



Norwegian University  
of Life Sciences

# Ethical guidelines for NMBU

Adopted by the University Board on 26 November 2015  
(UB case 111/2015).



# Table of Contents

FOREWORD.....	3
1. Introduction.....	4
2. Summary of NMBU’s Ethical Guidelines.....	4
2.1. Basic values.....	4
2.2. Working and learning environment.....	4
2.3. Research and research ethics.....	5
2.4. Administration and business.....	5
2.5. Reporting and handling of deviations.....	5
3. Basic Values.....	6
4. Working and learning environment.....	6
3.1. NMBU’s working environment and organisational culture.....	6
3.2. Teaching.....	7
3.3. Supervision.....	7
4. Research and research ethics.....	8
4.1. Academic freedom and responsibility.....	8
4.2. Good research practice.....	8
Reliability.....	8
Integrity.....	9
Transparency.....	9
4.3. Research misconduct.....	9
4.4. Publishing, authorship and co-authorship.....	10
4.5. Commissioned research.....	11
4.6. Protection of humans involved in research.....	12
4.7. Protection of animals.....	12
4.8. Protection of the environment.....	13
5. Administration and business.....	14
5.1. Public disclosure and confidentiality.....	14
Public disclosure.....	14
Active duty of disclosure.....	14
Secrecy and duty of confidentiality.....	14
5.2. Impartiality, gifts and purchases.....	14
Impartiality.....	14
Gifts and other benefits.....	14

Ownership stakes.....	15
Purchases.....	15
5.3. Loyalty to the institution and respect for individuals' integrity .....	16
Personal convictions and reservations towards work assignments .....	16
Public debate and freedom of expression.....	16
Respectful treatment of all collaboration partners.....	16
Information technology.....	17
Extra sources of income.....	17
6. Reporting and handling of deviations.....	17
6.1. Reporting procedures.....	17
6.2. Procedures for handling deviations.....	17
Staff and students' roles and responsibilities.....	18
Line managers.....	18
6.3. Responsibility for the guidelines and handling of deviations.....	18
The Rector.....	18
The University Board .....	18
The Ethics Committee.....	18
Consequences of violations .....	18
7. Revision and preservation of the guidelines .....	19

## FOREWORD

Staff and students of the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) will, in different situations, come to deal with difficult dilemmas and have to manoeuvre in situations where it is not clear what is right and what is wrong. In many issues, this concerns the opposition of different interests, in which many norms must be weighed up and moderated in relation to other considerations. In each individual instance, an evaluation must be made to find the right thing to do. NMBU's ethical guidelines provide a basis for reflection regarding such ethical questions, and offer advice for when staff and students are faced with a difficult decision. These guidelines apply to all staff and students at NMBU, contract staff and governing bodies.

In addition to supporting staff and students' powers of ethical reflection and judgement, these ethical guidelines are also important outward-facing signposts. They describe how NMBU should be viewed, and how it must manage its relationships with society, politicians, authorities, students, partners and potential alliances – both nationally and internationally. NMBU and the university's staff and students shall, in their work, comply with the laws and rules of society, generally accepted academic methods and the norms and rules of research ethics.

Each individual staff member has an obligation to familiarise themselves with these ethical guidelines, and holds a personal responsibility to follow these. As an institution, NMBU has responsibility to make staff and students aware of these guidelines, as well as to make each staff member aware of what the guidelines mean for them as an individual. This shall be a living document which stimulates discussion and reflection at the university. Uncertainty surrounding ethical problems may be raised with one's nearest responsible line manager, or be submitted to NMBU's Ethics Committee.

Ås, Rector

## 1. Introduction

This document contains NMBU's ethical guidelines in addition to simple, action-oriented descriptions and useful references to legal frameworks, international conventions and agreements. The ethical guidelines for NMBU are based on the individual ethical guidelines of the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB) and the Norwegian School of Veterinary Science (NVH) and are the result of a wide-ranging process within the organisation. These guidelines convey a range of values in the form of principles, which operate on both a general, and more concrete, level. They shall supplement existing laws and regulations, and cover everything from mandatory requirements to important considerations. These ethical guidelines are intended to contribute to an awareness surrounding relevant ethical questions within the organisation, and are instructive with regard to ethical reflections and assessments in concrete cases. In each individual situation, the use of these guidelines will always imply a level of discretion. Such discretion is best exercised in a collegial and social context.

NMBU's Rector is responsible for ensuring these ethical guidelines are both complied with and assessed on an ongoing basis. The Rector may raise concerns about any violation of these guidelines personally or at the request of others, and can gain additional advice from the Ethical Committee at NMBU, The National Commission for the Investigation of Research Misconduct, or other research ethics committees.

