Responsible conduct or research (RCR)
Whose responsibility?

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What is TENK?
Tutkimuseettinen neuvottelukunta
Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity

Background:

- Statute about TENK in 1991 (Nov 15. 1991)
- First Advisory Board started work on Feb 1, 1992 as a national-level body with a three-year mandate, ten members.
- Appointed by the Ministry of Education on the basis of proposals from the Finnish research community (universities, research institutes, funding agencies, science academies...)
- Guidelines on Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland
- Hyvä tieteellinen käytäntö ja sen loukkausepäilyjen käsitteleminen Suomessa
- Documents available at WWW.TENK.FI

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TENK and its main responsibilities

- **To promote** the responsible conduct of research and to prevent misconduct
- To promote discussion and dissemination on research integrity (rehtiys)
- To monitor and take part in international developments in research integrity and responsible conduct of research
- Make proposals and issue statements to governmental authorities on issues related to the RCR
The mandate of TENK

- Issues related to research integrity in all disciplines
- Main target group:
  - doctoral level, post-doctoral level researchers
  - in certain cases MA-level theses
- Research integrity at BA/MA level studies is handled through university level procedures

Not in the scope of TENK’s activities:
- Norm-based research ethics norms are governed by other national-level boards, such as The National Advisory Board on Social Welfare and Health Care Ethics, ETENE, The National Committee on Medical Research Ethics, etc.
- Alleged violations of the law, such as copyright law or patent law or slander
The leading principles behind TENK

Self-regulation does not work if it is not monitored

- Self-regulation of science and research
- A non-legalistic approach
- A decentralized model
- Training in RCR
- TENK’s primary mission can be compared to that of dentists – prevent cavities from appearing
- TENK is an appeals court without being a court
Commitments

- All public research institutions in Finland have committed themselves to following the guidelines (a university-level commitment) – a kind of collective oath
- The universities conduct the investigations themselves following the procedures described in the guidelines
- Universities are obliged to report to TENK about all investigations undertaken by them
The investigation procedure

- The investigation procedure for alleged violations of the responsible conduct of research involves three steps:
  - A written notification
  - A preliminary inquiry and if necessary
  - The investigation proper
    - Committee with at least two external experts
The aim of the RCR guidelines
HTK-ohjeen tavoitteet

- Describe what characterizes
  - Responsible conduct of research
  - Violations against responsible conduct of research
- How to handle alleged violations against responsible conduct of research
  - An institutional responsibility (not a department- or faculty-level issue)
Responsible Conduct of Research
Principles to be followed by the researcher:

- Adhering to principles endorsed by the research community (integrity, meticulousness, accurateness)
- Applying sound and ethically sustainable methods
- Respecting the work of other researchers and give them credit for their achievements
- Complying with the established standards of the research process (planning, conducting, reporting, recording)
- Acquiring the necessary research permits
- Agreeing on the rights and responsibilities of all researchers in the team or project
- Disclosing sources of financing, conflicts of interest and other commitments
- Refraining from all evaluation and decision-making if there is reason to suspect a conflict of interest
- Adhering to good personnel and financial administration practices at institutional level
- See pp 30-31 in the guidelines
Violation against responsible conduct of research - categories

A continuum of academic doping:
- Research misconduct
- Disregard for the responsible conduct of research
- Other irresponsible and unacceptable practices
- What is at stake? – Trust in science and scholarship
Definitions of misconduct

- Misconduct
  - Fabrication
  - Falsification
  - Plagiarism
  - Misappropriation (ideas, plans, observations, data)

- In international guidelines, misconduct is usually divided into three categories: fabrication, falsification and plagiarism, which is also referred to as the FFP categorisation.
Disregard for the responsible conduct of research manifests itself as gross negligence and carelessness during the research process, e.g.

- denigrating the role of other researchers in publications, such as neglecting to mention them, and referring to earlier research results inadequately or inappropriately;
- reporting research results and methods in a careless manner, resulting in misleading claims;
- publishing the same research results multiple times without a reference to the original source (includes translations). Also known as self-plagiarism

- Misleading the research community in other ways
Other irresponsible and unacceptable practices

- manipulating authorship, for example, by including in the list of authors persons who have not participated in the research, or by taking credit for work produced by “ghost authors”
- exaggerating one’s own scientific and scholarly achievements, for example, in a CV or its translation, in a list of publications, or on one’s homepage
- expanding the bibliography of a study to artificially increase the number of citations
- delaying the work of another researcher, for example, through refereed peer reviewing
- maliciously accusing a researcher of RCR violations
- hampering inappropriately the work of another researcher
- misleading the general public by publicly presenting deceptive or distorted information concerning one’s own research results or the scientific importance or applicability of those results

In their most serious forms, these practices may meet the criteria of an RCR violation mentioned above.
The most common types of allegations of violations against the RCR handled by TENK

- Misconduct
  - Plagiarism
- Disregard for the RCR
  - Authorship issues
    - The most common type and on the increase
All ethical issues in the academia are not research integrity issues

- Scholarly disagreements or bad science or scholarship
- Transparency of decision-making structures at universities
  - Quality control of degrees granted
- Funding criteria and assessing performance
- Employment issues
  - Harassment and bullying cases
  - Equal opportunities legislation
- Misappropriation of funds
Principles related to the investigation procedures

- The fairness and the impartiality of the process
- The hearing of all involved parties
- The competence and expediency of the process
- Careful documentation and the parties' right to information.

