



**No. 7 412 / 28.05.2020**

**DECISION**  
**on the Academic Ethics Oversight Mechanisms**

Following an electronic vote cast on 27 May 2021, on the recommendation of the UBB Ethics Committee and the UBB Scientific Council, the Administrative Council of Babeş-Bolyai University

**DECIDES:**

The *Academic Ethics Oversight Mechanisms* have been approved in the form attached to this decision.

**RECTOR,**  
**Professor Daniel DAVID, PhD**



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## Addendum to Administrative Council Decision No. 7 412 / 28.05.2020

# Academic Ethics Oversight Mechanisms

Proposed by the UBB Ethics Committee and UBB Scientific Council

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### Purpose

Research organisations are responsible for overseeing research ethics to ensure proper conduct, adherence to funding contract terms, and ensuring public confidence in the organisation. The responsibility also falls on the organisations participating in collaborative research (including non-academic and international collaborators) as well as invited students and researchers.

Regular oversight of research ethics as part of research governance procedures is critical for demonstrating the independence and credibility of conducted research, as well as the consistency of the decision-making process. Monitoring will come in the form of an annual (public) report on conformity to ongoing oversight principles, as well as a thorough audit for at least one type of annual research project in various fields.

### Academic and scientific research ethics

In compliance with Law 1/2011, the UBB [Code of Ethics](#) governs aspects of scientific research ethics and integrity. This document outlines the methods for monitoring compliance with the provisions of the code as it is implemented.

According to article 43 of the UBB [Code of Ethics](#), the **UBB Ethics Committee** oversees the enforcement of the code's provisions. In this respect, the Committee works closely with the **UBB Scientific Council**, which issues an ethics seal of approval for research projects.

### Monitoring academic ethics

Monitoring ethics in research is presently an uneven, discontinuous instrument that is heavily reliant on the sense of morality of the researchers conducting the research. Occasionally, funders of research programmes may contribute to a more adequate supervision of this process. In this regard, UBB understands the importance of ongoing monitoring of research projects, especially those involving humans or animals.

It is well established that in general, University Research Ethics Committees review proposed research in terms of research ethics, which involves possible conflicts of interest among researchers and compliance with national and international regulations designed to protect human subjects in the project proposal. The duty to protect human research subjects does not end with the proposal's initial revision or approval. In practice however continuous monitoring is minimal or even non-existent (after the initial assessment process).<sup>1</sup>

In this regard, UBB seeks to establish frameworks for continuous and active monitoring of research ethics, based on the key objectives of the UBB Code of Ethics.

## Academic Ethics Oversight Mechanisms

The oversight mechanisms matched to the standards of university ethics provided in the UBB [Code of Ethics](#) are detailed below: academic freedom, competence and professionalism, integrity, intellectual honesty, collegiality, commitment, justice and fairness, non-discrimination and equal opportunity, accountability.

### Academic and research freedom

According to the UBB Code of Ethics, academic freedom involves the right of every member of the university community to freely share their scientific and professional views, while also promoting critical thought, intellectual partnership and cooperation, regardless of political or religious beliefs. Academic freedom also entails consideration for the academic freedom of others.

Political propaganda in the university, religious proselytism, propagation of radical, discriminatory, or xenophobic doctrines, defamation of the university, and personal attacks are some examples of behaviour that cannot be deemed in compliance with the concept of equality, according to the [Code of Ethics](#).

Compliance with these rules is monitored by: (1) detailed complaints submitted to the Ethics Committee and investigated in compliance with the protocol for reviewing ethical issues, or (2) notifications in the abstract of the presence of institutional problems, which would be examined as general improper practices (not involving persons), with a report on the systemic deficiencies discovered. For both versions, the Ethics Committee can conduct its own documented inquiries, interview members of the UBB's teaching or research staff, and invite individuals to express or record their opinions in writing.

Furthermore, issues of research ethics can arise within the UBB Scientific Council, leading to a reconsideration of the ethics seal of approval granted at the outset of the project.

