcher can consult the Ethics Committee.

The researcher has to ascertain especially whether the ethical approval of his research will be required at a certain time by certain publishers, editorial boards, government agencies, financial backers etc. If he considers this to be the case, he has to request this approval from the Ethics Committee before starting his research. The Ethics Committee in principle does not offer *post hoc* advice.

Whatever his capacity, a member of the Ethics Committee who participates in a research protocol is not allowed to serve as a member during the Ethics Committee's evaluation of this protocol. He may however be heard, as any other researcher, should the Committee deem it necessary.

Research proposals having received a negative advice from the Ethics Committee can request a second reading by an ethics committee of a Faculty of Economics of a Belgian university.

The Ethics Committee does not initiate investigations of its own accord. Alleged violations of scientific integrity have to be reported to the Ghent University Committee of Scientific Integrity.

The Faculty's researchers will be asked to sign a document declaring that they are familiar with the code of ethics.

• Code of Ethics for Scientific Research in Belgium

Introduction

This “Code of Ethics for Scientific Research in Belgium” establishes the major principles of ethically justified scientific practice. Despite the great diversity of subjects and methods of scientific research, there are general principles and standards of behaviour to which researchers are obliged to conform. The code of ethics presented hereafter stipulates that researchers must carry out their research in a rigorous manner and that they must faithfully publish the relevant information by describing the methods and the results in such a way that they can be verified. A code of ethics does not only contribute to the quality of the scientific research, but also to its legitimation: it demonstrates to citizens, who finance the majority of research and reap the benefits, that the world of research is developing its own tools to guarantee responsible research.

This code applies to all disciplines, thus endowing it with a greater reach and strength of conviction, and allowing it to reinforce the existing codes or the codes to be developed at a later date by individual or separate institutions or for specific disciplines. This code exists within a broader movement at an international level aiming to develop national codes. Publications by the OECD, the European Science Foundation, the European Commission, and the Dutch “Gedragscode Wetenschapsbeoefening”, were important sources of inspiration alongside other texts.

This code does not explicitly refer to the laws and regulations in force (for instance, as regards privacy protection or the domain of biomedical research) that must, in any case, be respected.

A code of ethics offers advantages in relation to legal or statutory standards. Indeed, it is impossible to elaborate precise rules covering all cases and circumstances. Furthermore, a code, which is based on the values shared by researchers, has a greater moral legitimacy than the rules imposed top down. At the same time, such an approach invites researchers to reflect both on an individual level and within the framework of their research institutes and their professional associations. Such a reflection must relate to the way in which they carry out their work, but also to the relations that are maintained within the broader social context, even from an international point of view. The code aims to encourage researchers to think in a responsible way about the conditions and consequences of the social integration of their research activities as well as the close association between sciences, technologies, economics and ethics.

The aim is that this code should be respected unreservedly in all forms of fundamental, policy-driven and applied research financed by the government, but furthermore that all other forms of research (contractual research, research in the private sector, etc.) should apply it in the best way possible.

A limited deviation in relation to the principles of this code must not necessarily be seen as a breach. Cases may occur where one or other of its aspects cannot be applied. In such a case, the researcher is recommended to explicitly state this fact.

Mistakes may occur without the author having made any moral error. In this case, colleagues or research institutes must react in the appropriate manner, while respecting the principle of innocence until proved guilty. Knowingly and wrongly accusing someone of unethical behaviour is, in itself, a form of unethical behaviour. Then again, whistle blowers (anyone who has issued criticisms and sounded the alarm in good faith) must be protected.

Proper supervision of less-experienced researchers is necessary, without harming their freedom of research. Young researchers must be familiarised with the ethics of research right from the beginning. It is important that the teaching and support of young researchers explicitly focuses on the ethical aspects of scientific practice. Ethics committees, but also scientific academies, higher education institutions, foundations and associations have a responsibility in this respect.

Neither the pressure to transpose the research results as quickly as possible to exploitable applications, nor the concern to protect the results justifies constraints to ethical behaviour when carrying out research. The same applies to a researcher's desire for recognition.

Rigour and caution

A. RIGOUR

A researcher's work is deemed to be rigorous when he/she applies the generally acknowledged rules of his/her discipline with precision.

