

Research ethics for the humanities

Theories of science – KULT 8850/8851
8 February 2024

May Thorseth
Professor of Philosophy, IFR
[Director of Programme for Applied Ethics](#)
NTNU



Structure

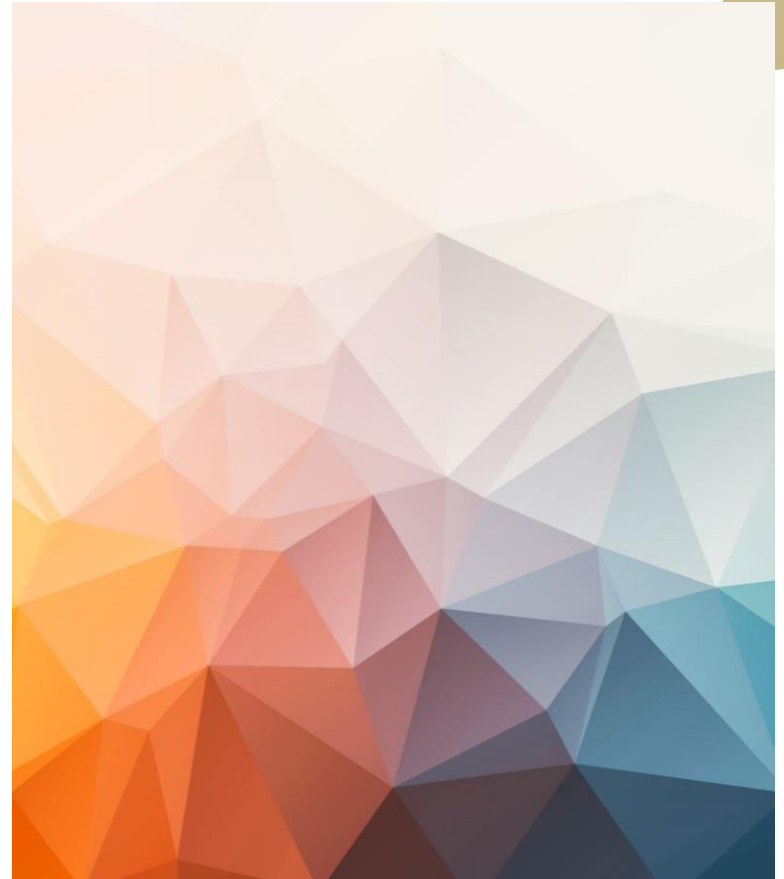


- What is research ethics?
- Three levels of research ethics, with examples
- The ethics of asymmetrical relations, with cases
- Co-authorship
- Digital resources

The overall aim of the course is to help the participants in their development of what we call academic citizenship.

Academic citizenship is a broad set of efforts and norms that relates to internal as well as external features of academic life.

The main feature is the ability to reflect about academic work and its context



What is (research) ethics?



- Ethics concerns *normative questions*:
 - Is an act right or wrong?
 - What ought we to do?
 - What is a good life/what are good practices?
- Research ethics as applied ethics: Requires knowledge of the field and the ability to reflect normatively.
- The professional ethics of researchers (role morality), but also:
- The ethics of research institutions => research ethics institutions.



Group Chat

- What is your field and topic of research?
- What do you expect to be/experiencing to be the most important ethical challenge(s) in your PhD research?

Three levels of research ethical commitments

1) Quality of research. Good research conduct and the 'ethos' of science

2) Protecting persons and/or groups affected by research.

3) The social responsibility of research (broad research ethics)

De nasjonale
FORSKNINGSETISKE
KOMITEENE

Forskningsetiske retningslinjer
for samfunnsvitenskap,
humaniora, juss og teologi



Level 1: Quality of research

FFP: Falsification, fabrication, plagiarism

QRP: Questionable research practices

R. Merton: C U D O S

Communism,
Universalism,
Disinterestedness,
Originality and (organized)
Skepticism