This document is structured so as to begin with a list which summarises the guidelines. This is followed by a more in-depth text linked to each individual point, which is useful to bear in mind in connection with raising awareness and reflection relating to ethical issues.

## 2. Summary of NMBU's Ethical Guidelines

These ethical guidelines apply to all staff and students at NMBU, contract staff and external representatives on committees, councils and board of the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, (NMBU) (hereafter referred to as "everyone").

### 2.1. Basic values

NMBU shall be a constructive, future-oriented and critical social organisation that builds upon the values of respect, ambition, independence and co-operation.

- *Everyone has an obligation to demonstrate loyalty and respect to the institution and to NMBU's basic values, and the rights of staff members shall, equally, be respected and safeguarded.*
- *Staff and students shall carry out their work in accordance with NMBU's interests.*

### 2.2. Working and learning environment

- *Everyone is entitled to a fully satisfactory working environment, and is obliged become acquainted with and respect the rules and norms for this.*
- *Managers have a particular duty to safeguard the welfare and wellbeing of their colleagues.*
- *Staff have a duty to contribute actively to achieving a pleasant and safe working environment.*
- *The management shall facilitate co-determination and shall seek to ensure that staff are heard and involved in decision-making processes.*
- *NMBU is responsible for giving all students teaching and supervision of a high quality.*
- *Everyone is entitled to both respect and a fair evaluation of one's work.*

- *The supervisor and supervisee shall both show respect for one another's personal and academic integrity, and shall refrain from any action or statement which could imply an attack on the other person's dignity.*
- *Private relationships which are incompatible with the professional relationship are forbidden.*

### 2.3. Research and research ethics

- *Research is rooted in a basic value of academic freedom.*
- *Research shall be free of any research misconduct.*
- *Research shall follow general principles of research ethics such as respect, consistency, fairness and integrity, and shall comply with specific research ethics guidelines in areas where such have been established.*
- *Researchers shall show respect for other researchers and students, and shall comply with the guidelines stipulated for authorship and co-authorship.*
- *Research shall be free and independent – even in the case of commissioned research – so that there can be no doubt of the researcher's or the institution's objectivity.*
- *Research shall be characterised by an underlying respect for the value of all human life; respect for the integrity, freedom and co-determination of human subjects; and respect for the requirement for informed consent.*
- *Staff and students shall exercise diligence and respect with regard to animal welfare; both in the treatment and diagnosis of animals, and when conducting experiments using animals.*
- *Research shall endeavour to safeguard and promote sustainability, in the short and long term.*

### 2.4. Administration and business

- *NMBU shall conduct its business in such a way as to ensure transparency in all processes, so that the public has access to information and various agencies can monitor its activities.*
- *All case management and aspects pertaining to the university's operations shall be documented and, as a general rule, be made available to the public.*
- *Everyone shall observe the provisions regarding the duty of confidentiality and privacy protection, and shall handle confidential information with care.*
- *Everyone shall act in accordance with the rules regarding impartiality and procurement, so that no private relationship inappropriately affects dealings in a working context, or gives reason for suspicion thereof.*
- *Research funding shall be distributed in an objective manner, and the criteria for distributions shall be made available to the public.*

### 2.5. Reporting and handling of deviations

- *Staff and students who become aware of situations which could inflict losses or damage upon NMBU shall report these so that measures to avoid or limit such damage may be put in place.*

### 3. Basic Values

In the strategy document 2014-2018 for the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, the vision for the organisation is described: "Knowledge for life". Through education and research, NMBU shall help secure the livelihoods of the generations of today and tomorrow. In the same strategy document, NMBU undertakes to uphold a social responsibility which emphasises the university as a constructive, future-oriented and critical social organisation. NMBU's official values are those of respect, ambition, independence and co-operation.

NMBU shall strive for transparency, and to uphold a shared respect each individual's background and experience. The institution shall pursue ambitious targets which can help the individual to reach his or her academic potential. The University shall assert academic freedom as a prerequisite for independent research and as a means of preserving the institution's critical function. As a critical, independent university, NMBU shall develop its internal co-operation and external collaboration with other universities and research institutions throughout the world within research and education.

NMBU manages a good deal of community resources and has research activities which could be of great significance both nationally and internationally. Through its operations, NMBU hopes to be able to contribute to a sustainable development and a fairer distribution of such resources. A respect for the environment, animals and humans of both present and future generations is central to NMBU's core values.

### 4. Working and learning environment

#### 3.1. NMBU's working environment and organisational culture.

NMBU shall provide a good working environment in accordance with [the provisions of the Working Environment Act](#). All staff and students are entitled to a working environment free of any form of harassment. Individual members of staff and individual students shall be familiar with, and respect, the rules and norms related to discrimination and harassment. Those who feel that they are being bullied, harassed or discriminated against shall report this to a supervisor, line manager or safety representative in line with [NMBU's internal procedures for this](#). All members of staff have a duty to report any instance of such, or any strong suspicion of the latter. Staff and students must show respect for one another and for one another's differences.