1 The researcher acts in a precise and nuanced manner when carrying out research and publishing its results. The obligation to obtain results should not interfere with this principle.

2 Researchers must conceive and undertake their protocols as precisely as possible. In their research work, researchers must take into account the latest state of the art in their domain. They must obtain the necessary skills beforehand in terms of knowledge and mastery of the techniques, while developing a critical mind. Assignments for which they are not qualified or that can be reasonably considered as impossible to execute must be refused.

3. The researcher must check whether the tools he/she intends to use (for instance, laboratory equipment, measuring material, standard questionnaires) are adapted to the work to be undertaken and ready to be used in optimum technical conditions.

4. The person in charge of the research must exercise sufficient control over the implementation of the research by his/her team members. The responsibilities pertaining to this research must be clearly defined and always respected.¹
5. In media communications or presentations, the researcher must present his/her research results in a truthful and comprehensible way. He/she must avoid arousing unjustified fears or hopes.
6. A researcher assumes his/her responsibilities as regards the development of his/her discipline and, consequently, commits oneself to participate in peer review.

B. CAUTION

A researcher's behaviour is deemed to be cautious when he/she acts with foresight and precaution and is guided by the concern to avoid harm to anyone else.

1. Although the researcher's primary concern is to acquire or increase his/her knowledge, caution requires him/her not to impose unnecessary or disproportionate risks. A careful analysis of the advantages but also of the short- and mid-term risks of a research project must be done and, in case of a risk for third parties, must be submitted to a peer review (or, if necessary, the ethics committee if it exists).
2. The researcher must show respect for the subjects/respondents of experiments, investigations and surveys, all the more so if the subjects are in a vulnerable position.^{2 3} The subjects of experiments and respondents must give their informed consent: they have the right to know they are the subject of research, they must be given the most complete information possible and give their prior consent with full knowledge of the facts.⁴ Any deviation from this principle must be submitted for approval of the persons or the institutions qualified to provide an opinion on both the scientific aspects and the ethical aspects of the matter (ethics committee, programme monitoring committee, academic authorities, etc.).⁵
3. Animals used in experiments must be treated with care by minimizing the number used and their suffering, according to the three R's (reduction, replacement, refinement).

¹ FEB: Students will be requested to observe the code of ethics as well when conducting research for their Master's degree thesis.

² FEB: Personal data from research should be saved with great caution.

³ FEB: Researchers have to ensure that, if no other arrangements have been made with the interested parties, any possible identification of participants involved will be eliminated from any reporting on the research.

⁴ FEB: Participants are also informed that they have the right to terminate their participation at any given time.

⁵ FEB: In this case, the Ethics Committee.

4. As regards experiments with a potential impact on the environment, the investigator must take into account the principle of precaution.
5. In the case of projects abroad, the researchers must apply the present code while also taking into account any existing codes and rules in force in the countries concerned. Within this context, respect for local culture and environment is of utmost importance. This concern will be even greater in cases where local rules and codes of ethics are absent or are not applied.
6. Responsibility must be taken for any errors or omissions made, as well as any resulting damage to third parties, and maximal compensation should be pursued.

Reliability and verifiability

A. RELIABILITY

Researchers are deemed to be reliable when they act in such a way that third parties can trust them to proceed in a professional manner, both in their scientific work and in their manner of reporting on it.

1. Researchers will endeavour to present their expertise, work and results as accurately as possible and will, in all cases, avoid creating a misleading or overrated idea of their work among their sponsors and colleagues, the press or any other third party.
2. Data arising from observations, experiments or existing literature should not be invented nor falsified. Researchers should not give the impression that empirical data is available if this is not the case. Sampling, analysis techniques and statistical methods should not be chosen or manipulated with a view to obtaining or justifying a result defined in advance.
3. The research results must appear in full in publications, and unwanted results must not be selectively omitted. Results which do not correspond to the stipulated hypotheses must always be mentioned in the publication of the research results. The level of uncertainty and the limits of the results must appear clearly in the publications, presentations and reports.
4. In their reports and communications, researchers must establish a clear distinction between the research results and the conclusions on the one hand, and hypotheses and speculations on the other.
5. The general principles in terms of intellectual property must be respected. Researchers may not present fieldwork, data and results obtained by other researchers as their own; they must not plagiarise other people's publications. People who have collaborated on a research project must be

correctly cited; only those who have actually contributed to the research may be mentioned as (co-)authors.^{6 7 8}

6. Colleagues' and researchers' beliefs must be respected; their ideas must not be wrongfully appropriated. This is especially valid in the case of new themes in research, theories or technologies that are still in the development stage.