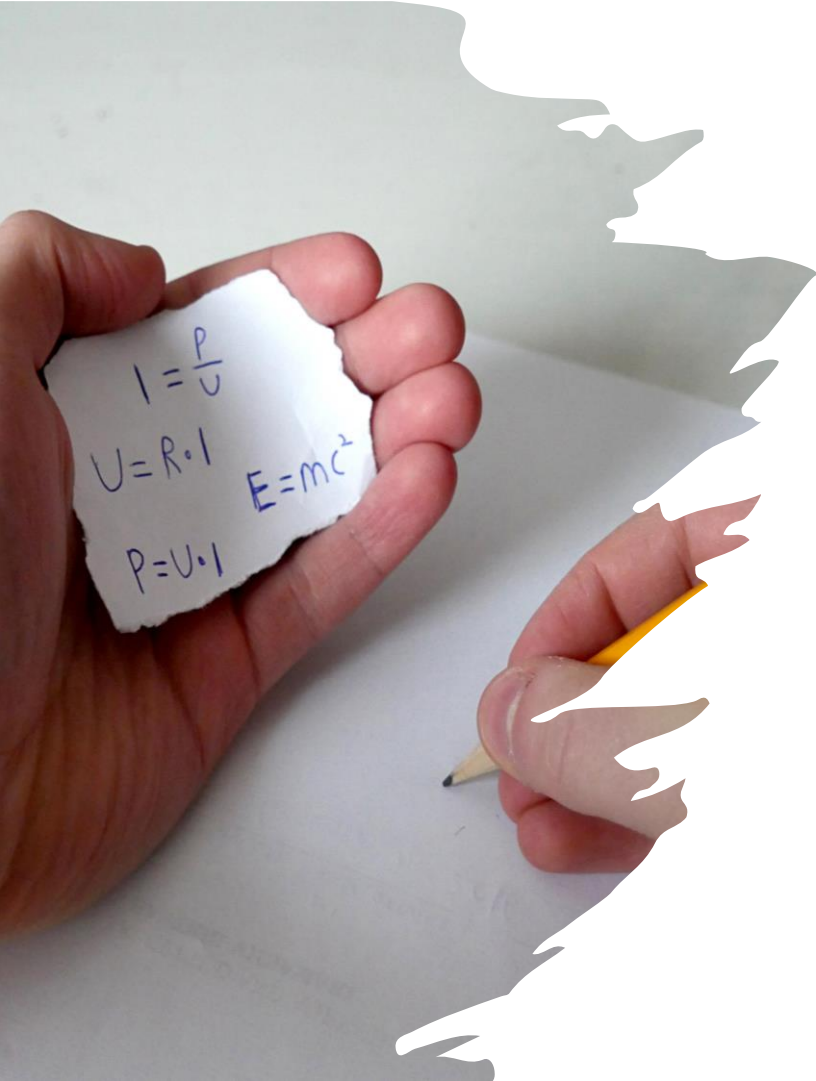
CUDOS – ethos in modern science (Robert K. Merton, 1942)



- **Communism (allemannseie):**
Common ownership of knowledge – all scientists should have common ownership of scientific goods (intellectual property), to promote collective collaboration; secrecy is the opposite of this norm.
- **Universalism (ingen fortrinnsett):**
Disregard of who puts forward a knowledge claim or where s/he comes from.
- **Disinterestedness (uavhengig av særinteresser):**
No value-based bias - scientific institutions act for the benefit of a common scientific enterprise, rather than for the personal gain of individuals within them.
- **Organized Skepticism (systematisk granskning, referee o.l.):**
Control of claims through peers - scientific claims should be exposed to critical scrutiny before being accepted: both in methodology and institutional codes of conduct.
- **Originality (added later)**

Scientific misconduct

- Multifaceted problem
 - Fabrication: false data.
 - Misleading analyses and interpretations.
 - Plagiarism/theft of others' results, ideas, texts.
 - Self plagiarism or double publication.
 - Misleading representation of the research of others.
- What is the difference between fraud and sloppiness?