NMBU and all its staff have a shared responsibility to prevent damage to health, develop a good working environment, maintain high quality and security in the execution of their work, and ensure that environmental considerations are borne into consideration in their everyday work. Staff have a duty to inform their employer, a safety representative and, where necessary, other employees of any errors or shortcomings which could pose a threat to life and health.

NMBU is responsible for facilitating diversity with regard to gender, age, ethnicity and disability, among other things, at every level of the organisation. NMBU works for an inclusive working life and student environment.

Managers have a particular duty to safeguard the welfare and wellbeing of their colleagues. They should be supportive towards their colleagues' working situation and work tasks, bring others' strengths and allow some room for error. Managers must be attentive to their function as role model where compliance with laws, rules and ethical guidelines are concerned. Managers shall act professionally in their dealings with members of staff.

The management shall facilitate co-determination and shall seek to ensure that staff are heard and involved in decision-making processes. At the same time, it is expected that the decisions made by governing bodies shall be respected. Any disagreements or conflicts shall be handled with a willingness to find suitable solutions. NMBU seeks to promote a good climate of expression which allows for a critical discussion of NMBU's activities.

- All staff and students are entitled to a working environment free of any form of harassment.
- All staff have an duty to report any instance of bullying, harassment or discrimination, or any other undesirable situation which could pose a threat to life and health.

### 3.2. Teaching

NMBU is responsible for giving all students teaching and supervision of a high quality. Students are entitled to a fair evaluation of their work.

Students shall make use of use up-to-date, accepted and lawful methods in their studies. No form of deceit – including plagiarism – shall be accepted. Lecturers and supervisors shall provide thorough information on what is considered deceit and on how to use sources correctly.

Students have a reciprocal responsibility towards one another, for example with regard to a fair input into group work.

### 3.3. Supervision

The “supervisory relationship” comprises the relationships between a teacher and research fellow, a teacher and student, an academic director and apprentice, and a postdoctoral fellow and mentor. The parties in the supervisory relationship shall both display respect for one another's personal and academic integrity, and refrain from any conduct or statement which could imply an attack on the other person's dignity.

This means that:

- The supervisor has overall responsibility for ensuring that his or her supervision is offered in academic and professional forms, and should be aware of the position of power the supervisory role can give him or her in relation to the supervisee.
- The supervisor must not exploit his or her position of authority to benefit from the supervisee, or to gain private services or benefits. Academic knowledge shall not be used to offend or suppress others.
- The supervisor shall show caution when commenting on the personality, appearance or gender of the supervisee. The student shall show the same respect for the supervisor as an individual.
- The supervisor shall avoid discussing internal collegiate situations with students and research fellows.  
In the same way, staff shall display discretion towards colleagues and students. Information of a personal, sensitive and confidential nature which has been shared in the context of the supervision shall be treated with discretion by both parties.
- Supervisors must exercise caution with regard to discussing the supervisee's academic and personal concerns with other students or research fellows.

The student should exercise the same consideration towards the supervisor.

Private relationships which are incompatible with the professional relationship are



forbidden. This means that:

- It lies with the supervisor to ensure that an essential professional distance is maintained and that no relationships are entered into which place the candidate in a vulnerable position. Double relationships in the supervisory relationship (such as familial, romantic or private economic relationships) are not permitted.
- The supervisor shall not accept any form of fee for supervision beyond that agreed upon with NMBU.
  
- The students are entitled to teaching and supervision of a high quality, and a fair evaluation of their work.
- Both parties in a supervisory relationship shall demonstrate respect for one another's personal and academic integrity.

## 4. Research and research ethics

All research and academic activity is built upon trust. Both the research community and society at large can expect research to be carried out in accordance with accepted requirements of accuracy and objectivity. The supervisor has a particular responsibility to pass on the core rules which apply for that specific department. Students and research fellows, in turn, undertake to actively orient themselves in questions of research ethics.

### 4.1. Academic freedom and responsibility

The basic ethos of research lies in the search for the truth, and in the related values of reliability, integrity and transparency. [Academic freedom](#) is a basic value. Academic freedom can be defined as the freedom to seek out truth and insight through research, teaching, speaking and publishing, based on the norms and standards which apply for academic activities, without risk of interference or punishment.

This includes:

- the freedom to ask questions, including questioning things authorities consider to be established knowledge and understanding, and questioning issues and theses which provoke strong interests or emotions.
- the freedom to determine which materials and methods one wishes to employ.
- the freedom to make hypotheses, results and reasonings public.