7. Researchers must not simultaneously publish the same text in several international scientific journals with peer reviewed. Neither should they submit the same text at the same time to several journals for evaluation.

B. VERIFIABILITY

Researchers' work is deemed to be verifiable when it allows colleagues to follow the progress of the research and to reproduce it, if need be.

1. The information given should be verifiable. The results of the literature study, the hypotheses, the organisation of the research, the research and analysis methods, as well as the sources, are described in detail (in a research logbook, a laboratory diary or a progress report) so that other researchers can verify the accuracy of the process and reproduce it. If the subject of the observation is destroyed (for instance, during excavations), these observations must be recorded as well as possible. All the agreements and decisions must be written down and saved.

2. The publication of results is at the basis of the evaluation by peers. The results from a research project should be published and/or made accessible to other researchers as soon as possible. In some cases, agreements may be established concerning publication times.

3. The primary data of a research project and the protocols must be kept and made accessible during a determined and sufficient period of time.⁹ When publications, especially review and summary articles, do not contain all the necessary data for verification, the data should nevertheless be available.

⁶ FEB: The first authorship and co-authorship should represent the scientific or professional contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of their relative status. Mere possession of an institutional position, such as department chair, does not justify authorship. Minor contributions to the research or to the drafting of publications are acknowledged appropriately, for example in footnotes or in an introduction.

⁷ FEB: As a rule a PhD student is listed as first author in any article with multiple authors which is substantially based on the student's dissertation research.

⁸ FEB: A Master's thesis' supervisor has to ensure that the scientific merit of the student is properly reflected in the manner of publication.

⁹ FEB: Specifically, in principle at least five years after publication.

Independence and impartiality

A. INDEPENDENCE

In their scientific activities, researchers are guided by rules of a scientific nature, which are a condition of their independence.

1. Researchers must be able to carry out their research in complete freedom and independence since their creativity depends on it.
2. Commissioned scientific research is carried out without interventions from the sponsor during the execution of the scientific work entrusted to the researcher. The sponsor's policy (public or private) is expressed in the choice of research themes. The researcher does not fail his/her independence by accepting contracts or in responding to calls for proposals within this context, insofar as he/she retains his/her freedom in the execution of the research, as regards the organisation of the research, the hypotheses, the methods used and the formulation of conclusions. A scientific conclusion can only be formulated on the basis of scientific arguments.
3. Commissioners and external sponsors, as well as their relations with the researcher, are mentioned in the publications of the results. The possible links between sponsors and researchers, such as their expert or advisory role, will also be mentioned. Any conflicts of interests must be mentioned in scientific communications and publications.
4. Commissioners institutions must elaborate clear contractual conventions, as regards, among other things, the freedom of publication and the ownership of the results. If restrictions on the freedom of the researcher have to be imposed, this will be explicitly mentioned.
5. If a project is carried out by a team, the rights and obligations of the various parties involved must be specified, including the research institution where the research is being carried out as well as the bodies that are the source of financing. The agreements relating to the ownership of results, their use and their dissemination must be clearly established.

B. IMPARTIALITY

Researchers are deemed to be impartial when they do not allow themselves to be influenced by their preferences, sympathies, interests or personal prejudices in the execution of their scientific work.

1. Researchers have a right to their opinions and preferences (for instance, as regards the economic or societal usefulness of certain activities) though these should not interfere with their scientific work.
2. If there is a risk that there could be a conflict or a confusion of interests, the researcher can only accept to carry out the research if his/her impartiality will not be jeopardised. His/her solution to this problem will be explicitly mentioned during the presentation of the research results.

3. In the publication of the research results, especially the conclusions and recommendations for application that could be drawn from them, the researcher must make a clear distinction between his/her scientific judgements and his/her personal preferences.
4. By participating in peer review, the researcher should only be guided by considerations of a scientific order. The confidentiality of the information should be guaranteed.
5. The assessment of manuscripts for scientific journals must be carried out in an impartial manner and within a reasonable deadline.
6. Any disagreements with the scientific views of other researchers will only be discussed on the basis of scientific arguments.