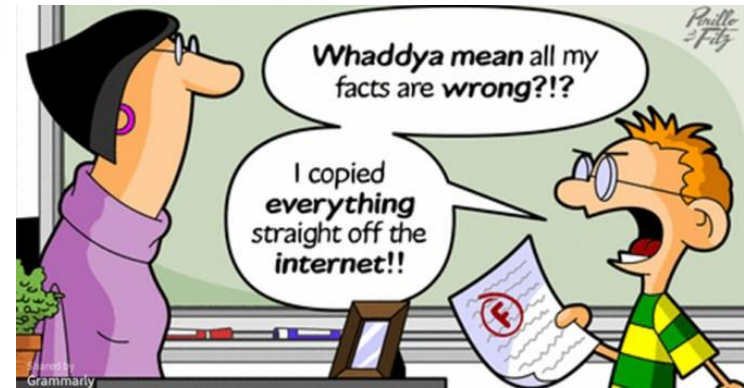


Example 2: Plagiarism

From [new research ethics law § 8](#), on dishonesty:

*“Scientific dishonesty means forgery, fabricating evidence, **plagiarism**, and other serious violations of good scientific practice that is **deliberately or negligently** carried out. This applies to planning of, completing or reporting on research”.*

- Turning in someone else's work as your own.
- Copying words/phrases/sentences or ideas from someone else without giving credit.
- Crucial point: give false impression that the text is yours (whether you meant to or not).



Plagiarism: Subjective and objective criteria



[New research ethics law § 8](#), on dishonesty:

*“Scientific dishonesty means forgery, fabricating evidence, **plagiarism**, and other serious violations of good scientific practice that is **deliberately or negligently** carried out. This applies to planning of, completing or reporting on research”.*

SELVPLAGIERING

«Kan man virkelig stjele av seg selv?» Student vil ta plagiering til Høyesterett

Utestengt etter å ha sitert seg selv. Har tapt i alle instanser. Håper Høyesterett vil ta saken.

FUSK

Sykepleierstudent utestengt et helt år for selvplagiering

21-åringen ble utestengt i to semestre etter å ha kopiert noen setninger hun hadde skrevet selv. Universitetet sier det er studentenes ansvar å kjenne reglene for kildehenvisninger.



Salami-slicing? Trolling for supportive references?

- Publish or perish? Quality vs. quantity
- Temptation towards pushing the rules?
- Relevant in our fields?



Matthias Kaiser ved Universitetet i Bergen er leder for Rino-prosjektet. (Foto: Ida Bergström, PÅ Hayden)

Økonomisk press fører til «akademisk prostitusjon», ifølge ny rapport

Publiseringspress, tellekantsystemet og konkurranse om finansiering settes i sammenheng med forekomsten av diskutabile forskningsetiske praksiser.

Espen Halvorsen Bjørnan
JOURNALIST I UNIVERSITETSSYSSA

[Published: 11 May 2016](#)

The pressure to publish pushes down quality

[Daniel Sarewitz](#) 

[Nature](#) **533**, 147 (2016) | [Cite this article](#)

1240 Accesses | **81** Citations | **1541** Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

«Publish or perish»

- Quality vs. quantity
- Temptation towards pushing the rules?
- Co-authorship, plagiarism, dishonest reference practice...

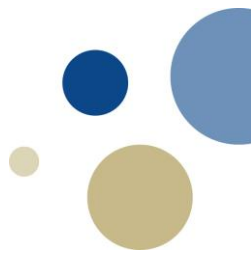


Vancouver Recommendations on co-authorship

- Requirements for publication in medical journals:
«Gold standard» concerning the ethics of authorship, double publications, conflicts of interest etc.
- On authorship:
Authorship credit should be based on **1)** substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; **2)** drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and **3)** final approval of the version to be published. Authors should meet conditions 1, 2, and 3.
- As a co-author, you should also be accountable for all parts of the text.



Recognized norms for research ethics, regulating research in different areas and in different relationships:



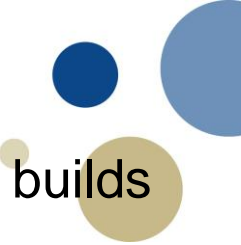
- **Constitute good scientific practice:**
academic freedom, originality, openness, trustworthiness etc.
- **Regulate the research community:**
integrity, accountability, impartiality, criticism etc.)
- **Relationship to people who take part in the research:**
respect, human dignity, confidentiality, free and informed consent etc.)
- **Relationship to the rest of society:**
independence, conflicts of interest, social responsibility, dissemination of research etc.