At the same time, one should emphasise that research has a wider social responsibility. Researchers and research environments should undertake a critical evaluation of whether research can, directly or indirectly, be of use to society, and whether it complies with basic human rights. Researchers also have a duty to show consideration to the consequences that the selected methods may have for any people affected by the research.

### 4.2. Good research practice

Academic activities at NMBU shall be based upon good research methodologies and relevant rules and regulations. Staff at NMBU shall be familiar and comply with the guidelines for good research ethics presented.

#### Reliability

Research shall be verifiable. Methods and findings shall be documented in an understandable and complete form, and data shall be accessible to others for testing after a certain period. The choice of method shall be justified and in keeping with academic manners of working.

Researchers often develop their ideas by interacting with others' thoughts and ideas. Colleagues and sources of knowledge that have been significant for the individual's research shall be acknowledged. Whether such sources of knowledge are used supportively or critically in one's own work, the researcher shall endeavour to offer an impartial, balanced and truthful presentation of these. Accordingly, researchers shall also endeavour to offer a balanced and truthful presentation of their own work. It is important that researchers impart any uncertainty present in their own research – especially when this research is used as a basis for different types of public and private decisions.

### Integrity

All research shall be characterised by truthfulness, and shall be presented in an honest and professional manner. The researcher shall not compromise his or her core values in the implementation or dissemination of research.

### Transparency

Publishing is important in the international world of research. Within the limits set by confidence and the duty of confidentiality, publishing and disseminating one's results shall be sought after – both in scholarly and more popular forms. Different means of access to academic knowledge is a problem, and, in the case of research which is relevant to developing countries in particular, one should evaluate the possibility of publishing in recognised [open access](#) journals.

Academic activities at NMBU shall be based upon good research methodologies and the relevant rules and regulations. NMBU's staff and students shall be familiar and comply with the guidelines for good research ethics conduct.

- Research shall be verifiable.
- Research shall be characterised by truthfulness and shall be presented in an honest and professional manner.
- The results of research shall be published and disseminated publicly, within the limits set by confidence and the duty of confidentiality.

### 4.3. Research misconduct

Research data shall be presented using straightforward, honest and scientifically verifiable methods. A breach of good research practice can comprise anything from carelessness and slight trickery to more serious offences, defined in the Research Ethics Act as “research misconduct” Any form of deceit is unacceptable.

Research misconduct comprises, but is not limited to, any falsification or fabrication of data, plagiarism, or other serious breach of good research practice which has been committed wilfully or through gross negligence when planning, carrying out or reporting research (cf. Section 5, second paragraph, Research Ethics Act).

Examples of behavioural misconduct can be:

- deliberately withholding undesired results
- deliberately applying misleading statistical methods
- deliberately misleading others regarding who has contributed to the research and how many participants have contributed
- withholding, either through wilfulness or gross negligence, details in methodology
- deliberately misinforming others of one's academic qualifications in applications

- deliberately destroying research material to hinder inspections in the case of suspected research misconduct

Staff and students at NMBU have a right and a duty to report any research misconduct. There are overarching laws, rules and [reporting procedures in place at NMBU](#) (see also point 6), as well as rules for the handling of cases concerning research misconduct.

Misconduct must be distinguished from errors in research and the internal criticism and verification of research findings which take place in an academic environment. NMBU should not aggravate the spread of unwarranted suspicion or any over-exaggeration of cases. Staff members who are suspected of acts of research misconduct are entitled to a thorough and fair investigation. The case should be handled in such a way as to protect both the accuser and the accused, in accordance with the consideration for privacy protection.

- Staff and students at NMBU have a right and a duty to report any research misconduct.

#### 4.4. Publishing, authorship and co-authorship

Researchers shall respect other researchers' and students' contributions, and shall follow the standards pertaining to authorship and collaboration. Staff and students shall familiarise themselves and comply with the guidelines for authorship and co-authorship which are generally accepted in the scientific community. Individual responsibilities should be clarified as early as possible in the process, and in co-operation with all participants. Colleagues who have made considerable contributions to the work shall not be omitted from its list of co-authors. Correspondingly, participants who have not made an essential contribution to the project shall not be included as co-authors.

There are different standards for co-authorship in different academic environments. With a view to the review and formulation of such standards, the [Vancouver rules](#) have had great significance, even beyond the academic environment they themselves were formulated in. According to *these rules*, the right to authorship shall be based on four main criteria, all of which must be met for the authorship to be legitimate:

- a) Significant contribution to the concept and design, *or* data collection *or* analysis and interpretation of data.
- b) Preparation of the manuscript in question *or* significant parts of the manuscript *or* critical revision of the article's intellectual content.
- c) Approval of the version of the article that is to be published.
- d) Acknowledgement of responsibility in properly investigating and responding to questions pertaining to the integrity and accuracy of the work in all its aspects and parts.