- **The person responsible for the making the decision is the rector of the university or the director of the research organization.** The decision making cannot be delegated to another person.

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Additional TENK guidelines and documents 1

- **Ethical review in human sciences**
  - A set of recommendations on the ethical principles to be followed in research in the humanities and social and behavioural sciences

- **Ethical principles**
  - The ethical principles applying to research belonging to the humanities and social and behavioural science
    - **The research subjects**
      - right of self-determination
      - prevention of harm
      - privacy and data protection
Template for researcher’s curriculum vitae
- A curriculum vitae (CV) presents an overview of an individual's studies and professional career as well as of his or her academic merits and other achievements. When appended to an application, it becomes a public document and the information presented in it must therefore be verifiable when necessary.
- Model CV for researchers aims to provide guidelines for drafting an appropriate CV from the perspective of research ethics in a way that presents an individual's merits as comprehensively, truthfully and as comparably as possible.

Tutkimuseettisiä näkökohtia väitöskirjan ohjaus- ja tarkastusprosessiin. Tutkimuseettisen neuvottelukunnan ja Suomen yliopistot UNIFI ry:n suosituksia yliopistoille -
Description of the duties, rights, responsibilities of the different actors involved in the doctoral dissertation process (English version will be available early next year)
Does self-regulation work in the Finnish context?

- YES
- YES BUT
- NO
YES

- at institutional level
  - if brought to the attention of the rector/head of institution
  - no need for cover-ups
  - research integrity part of quality assurance
- the main funding agencies' signatories are represented on the Board
- the academic community fairly homogeneous in a small country with a long tradition of handling alleged misconduct cases
YES BUT

- mistakes happen
  - people who should know the procedure don’t (both senior and junior)
    - dean wanted to deal with allegations internally, rector did not know about the case. Process amended afterwards. Outcome the same

- supervisors spread bad practices
  - inherited bad practices
  - competition induced new practices (other irresponsible and unacceptable practices)

- impact factor and citation index orientation particularly in biosciences
NO

- intentional oversight of grey area unacceptable practices
  - local conventions
  - in project proposals
  - in the attribution of authorship
- hearsay evidence exists
  - of “plagiaristic” practices in the literature reviews of dissertations
  - of additional authors to articles in funding applications (to improve the standing of project members)
  - ghost writing
- **whistle-blower protection**
  - not all cases are reported, rumours abound
- collegial practices and cover ups (cf. more stringent regulations in the new guidelines)
Measures taken - Ethics advisers at research-performing institutions

- A proposal to the Ministry of Education by TENK
  - Supported by the Ministry
  - Letter to universities in November 2016
- To give “low-key” advice to researchers with research integrity issues
- Ethics advisers would give confidential advice to researchers and promote research integrity at the institution. They would not be part of any official investigation
Hot topics in RI

- Authorship issues
- Whistleblower protection
- The rights of junior researchers in projects
- The rights and responsibilities of PIs
- Rights to data and reuse of data
- Project-internal agreements about right to authorship and access to data after the project
What about sanctions?

- Philosophy based on self-regulation

- Sanctions depend on the **status** of the offender

  - Sanctions issued by the university or research organization not by TENK

  - Universities autonomous

  - The most severe punishment is often the loss of reputation and media attention
Who is responsible for the RCR?

- Individual responsibility
- Institutional responsibility
- Political responsibility
Individual researchers and research groups

- The ultimate responsibility lies with the individual researchers and research groups
  - They bear the responsibility for their research practices and the results they publish.
  - The research community must, however, be able to trust that the research has in the first place been conducted honestly and according to commonly accepted practices.
  - Dishonest research neither promotes nor advances science and scholarship.
Universities and research institutes are responsible for the quality control of the research conducted under their umbrella.

They need to make sure that the incentives they use to promote research are transparent and fair both in the actual research practices and in research administration.

The responsibilities of senior researchers
Political responsibility

- Political decision makers, in particular bodies making science-political decisions about the criteria used for research funding or for funding formulas.
- At the national level, it is often the ministries of education and research or the national funding organizations that assume this role.
- In Europe, it is the EU that directs European research policies and thus also individual research efforts.
Freedom of science and scholarship?

- The European model of promoting research integrity is firmly rooted in self-regulation— and this aspect of the freedom of science is worth defending and fighting for.
- This means that we need to make sure that self-regulation is both practiced and monitored throughout Europe.
Funding criteria and assessing performance

- An ethical issue for political decision-makers at national and international (EU) levels

- Today, the indicators mostly quantity-based
  - Directly
  - Indirectly when quantitative criteria are disguised as quality criteria

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Revised European Code of Conduct

- New guidelines will be ready by the end of January 2017
- A framework document
What is the purpose of the updated European guidelines for responsible conduct of research (RCR)?

- **Apply to all disciplines** (the roles of professional norm-based regulations are different)
- Are based on **self-regulation** and the idea that science corrects
- Describe what responsible conduct of research is
- **Describe types of misconduct**, disregard for RCR and other unacceptable and irresponsible practices
- **Provide a general framework for national guidelines** (institutional guidelines)
- Will be the reference document for future Horizon 2020 calls