Level 2: Protecting persons or groups

Four basic, ethical principles
(cf. Beauchamp and Childress, 2001):

- Beneficence (do good)
- Nonmaleficence (do no harm)
- Justice
- Respect for autonomy



- 
- Research ethics is based on respect for *human dignity* and builds on general ethics and fundamental human rights.
 - Each individual possesses their own interests and integrity that cannot be disregarded in the performance of research:

‘Researchers must protect personal integrity, preserve individual freedom and self-determination, respect privacy and family life, and safeguard against harm and unreasonable strain’ (NESH 2016: B.5).

- Recognized norms and values in Internet research include, for example, dignity, freedom, autonomy, solidarity, equality, democracy and trust.

Collection of personal data



- Personal data is information that directly or indirectly can identify a person:
 - names, personal ID numbers or other personal identification.
 - background information that can be traced back to an individual, e.g., place of residence or institutional affiliations combined with information about age, sex, occupation, nationality, and so forth.
- Includes de-identified data.
- Even if all project reports are anonymous, the project may still be notifiable if personal data is processed during work on the project.

Internet research is not exempt from this!

- Social media – public or private domain?
- Should researchers be allowed to use all content that is voluntarily put out on the web?
Why/not?



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

Sikt (earlier NSD), GDPR etc.

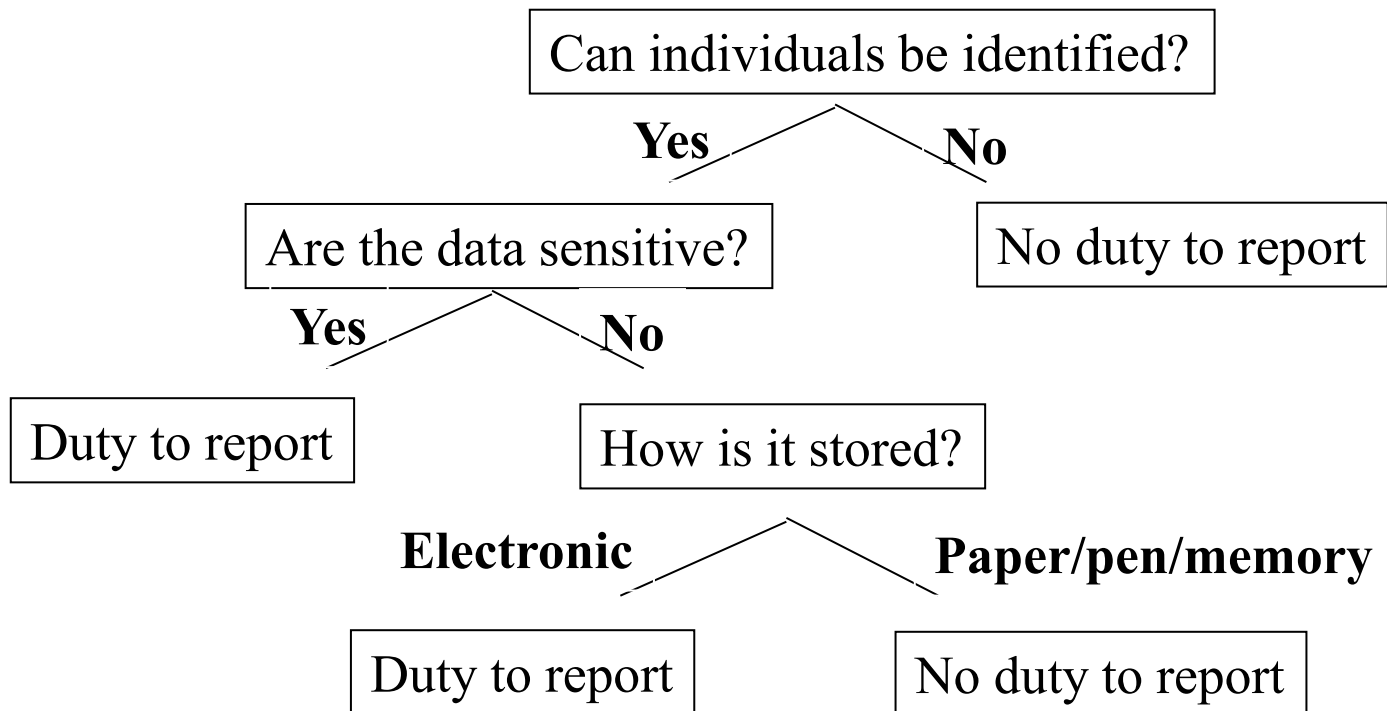


- Researchers in different disciplines have expressed concern and criticism of:
 - “check-box ethics” (too much law, not enough reflection? Too many committees, not enough personal accountability?)
 - excessive focus on informed consent
 - Individual vs. collective good-evaluations

What do you think?