Crediting of institutions must be fair, particularly as concerns staff members with two employers. It is the responsibility of the researcher to provide the author list that he or she

deems to be fair in terms of the work that has been carried out.

If an academic supervisor wishes to use the student's unpublished data or research results in his or her own research, the student shall give his or her consent. Equally, the supervisor's consent is required when a student wishes to use any unpublished material or results belonging to the supervisor.

One should also strive to publish negative results.

- Staff and students shall familiarise themselves and comply with guidelines for authorship and co-authorship which are generally accepted in the scientific community.

#### 4.5. Commissioned research

The increasing dependence of research on external funding can be a threat to its independence, with regard to the wishes and interests of the commissioner. In reports, evaluations and similar tasks carried out upon commission, all financial sources underlying the research in question shall be declared. Any connection between the author or institution and the subject being researched – and, where applicable, any commissioner – which could be deemed capable of casting doubt on the researchers' or the institution's independence shall be declared. NMBU's researchers shall resist any direct or indirect pressure from a commissioner or any other source where the selection of methods, findings or conclusions, project execution and reporting of results are concerned. The same applies for consultancy assignments and evaluations carried out for businesses, special interest organisations and public institutions (where permitted by the duty of confidentiality and secrecy). If necessary, queries concerning this area may be raised with the individual's line manager. NMBU's standard contract for commissioned research shall be used.

As a main rule, research shall be published. In cases where a time-limited exclusive right of use has been agreed upon for the commissioning body, it is the researcher's right and duty to ensure the research findings are made public upon expiry of the time restriction. No exclusive user rights to research results shall be offered without a time limit.

Staff who accept assignments as consultants in investigations, evaluations or similar by virtue of their position at NMBU or on the basis of the competence this position presupposes, shall strive to deliver truthful and complete information to the contracting institution. In such circumstances, any uncertainty or lack of knowledge shall be accounted for, as well as what this may mean for the conclusions. This applies regardless of whether the contracting institution is a public department, private company or special interest organisation. Staff who accept such assignments shall not omit system critiques when they are a natural component of the assignment's nature. Nor shall they compromise on the requirement for truthfulness and completeness based on a consideration for the possibility of future assignments.

- All financial sources underlying the research in question shall be declared.
- Any affiliation which could be deemed capable of casting doubt upon the researchers' or institutions' independence with regard to the research area or contracting institution shall be declared.

#### 4.6. Protection of humans involved in research

Staff and students shall root their work in a fundamental respect for the value of human life, the integrity, freedom and co-determination of human subjects, and the requirement for informed consent. Caution must be exercised in research concerning vulnerable groups or individuals with a reduced or non-existent capacity to give consent. The research should be beneficial to those subjects included in the research, or for the group in the longer term. The necessary approvals shall be obtained from the Data Protection Officer for Research, the Data Inspectorate or similar authorities. Where applicable, research projects shall be presented for independent evaluation at the [Regional Committee for Medical and Health Research Ethics](#) (REC). In the case of research within the social sciences, the guidelines from [the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities](#) (NESH) shall apply.

In the case of research which has consequences for indigenous populations or other groups of people who need particular cultural protection, special consideration should be given to their culture, and the research should be prepared in dialogue with representatives of the groups in question. Research based on indigenous populations' knowledge of natural resources must ensure that the indigenous population retains access to and control over their knowledge (ref. [the Biodiversity Convention](#)). This includes evaluations of how the research is planned and implemented, who will distribute the results and who will be able to benefit from them. In general, a collaboration which ensures that the research is both adapted to the culture in question, and relevant to those involved, is desired. As is the case for all participants in research projects, it must be ensured that local populations are not exploited in the research process or in the use and dissemination of the results of the research (for example, through patent protection which hinders the local population in their traditional use of resources, see [WHO](#)).

Staff and students shall root their work in a fundamental respect for the value of human life, the integrity, freedom and co-determination of human subjects, and the requirement for informed consent.

#### 4.7. Protection of animals

Animals have intrinsic worth and shall be treated with respect. Staff and students shall exercise diligence and respect with regard to animal welfare; both in the treatment and diagnosis of animals, and when conducting experiments using animals. [The Animal Welfare Act](#) and [regulations regarding experiments on animals](#) shall be complied with, but this does not exempt staff and students at NMBU from exercising good judgement.

In work regarding the diagnosis, treatment and care of animals, the animal's welfare shall be respected and safeguarded. In the treatment of animals, members of staff are confronted with ethical challenges and dilemmas which cannot easily be solved through a simple consideration of laws and rules: How long should an animal in great pain be kept alive? What if the owner cannot pay for the best form of treatment? The treatment and diagnosis of animals places high demands on the power of moral judgement: the ability to make moral decisions by balancing different considerations. This ability is best practiced in a collegial community where there is scope for discussing such challenges.