Authorship guidelines of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration

(approved by the Faculty Council of March 21st 2018)

(updated by the Scientific Research Committee on October 19th 2023)

This document provides a number of guidelines regarding the authorship of scientific publications for the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration. The guidelines reflect (1) policy recommendations in accordance with the faculty's and university's research policy, (2) best practices that were distilled from the response of a faculty-wide survey of the research groups active in the research disciplines represented in the faculty and (3) wishes and complaints of the assisting academic and scientific staff.

The author guidelines that the document offers must be interpreted as such. These are guidelines that can guide the behaviour regarding authorship in the direction the faculty considers desirable. Its application is fully endorsed by both the Scientific Research Committee and the Well-being at Work Committee.

The faculty guidelines are published on the faculty website and communicated to all members and students of the faculty who are involved in scientific research.

This document will be signed by the PhD student and his/her supervisors at the start of a PhD project.

1. General principles

1. Good appointments make good friends. As a general principle, therefore, agreements are made between the (potential) co-authors at the beginning of the publication (i.e. at the start of the research necessary for the publication). These agreements concern at least the authorship itself (who is mentioned as author?) and the order of authorship. Changing these agreements during the publication process can only be done if there are good reasons for doing so and with the consent of everyone involved in the initial agreements.
2. The research disciplines represented at the faculty differ widely in terms of publication culture, including customs and traditions related to authorship. The agreements concerning authorship follow the guidelines of this document as closely as possible, without compromising the customs and traditions within the research discipline. The publication culture of the discipline prevails in case of conflicts.
3. Everyone mentioned as author of a publication takes full responsibility for the publication. This implies that the merits are assigned to the author (for example, the author has the right to mention this publication on his/her CV), but also the flaws, shortcomings, errors or infringements against standards and rules (e. g. upon detection of infringements, all authors are accountable).

2. Guidelines relating to authorship

1. In order to avoid gift authorship, it is essential that each author makes a substantial contribution to the publication. A substantial¹⁰ contribution to a publication is made if at least two of the following three conditions are met¹¹:
 - a. Substantial contribution to the *design of the research* (for example introduction of the research idea; formulation of problem definition, research question, objective or hypothesis; choice of research method(s), drafting the research plan;
 - b. Substantial contribution to *carrying out the research* (e. g. study of literature, collection of data, analysis of data, interpretation of analyses, assessment of other research activities);
 - c. Substantial contribution to the *writing of the publication* (for example write parts of the text, review the text which has led to significant redrafting, restructure the text in order to improve its readability)
2. In order to avoid ghost authorship, anyone who has made a substantial contribution to the publication (as defined in the previous point) should be mentioned as an author, without compromising agreements made about 'single authorship' (see point 4).
3. The status of supervisor, financier, head of department, etc. does not automatically entitle the holder to authorship.
4. It is recommended that researchers whose contribution to the publication is not considered substantial (e. g. friendly review, assistance with data collection or analysis, methodological advice), are recognised by means of a footnote, endnote or acknowledgement insofar as this is customary in the research discipline and allowed according to the guidelines of the journal or publisher.

¹⁰ We leave what is 'substantial' to the judgement of those who apply these guidelines. In assessing this, reference can be made to the customs and tradition of the research discipline.

¹¹ The "Policy on authorship and recognition of contributions to scholarly publishing" (<https://codex.ugent.be?regid=reg000282&lang=en>, 10 November 2022) has to be taken into account. It imposes stricter conditions for authorship:

7. NORMS FOR RESEARCHERS

B. CRITERIA FOR AUTHORSHIP

2. Authorship is granted on the basis of the **contribution made**.

Researchers who contribute **significantly** to the creation of the publication are added to the authors list. "*that authorship itself is based on a **significant contribution** to the design of the research, relevant data collection, or the analysis or interpretation of the results.*"

This provision is a **minimum requirement** and further interpretations of the term 'contribution' should always be at least in line with this requirement.

3. In addition to a significant contribution, researchers contribute to the **writing or substantial revision** of the work.