Duty to report personal data – a *rough* guide

Key issues: sensitivity of data and how data is stored



Three regulative committees/bodies



1. REC – Human participants
 - Persons involved in medical and health research
2. NSD (Sikt) – (Data protection services for research in general)
 - Personal data in general
3. Norwegian food safety authorities - Animal research
 - Animals subjected to research



Level 3: The social responsibility of research

- What kind of research *should* we be doing? How does our research fit in the world?
- Cf. RRI (Responsible research and innovation), Horizon 2020.
- Cf. NTNU's vision: «Knowledge for a better world»

Broad concept of research ethics → Responsible Research and Innovation: RRI



- Public/stakeholder engagement
 - responsible researchers and innovators
- Open access
 - publication, reviewing, data sharing
- Gender and identity
 - gender balance in research teams, in decision making and among research subjects of the project
 - Integrating the gender dimension in research and innovation (R&I) content
- Ethics
 - research ethics, environmental ethics, social responsibility
- Science education
 - sustainable and cross-cutting interaction between the relevant actors in the field
 - education system, universities and other higher education establishments, research and innovation funding and performing organizations, civil society organizations and NGO's, industry, policy-makers, professors, teachers, students and pupils, Science museums and science centres.

Example: Petroleum research

- Challenging the social responsibility of individual technology researchers as well as Norwegian universities.
- Should NTNU be involved in petroleum research, or is this in conflict with the vision «Knowledge for a better world»?
- Case treated by NENT in 2014.

Norwegian universities consider the ethics of oil and gas research

If Norway, one of the most oil-dependent countries in the world, can question petroleum research, will others follow?



theguardian

Proposal for a scientific oath



I acknowledge that I am a part of an international community of researchers. I will practise my activities in line with the recognised standards for good research practice. I shall conduct my research in an honest and truthful way and show ***respect for humans, animals, and nature***. I shall use my knowledge and skills to the best of my judgement ***for the good of humanity and for sustainable development***. I shall not allow interests based on ideology, religion, ethnicity, prejudice, or material advantages to overshadow my ethical responsibility as a researcher.

The ethics of asymmetrical relationships

- Special challenges of the supervisor-candidate relationship.
- What are the role responsibilities of being a supervisor?

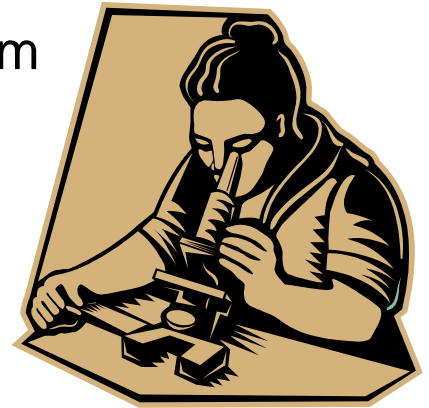


Case: Supervisors (mis)use of PhD's data

At NTNU, a PhD candidate complained that his supervisor published results before the candidate (who had produced the results) had completed his PhD. As the supervisor had published the results, which were based on the candidate's wealth of interesting data from the lab, there was nothing left for the candidate to publish.

Questions:

- Does a supervisor have the right to use the results produced by the PhD candidate, and if so, when?
- Is it always possible to explicate the boundaries between supervision and scientific contribution?



Example: Co-authorship

What does it take to qualify as co-author of a scientific article according to the “Vancouver convention”?

ALL authors should

1. Give a substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
2. Draft the work or revise it critically for important intellectual content; AND
3. Give a final approval of the version to be published; AND
4. Agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved; be able to identify which co-authors are responsible for specific other parts of the work; confidence in the integrity of the contributions of their co-authors

<http://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf>

- *Recognizable?*

The Blueprint?