In the case of experimentation on animals, the necessity of the experiment shall be recorded,

and this must have solid grounds. The “three Rs” for animal experimentation (“reduce, refine, replace”) should be characteristic principles for all use of animal experimentation.

If a researcher plans to carry out an experiment on animals, he or she shall apply for permission for every instance in which there is reason to believe that the experiment will influence the animal’s normal way of life or cause anything other than an entirely temporary light pain or discomfort.

This application shall be sent to the Norwegian [Animal Research Authority](#), and it shall be entered into the Authority’s electronic application system, [FOTS](#). The application will then come up for investigation with the person responsible for NMBU’s applications.

Researchers who carry out experiments on animals shall have approval as a FELASA Category C researcher. In practice, this means that everyone who will carry out experiments on animals shall have completed a course in laboratory animal science at NMBU, or a corresponding course at other institutions (University of Oslo, University of Bergen, University of Tromsø).

Research at NMBU can also have a direct or indirect effect on other animals’ welfare (for example domestic and wild animals) or stock. All researchers and others who work with animals should undertake a critical evaluation of their work, with consideration for its consequences for ecology and animal welfare (see also [Parliamentary Report No. 12 2002 – 2003, Regarding animal husbandry and animal welfare](#)).

At NMBU, a [committee](#) has been established for the ethical approval of studies involving animal patients. Such an approval is required for publication in internationally recognised publishing channels.

Staff and students shall exercise diligence and respect with regard to animal welfare; both in the treatment and diagnosis of animals, and when conducting experiments using animals.

#### 4.8. Protection of the environment

NMBU has a particular responsibility to conduct research into environmental issues and ensure that this research contributes to a good management of nature. Researchers shall endeavour to ensure that their research safeguards and promotes sustainability in the short and long term. Both national and international research must strive to preserve biological diversity, the stability of the ecosystem and our shared basis of existence. The protection of the environment should be evaluated from the perspective of an integrated, international system.

If there is any uncertainty as to whether the research or the technological use of results thereof can have negative consequences for the environment, the precautionary principle shall be applied. This means that researchers, individual institutes and the university as a whole have a responsibility for bringing forth and evaluating our knowledge of such consequences, as well as for making the practical decisions which would be essential to prevent damage occurring.

## 5. Administration and business

NMBU shall conduct its activities in a way which ensures transparency in all processes, so that the public has access to information and can oversee its operations. Staff and students shall carry out their work in accordance with NMBU's interests.

### 5.1. Public disclosure and confidentiality

#### Public disclosure

In accordance with the [Act relating to right of access to documents held by the public administration and public undertakings](#), case proceedings and the university's business shall be documented and made accessible in public records. This also applies to emails of a more formal nature, which are case documents in the same way as paper documents. It is therefore important to be conscious of the form and content of emails sent on behalf of NMBU.

The distribution of research funding at NMBU shall be carried out in an objective manner. The allocation of funds shall be undertaken in a transparent way. Criteria for the distribution of funds shall be accessible to the public, and concrete allocations shall be documented and justified.

NMBU's [recruitment procedures](#) shall be followed.

#### Active duty of disclosure

As a state institution, NMBU, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, has an active duty of disclosure. This means that we shall always give correct and complete information to authorities, companies, organisations and citizens. Equally, this must occur in line with confidentiality requirements.

#### Secrecy and duty of confidentiality

Staff and students at NMBU shall observe the provisions of the [Public Administration Act](#) regarding the duty of confidentiality and privacy protection, and shall handle confidential information with care. The circulation of confidential documents via internal post or emails can compromise confidentiality, and the correct use of central registration systems is therefore encouraged.

### 5.2. Impartiality, gifts and purchases

#### Impartiality

Staff at NMBU manage the organisation's resources, and should therefore not conduct themselves in a manner which could impair trust in our impartiality. Private relationships such as familial relations, cohabitation, marriage, friendship or close working relations shall not inappropriately affect dealings in a working context, or give reason for suspicion of such. It is the individual's duty to inform the university of any possible partiality.

#### Gifts and other benefits

In line with the [Civil Service Act](#), all staff at NMBU shall refrain from using their position to acquire undue benefits for themselves or others by virtue of their employment at NMBU. University staff must not accept or offer gifts or other benefits which are intended to influence the recipient's actions.

Moderate forms of hospitality and conviviality are a natural part of polite business. The

degree of such attention must, however, not develop so as to influence decision-making processes, or gives others reason to believe that such is the case. The frequency and degree of attention must be proportionate to the relevant business/service needs.

In general, when suppliers and representatives of the business sector offer visits to private firms, trips to exhibitions or similar, it is a prerequisite that NMBU cover the costs of travel and accommodation. Travel shall always be approved by a senior manager.