3. Guidelines on the order of authors

Note: Obviously, these guidelines only apply to those who meet the conditions of authorship as stipulated above.

1. In some research disciplines represented at the faculty, it is customary to mention authors alphabetically, regardless of the size or importance of the contribution made to the publication. In this case, it is essential that this custom is known to all parties involved. Subject to mutual agreement between all parties involved, it is of course also possible to deviate from this custom for these disciplines if there are substantial differences in the contributions or with regard to publications resulting from doctoral research.
2. In most of the research disciplines represented at the faculty, it is customary to mention authors in order of the contribution made. In this case, it is essential that this order (and therefore the size and nature of the contribution) is agreed in advance. At least, prior agreements must be made about who is the first author.
3. Without prejudice to the previous guideline, for disciplines that mention authors in the order of their contribution, it is recommended that for publications resulting from doctoral research, the PhD student is the first author. Since the PhD student is responsible for the doctoral research and is expected to prove that he/she can function as an independent researcher by way of this research, it is expected that the PhD student is the main contributor in at least the majority of the papers in a doctoral dissertation and as such will be the first author.
4. The status of supervisor, financier, head of department, chairperson, etc. does not automatically entitle the holder to first authorship.

4. Single authorship guidelines

1. In some of the research disciplines represented at the faculty, it is customary for PhD students with academic ambitions (for postdoctoral research or professorship) to write a job market paper as a single author. In this case, it is essential that this custom is known to all involved parties. In addition, clear agreements must be made about this job market paper with regard to which study of the doctoral research will lead to such publication and to what extent researchers other than the PhD student (e. g. supervisor, members of the supervisory committee) may/can contribute to the publication.
2. It is recommended that researchers who have contributed to the publication without being mentioned as authors should be recognised by means of a footnote, endnote or acknowledgement insofar as this is customary in the field of research and permitted under the guidelines of the journal or publisher.

5. Guidelines concerning authors' affiliation

1. It is necessary that for any publication where members or students of the faculty are mentioned as authors, at least one of these authors mentions Ghent University as affiliation, regardless of whether or not this author is still associated with the faculty at the time of publication. Single authors who are no longer affiliated with the faculty at the time of publication are also expected to loyally mention Ghent University as (additional) affiliation¹².

For a list of the affiliation tags that may be used when submitting an article for publication, see <<https://www.ugent.be/intranet/en/research/impact/scholar-publishing/policy-ugent.htm#Integrityandquality>> .

It is also strongly recommended that the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (Dutch or English, in full or in abbreviated form) and/or the research group or department are also mentioned.

6. Who to contact in case of questions or conflicts?

For further information or for mediation in the event of conflicts that cannot be dealt with internally (i.e. between the authors as stipulated in the preceding agreements), the following contact points apply (and preferably in the following order):

- The ombudsperson for the Faculty's doctoral students (only for PhDs)
- The substitute ombudsperson for the Faculty's doctoral students (only for PhDs)
- The psychosocial well-being contacts of the Faculty (for everyone)

The names and contact details of the FEB persons are published on the faculty website.

- Ombudspersons: <<https://www.ugent.be/eb/en/degree-students/rules-and-regulations/ombudsperson/ombudsperson.htm>>
- Psychosocial well-being of staff: <<https://www.ugent.be/intranet/en/human-resources/health-safety/psychosocial-welfare/contactpersons/confidentialcontacts.htm>>

When asking for mediation in the event of conflicts, it is important to speak to a person who is 'neutral' (e.g. not of the same department(s) as the author(s), no hierarchical relationship with the author(s)).

¹² On the other hand, the Faculty / research group can make the effort to connect recent PhDs longer to the FEB as an affiliated postdoctoral researcher.

7. University-wide guidelines

For information about university-wide guidelines on publishing and authorship, see

- Authorship in research <<https://www.ugent.be/intranet/en/research/impact/scholar-publishing/authorship.htm>>
- Policy on authorship and recognition of contributions to scholarly publishing (approved by the Board of Governors on 10 november 2022) <<https://codex.ugent.be?regid=reg000282&lang=en>>
- Policy on scholarly publishing (approved by the Board of Governors on 3 June 2022) <<https://codex.ugent.be?regid=REG000274&lang=en>>