(From the code of ethics for teaching and supervisory relationships at NTNU)



Academic integrity

If the supervisor wants to use *the candidate's data material or research findings* in his or her own publications or research, the supervisor must obtain **permission from the candidate** and follow the rules of the academic field for citing sources and attributing credit. In research projects with commercial potential, the supervisor must ensure that the ownership of ideas by the candidate and the supervisor is clarified from the start.

The supervisor must not receive any fees for supervision beyond what has been agreed with the department.

Supervision is normally included in the employee's required duties. The supervisor should consider the consequences of receiving *gifts or other services in return* from the candidate.

- **Comments?**



<https://www.wsj.com/articles/allegations-of-groping-lewd-comments-and-rape-academias-metoo-moment-1515672001>

U.S. | EDUCATION

Allegations of Groping, Lewd Comments and Rape: Academia's #MeToo Moment

Students and faculty from universities in the U.S., Europe and beyond describe a wide range of alleged sexual harassment in an anonymous, crowdsourced spreadsheet

Starter #metoo for akademia

#metoo. Ansatte ved NTNU har satt i gang et opprop, ikke bare mot seksuell trakassering, men mot maktmisbruket og urettferdighetsfølelsen de mener maktforhold i akademia kan medføre.

<https://khrono.no/opprop-meetooakademia-ntnu/starter-metoo-for-akademia/201651>

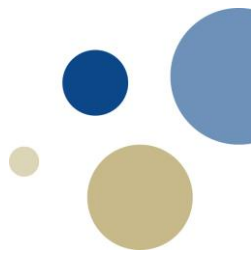
Case: Unwanted attention from supervisor

#metooacademia

- A female master student is on several occasions sexually harassed by her supervisor, a prominent professor within the discipline. She discusses the problem with co-students, but never considers to blow the whistle on the professor.
 - *One is so vulnerable. He could for example prevent me from getting a PhD scholarship at a later stage.*
- Do you think she deals with the situation in the proper way? If not, what should she have done?
- NTNU's [Speak up! button](#)



What is sexual harassment?



- NTNU's definition:

Sexual harassment is often defined as **unwelcome sexual attention that is perceived as offensive and objectionable for the person affected**. It is common to distinguish between physical, verbal and non-verbal harassment.

- Legal definition:

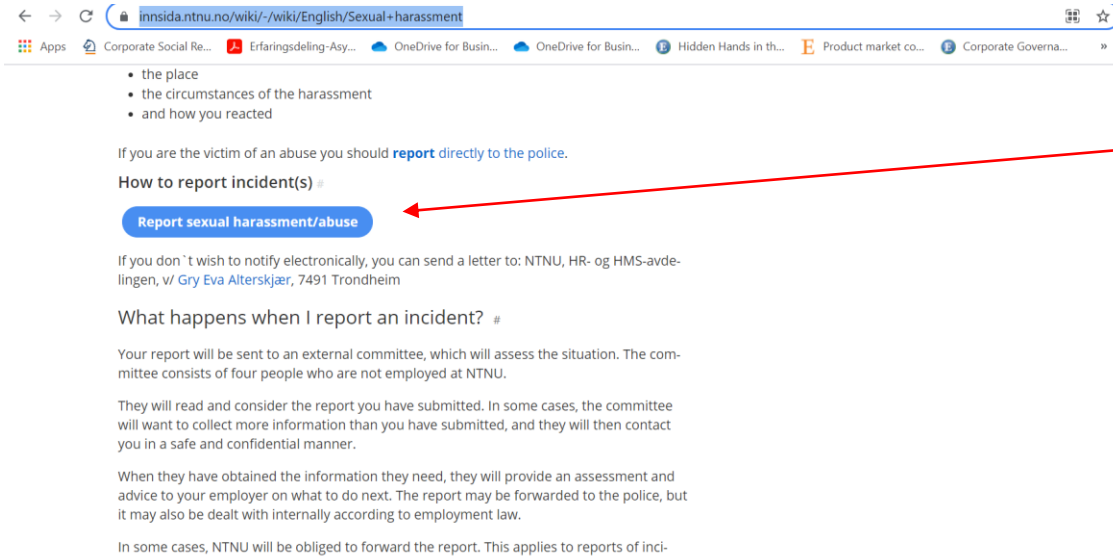
Sexual harassment» means any form of **unwanted sexual attention that has the purpose or effect of being offensive**, frightening, hostile, degrading, humiliating or troublesome.” (Equality and anti-discrimination act - likestillings- og diskrimineringsloven)