### Ownership stakes

Staff who have significant ownership stakes in businesses which have a customer or supplier relationship to NMBU shall notify their closest line manager of such. The same applies to people who have a close relationship to the members of staff. All staff are encouraged to register their ownership stakes.

### Purchases

NMBU's staff must not use their position to their own personal gain by taking part in or influencing procurements for NMBU from their own firm, or that of a close personal relation. Through the university's procurement process, staff have the opportunity to submit tenders in accordance with tender documents issued. Special circumstances, however, must be invoked before the staff member's tender can be considered, and then only as the result of an ordinary, open tenders process.

Staff who have a personal interest in a procurement – financially or otherwise, direct or through a close personal contact – shall not take part in or in any other way influence the work surrounding the tenders process.

Nor shall NMBU's staff, during the preparatory phase, take part in or seek to influence a procurement through descriptions and decisions regarding procurement needs which could either be perceived as or occasion a conflict of interests. This can include any personal interest in the procurement, financially or otherwise, direct or through a close personal contact.

Information received from the market regarding tenders and tenderers shall be treated in confidence and shall not be misused, for example in the face of competing tenderers. The Act's requirements – namely, that purchasers act in accordance with good business practice, have high standards in business ethics and ensure the equal treatment of suppliers – apply.

All purchases made through NMBU shall follow NMBU's [internal procedures for procurements](#) which are in turn based on the [Public Procurement Act](#).

As a "green" university, NMBU shall give environmental values a high priority, including in its purchasing policy. NMBU shall set requirements that the UN's human rights and the ILO's core conventions are met throughout the value chain. Where possible, NMBU shall prioritise the purchase of "fair" or fair-trade labelled products. Documentation and follow-up will take place in the form of self-certification, external verification, follow-up meetings and checks with and without notification. When the standard for social responsibility for private and public organisations (ISO 26000) becomes operative, NMBU will evaluate the requirement for the documentation of social responsibility in line with this.



- All case management and aspects pertaining to the university's operations shall be documented and made available in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.
- Staff and students shall observe the provisions of the Public Administration Act regarding the duty of confidentiality and privacy protection, and shall handle confidential information with care.
- Research funding shall be distributed in an objective manner, and the criteria for distributions shall be made available to the public.
- Private relationships such as familial relations, cohabitation, marriage, friendship or close working relations shall not inappropriately affect dealings in a working context, or give reason for suspicion of such.

### 5.3. Loyalty to the institution and respect for individuals' integrity

At NMBU, staff, students and partners are all valued. Their integrity shall also be respected when it regards the expression of criticism directed at the management of the university, faculty and institute. However, anyone who possesses a role of manager, employee or student at NMBU has an obligation to show loyalty towards NMBU's basic values (cf. Chapter 2) and to avoid acting in ways which violate these values. This applies to conduct both internal and external to the organisation – such as in contact with the media or on social media.

#### Personal convictions and reservations towards work assignments

In line with what has been said about academic freedom, all staff equally have the opportunity to refrain from participating in projects if the content of such a project runs contrary to the individual's religious or moral convictions. If this extends beyond obligatory assignments, the individual should discuss this with the department head, to evaluate how the situation can be resolved within the framework of the job description or study programme.

#### Public debate and freedom of expression

Staff and students are encouraged to contribute an academically-based reasoning to public debate, but must equally make clear which, where applicable, are NMBU's or the institute's points of view and which are the researcher's own. This also extends to the use of social media.

Staff and students at NMBU have the right to voice critical opinions of the organisation's activities and other situations which are in the public interest, but must equally respect internal decisions when making public statements.

#### Respectful treatment of all collaboration partners

Staff and students at NMBU shall show respect towards all collaboration partners. Staff and students who are involved in projects in other countries or collaborations with international organisations should familiarise themselves with, and respect, the culture, norms and customs of these countries – provided that these do not run contrary to other points of NMBU's ethical guidelines (for example, where the giving and receipt of gifts or other benefits are concerned). The purchase of sexual services when on working trips is forbidden ([ethical guidelines for public administration](#)).

## Information technology

The use of NMBU's computer systems, information and online services shall be limited to work-related needs. NMBU has its own [ICT regulations](#) which discuss this. Information which may be offensive or inappropriate shall never be downloaded, saved or passed on.

## Extra sources of income

Staff at NMBU may not have any additional or side job, directorship or paid assignment which is incompatible with NMBU's interests or which is likely to impair confidence in NMBU ([NMBU's procedures for extra sources of income](#)). There must be transparency regarding any additional or side job which may have an impact on the staff member's fulfilment of his/her official duties, or any commercial activities which are in competition with NMBU's business.

