

Preamble

In the knowledge and innovation society marked by acceleration in the construction and transmission of knowledge and by international competitiveness, public higher education and research institutions and universities are in a privileged position to address current and future challenges. They are responsible for the production, transmission and utilisation of knowledge and contribute to the implementation of a qualified expertise in public decision-making processes. However, the application of this major responsibility implies consolidating trust relationship between research and society.

The French National Charter for Research Integrity clarifies the professional responsibilities ensuring a rigorous and trustworthy scientific approach and will apply in the context of all national and international partnerships.

This Charter is well aligned with the main international texts in this field: the European Charter for Researchers (2005); the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity (2010); the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ESF-ALLEA, 2011). The Charter falls within the reference framework put forward in the European research and innovation programme, HORIZON 2020.

It is the individual responsibility of every public body and institution involved in research and education to implement this Charter by promoting best practices in research, through training and raising the awareness of both their staff and their students, by setting out clear policies, practices and procedures with the aim of preventing and addressing any potential breach.

It will be up to each institution to adapt this Charter as appropriate to the disciplines and professions concerned.

The Charter

The French National Charter for Research Integrity concerns all women and men (referred to in the text by the generic term “researcher”) forming part of an institution or body, whether permanent staff or not, who contribute to a research activity and who undertake to respect the principles of integrity expressed herein, in the context of those research projects in which they are involved, either directly or indirectly.

1. Compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements

All researchers should ensure that they remain informed and up-to-date concerning the legislation and regulations which govern their professional activities and that they comply with any such legislation, notably that covering research on human subjects, animals and the environment.

2. Reliability of research work

Researchers must respect the commitments undertaken by their research unit or for any specific contract. They must always use the most appropriate methods to conduct any research project.

A detailed description of the research protocol, through the use of laboratory notebooks, or any other media, must enable the replication of the experimental work.

All raw data (which are the property of the institution) together with their analysis must be conserved to enable their verification.

The conclusions must be based on a critical analysis of the results and possible applications should not be unjustifiably amplified. The results should be communicated in their entirety in an objective and honest manner.

All research naturally relies on previous studies and results. The use of these sources must be correctly cited in any scientific production, publication and communication. In certain situations, their use may require prior authorisation to be obtained.

3. Communication

It is the vocation of research results to be brought to the attention of the scientific community and the public, any previous intellectual and experimental contributions should be appropriately acknowledged and intellectual property rights should be respected.

Research work is most often collective and, when this is the case, any decision to publish must be taken collectively, with each author being granted intellectual property rights. Authorship should be based on an explicit role in the work carried out and all persons having fulfilled such a role should be authors. Contributors who do not qualify for the status of author according to international criteria must be included in the 'acknowledgements' section of the publication.

The notion of freedom of expression and opinion is applicable within the legal framework of public service, with a duty of reserve, confidentiality, neutrality. Any potential conflict of interest should be disclosed. On each occasion, the researcher shall clearly indicate whether they are intervening in a personal capacity or as representative of their institution, and professional comments from opinion based on personal convictions.

Any communication made via the social networks must respect the same rules.

4. Responsibility in collective work

Through their professional activities, researchers fulfil the mission assigned to them by their employer, according to the rules of good practice current within that institution.

Those responsible for collective work and, more generally, those researchers having a supervisory and educational role, must devote sufficient attention to sharing the collective project, clarifying the contribution and developing the skills of all those involved, thus creating a collective dynamic.

Respectful work relationships should be encouraged, with discrimination, harassment and abuse of authority being considered professional misconduct.

The falsification or fabrication of data and plagiarism are deemed the most serious breaches of integrity. They must be reported to the institution concerned and be tackled.

5. Impartiality and independence in assessment and expertise

During the evaluation of a research project, a laboratory or a colleague, the researcher shall examine all files with impartiality, and disclose any potential conflict of interest and should withdraw, if it is incompatible with an impartial assessment. They are required to respect the confidentiality of any deliberation and to refrain from using any data provided during the evaluation procedure.

In the case of an expertise carried out in the name of an institution, the researcher must respect the terms of the national charter on scientific expertise and the specific version which applies to their institution.

6. Collaborative work and plurality of activities

Collaborative work, particularly outside the institution and internationally, shall be subject to prior agreements with the public or private partners and must preserve the independence of the researcher, notably concerning the provision and use of data, their intellectual property rights and communication. Such work is covered by the same ethical rules, with a responsibility to ensure integrity, transparency and honesty.

Should the advisory or evaluation activities be carried out in conjunction with or peripheral to the research work, researchers are required to inform their employer and to comply with their institution's rules concerning plurality of activities and remunerations. Any interests which may arise from such work must be declared in any communication.

7. Training

Research integrity rules must be integrated into educational curricula, particularly those for Master and PhD degrees, and learning them should be considered an integral part of mastering the specific domain of research.