Reasons to care specifically in the world of research and academia



- A culture of not talking about it or minimizing it
- Uneven power structures
 - Between supervisor and student/PhD-candidate
 - Between junior and senior researchers
 - Between ‘big shots’ in the subject and the rest
- Fear of being excluded from research projects, publications, labs, not get references...
- Gender stereotypes? E.g., women having to prove themselves and not appear as victims or hysterical. Victim blaming (“asking for it”), or ‘It’s impossible for women to harass men!’

Procedures at NTNU



← → ↻ innsida.ntnu.no/wiki/-/wiki/English/Sexual+harassment 📄 ☆

Apps Corporate Social Re... Erfaringsdeling-Asy... OneDrive for Busin... OneDrive for Busin... Hidden Hands in th... Product market co... Corporate Govern...

- the place
- the circumstances of the harassment
- and how you reacted

If you are the victim of an abuse you should **report** directly to the police.

How to report incident(s) #

[Report sexual harassment/abuse](#)

If you don't wish to notify electronically, you can send a letter to: NTNU, HR- og HMS-avdelingen, w/ Gry Eva Alterskjær, 7491 Trondheim

What happens when I report an incident? #

Your report will be sent to an external committee, which will assess the situation. The committee consists of four people who are not employed at NTNU.

They will read and consider the report you have submitted. In some cases, the committee will want to collect more information than you have submitted, and they will then contact you in a safe and confidential manner.

When they have obtained the information they need, they will provide an assessment and advice to your employer on what to do next. The report may be forwarded to the police, but it may also be dealt with internally according to employment law.

In some cases, NTNU will be obliged to forward the report. This applies to reports of inci-

Click here to report. The report is sent automatically to an external Committee. They may contact you for more information. The accused person(s) also get a chance to explain their side.

By March 2021, the committee had treated a total of 8 cases.
<https://khrono.no/atte-saker-i-ntnu-si-eiga-metoo-nemnd/559603>

Web resource 1: The ethics portal at NTNU



<https://www.ntnu.edu/ethics-portal>

1. Transparency and confidentiality
2. Freedom of expression and loyalty
3. Acceptable and unacceptable relations
4. Handling conflicts of interest
5. Blowing the whistle on dishonesty and research fraud
6. The research process: Contracts and reporting system
7. Relationship between supervisor and PhD candidate / student
8. Agreements on storage, use, and publication of data
9. Challenges of interdisciplinary projects
10. International relations
11. #Me Too Academia

Resources, guidelines, contact NTNU

- [NTNU – Ethics portal](#)
- [NTNU – website for research ethics](#)
- [NTNU – research ethical committee](#)
- [Speak up! Button](#)
- [e-learning course in research ethics for PhD-candidates](#)

National and international resources

- [Research ethics law](#)
- [General guidelines for research ethics - NESH/NEM/NENT](#)
- [Fbib –electronic library, short articles](#)
- International guidelines
 - [Helsinki declaration](#)
 - [Vancouver guidelines](#)



Web resource 2: **National research ethics committees** **and The research ethics library**

[The National Committee for Medical and Health Research Ethics \(NEM\)](#)

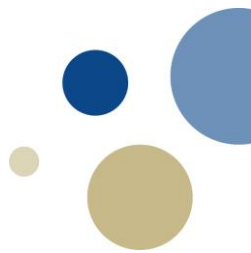
[The National Committee for Research Ethics in Science and Technology \(NENT\)](#)

[The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities \(NESH\)](#)

[The National Commission for the Investigation of Research Misconduct \(GRU\)](#)

[The National Committee for Research Ethics on Human Remains \(SKJ\)](#)

DORA declaration: San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment



- the need to eliminate the use of journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, in funding, appointment, and promotion considerations.
- the need to assess research on its own merits rather than on basis of the journal in which the research is published, and
- the need to capitalize on the opportunities provided by online publication (such as relaxing unnecessary limits on the number of words, figures, and references in articles, and exploring new indicators of significance and impact)