# 6. Reporting and handling of deviations

## 6.1. Reporting procedures

Staff and students who become aware of situations which could inflict losses or damage upon NMBU shall report these so that measures to avoid or limit such damage may be put in place.

Staff and students at NMBU have a right and a duty to report censurable conditions in the company, in accordance with Sections 2-4 of the Norwegian Working Environment Act. [Internal reporting procedures](#) shall follow the applicable guidelines. In a first instance, notifications shall be made through the line organisation, unless there are special reasons for this being inadvisable. All situations shall be attempted to be resolved internally before any reports are made externally. NMBU has a responsibility to provide a good climate of expression, so that any issues can be raised without staff being fearful of the consequences of doing so. Such a climate also means that there must be some leeway for making errors.

Suitable mechanisms for protecting both the person filing a report and the person being accused are described in NMBU's reporting procedures. The person reported to has an obligation to take up the case and notify the person filing the report of how the case will be taken further.

- Staff and students who become aware of situations which could inflict losses or damage upon NMBU shall report these so that measures to avoid or limit such damage may be put in place.
- Reports are normally made through the line organisation and should be resolved at the lowest possible level.

## 6.2. Procedures for handling deviations

Breaches of guidelines can have varying levels of seriousness, and shall be sanctioned in different ways. Each individual breach is an offense and shall be treated as such. NMBU endeavours to find good resolutions for students and staff involved in a breach of the guidelines.

## Staff and students' roles and responsibilities

A breach of the ethical guidelines shall be resolved at the lowest possible level. The nearest line manager shall be involved if it is not possible to find a solution at a lower level. If for whatever reason it is not possible to involve the line manager, the case is raised to the next management level up. Students may also approach their representative or student council, who will move the case along in the system.

### Line managers

The line manager shall be attentive to and take up any breach of the ethical guidelines which arises in the work and teaching environment as swiftly as possible. The manager is responsible for ensuring that the issue is resolved and that everyone involved is heard.

Should any suspicion arise that a breach of the ethical guidelines has occurred, the line manager shall inform the person concerned as soon as possible, and before the case is reported further. The duty to disclose information is intended for those directly concerned by the case. Otherwise, the duty of confidentiality applies.

In the case of serious violations, the line manager shall report the case on to a superior.

## 6.3. Responsibility for the guidelines and handling of deviations

### The Rector

The Rector of NMBU has a particular responsibility to ensure that the ethical guidelines are followed and evaluated in a consistent manner, and that serious violations, or suspicions of such, are dealt with. The Rector may request advice or evaluations from the Ethical Committee at NMBU, the National Commission for the Investigation of Research Misconduct or other research ethics committees.

The Rector has a responsibility to involve the police when such is called for by the nature of the case.

The university's management is responsible for information in cases concerning a gross breach of the ethical guidelines, but smaller information responsibilities are delegated to others.

### The University Board

NMBU's ethical guidelines are adopted by the University Board. Cases concerning the ethical guidelines may be proposed for handling by the Board. In such cases, the Ethics Committee shall advise the Board.

### The Ethics Committee

NMBU's Ethics Committee has an advisory role in issues of an ethical nature. One person may be appointed as case handler in issues of misconduct and as approving authority in connection with the use of people in surveys, participant observation during field work and the like. An approving authority may also be appointed in connection with the use of genetically modified organisms in research. The Ethics Committee may also handle issues at the instigation of students and staff.

### Consequences of violations

Any violation of the guidelines may have consequences for an individual's working situation. In particularly serious instances, a violation may lead to dismissal or termination of contract, in accordance with the rules and regulations which apply in working life.

## 7. Revision and preservation of the guidelines

These guidelines shall be a living document which creates discussion and reflection at the university and which are the subject of continuous evaluation. Suggestions for revisions of the guidelines are proposed by the Rector. Suggestions for changes may be proposed by the Ethics Committee and other relevant bodies. Changes to the document are adopted by the University Board.

## Appendix

It is important that ethical principles and guidelines are perceived as fair and in line with what applies at other similar institutions. The ethical guidelines for UMB and the research ethics guidelines for NVH have formed the basis of the preparation of this document. In the case of the preparation of UMB's ethical guidelines in particular, several existing ethical guidelines were used as a basis for this document. Some of these were:

Ethical guidelines for government officials, prepared by the Ministry of Modernisation, 2005

Ethical guidelines for the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB)

Guidelines for research ethics for the Norwegian School of Veterinary Science (NVH)

Noragric's Code of Conduct

Guidelines for research ethics in science and technology, prepared by The National Committee for Research Ethics in Science and Technology (NENT), 2007

Ethics in SINTEF, SINTEF Media 2006

Ethical guidelines from the University of Stavanger

University of Oslo's ethical guidelines for staff for the purchase of goods and services

University of Oslo's guidelines for supervisors