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“RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH – RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND ETHICS IN GEORGIAN UNIVERSITIES (ETHICS)”

The aim of the national structural reform project "Responsible Conduct of Research - Research Integrity and Ethics in Georgian Universities (ETHICS)", funded by the European Commission's Erasmus+ CBHE program, is to launch a systemic improvement intervention to improve the quality of University and Research-Performing Organizations (RPOs) research through launching measures to adhere to the foundations of high-quality research and excellence.

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND ETHICS

Research integrity means conducting all stages of research, from idea development to publication, in a transparent, trustworthy, and honest manner. It is an essential component of science, ensuring that research builds trust and has a positive impact on society. Research ethics, on the other hand, refers to the application of ethical principles in decision-making throughout the research process, considering the potential consequences for research participants and the wider community (The European Network for Academic Integrity, 2018). Research ethics and integrity are both vital to maintaining the credibility of scientific work

FUNDAMENTAL VALUES OF RESEARCH ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

International frameworks identify similar core values of research ethics and integrity. According to the European Code of Conduct (ALLEA, 2023), good research practice is based on four core principles: Reliability, Honesty, Respect and Accountability. Similarly, the Singapore Statement outlines the principles of honesty, accountability, professional courtesy and fairness and good stewardship. While methodologies differ across the disciplines, a common set of ethical principles is essential to ensure responsible conduct in any research context (Singapore Statement, 2010). The overlap in international statements demonstrates a global consensus on ethical values and responsibilities of research.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY

Research Integrity is crucial for many reasons, it can affect public trust in science, which is the most serious and lasting consequence of misconduct. According to the European Code of Conduct: research misconduct “damages the research processes, degrades relationships among researchers, undermines trust in and the credibility of research, wastes resources, and may expose research participants and subjects, users, society, or the environment to unnecessary harm” (ALLEA, 2023, p. 10). Research integrity also protects human participants and subjects. The Declaration of Helsinki emphasizes that medical research involving human participants aims to understand disease, to improve preventive and therapeutic measures, and to enhance public health, but these aims should never take precedence over the rights and interests of participants (WMA, 2024, p. 2)

The responsibility for research integrity lies with individual researchers and beyond. It extends to institutions, funders, publishers, and the broader scientific community. Clear procedures for handling allegations of misconduct, protecting whistleblowers, and ensuring fair investigations are essential components of an institutional commitment to research integrity. Therefore, the international project “Responsible Conduct of Research – Research Integrity and Ethics in Georgian Universities (ETHICS)” is being implemented precisely to strengthen the institutional culture of research ethics in Georgia. Within the framework of the project, the formation of a Research Governance Board / Research Ethics Committee (REC) is one of the main goals to support institutional research ethics policies.

REFERENCES

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