### Competence and professionalism

In accordance with Art. 7-13, UBB promotes professionalism as a core ethical principle in its Code of Ethics, stating that it respects and rewards scientific, technical, pedagogical, managerial, and administrative competence, collegial cohesion, and competitive loyalty.

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<sup>1</sup> Ramseyer Apau Bediako and Chris Kaposy, How research ethics boards should monitor clinical research Ramseyer, ACCOUNTABILITY IN RESEARCH, 2020, VOL. 27, NO. 1, 49–56

Teachers must perform the discipline they teach at a high scientific level and promote teaching practices in accordance with ethical norms; teaching must be planned with a focus on students, encouraging free and open dialogue.

In terms of research, competence entails the researcher's duty to ensure that their activity is relevant to society and does not repeat previous research, whereas any scientific disputes or controversies between University teachers must not have an impact on students' training and performance. If there are disputes or scientific controversies in the national and international academic community, opposing viewpoints will be stated, and the selection of teaching or research staff will be discussed.

Art. 13 also provides for possible breaches of the principle of competence and professionalism: a) entrusting courses, seminars or laboratory projects to people who are not adequately trained; b) devoting an important part of the time allocated to the course or seminar to discussions unrelated to its subject; c) intentionally misinterpreting the results of a research to substantiate a theory that the person supports; d) negative attitude towards colleagues and their achievements in their own teaching activities; e) requiring students to adopt the exclusive viewpoint of the teacher or to refuse to debate and discuss, based on arguments, other points of view expressed on the same topic; f) the partial coverage by a teacher of a fundamental course, respectively addressing only the issues that interest them personally; g) choosing assessment methods which are inconsistent with the objectives of the course; h) not complying with the obligations stipulated in Articles 8-12.

Compliance with these rules is monitored by: (1) detailed complaints submitted to the Ethics Committee and investigated in compliance with the protocol for reviewing ethical issues, or (2) notifications in the abstract of the presence of institutional problems, which would be examined as general non-ethical conduct (not involving persons), with a report on the systemic deficiencies discovered. For both versions, the Ethics Committee can conduct its own documented inquiries, interview members of the UBB's teaching or research staff, and invite individuals to express or record their opinions in writing.

Furthermore, issues of research ethics can arise within the UBB Scientific Council, leading to a reconsideration of the ethics seal of approval granted at the outset of the project, based on a risk assessment.

### Integrity

The UBB [Code of Ethics](#) contains provisions for dealing with conflicts of interest in Art. 14-20, 24-25. A conflict of interest exists when the personal interest of a member of the academic community (faculty member, student, member of the administrative staff) will interfere, or has the appearance of interfering, with the obligations deriving from their position, or are likely to affect the independence and impartiality required for the fulfilment of these obligations. The Code governs conflicts of interest in the context of teacher-student relationships and the holding of managerial positions, as well as at the administrative level.

Integrity in **scientific research** (art. 21-22) entails accurate attribution of writers and contributors to research findings, avoidance of plagiarism, self-plagiarism, accurate and complete citation of sources, correct management of research projects, compliance with the research ethics on human or animal subjects, and biological and ecological ethics. Babeş-Bolyai University strongly supports intellectual integrity (art. 26-31), which is defined by an impartial attitude of consideration for intellectual property rights and copyright, as well as proper evaluation of teachers, students, and all other employees.

The violations of ethics in the field of science are defined in Art. 22 of the UBB [Code of Ethics](#), and copyright infringement is described in Art. 29.

The Ethics Committee, in cooperation with experts appointed by the Scientific Council, undertakes monitoring on an ad hoc basis of the ethics of research projects financed by national or international funding, depending on the number of projects. An audit will be conducted on at least one type of research project each year, selected at random from various fields. Principal investigators and student supervisors should be mindful that, for this audit, they must keep records of ethical procedures. The audit may be conducted on the documentation (consent, other special licenses and related documents, information on data storage and sharing, as well as a report from the principal investigator on changes and relevant outlines), but it can also include visits to laboratories or other testing facilities.

Lastly, in the **administrative activity** (art. 23 of the UBB [Code of Ethics](#)), integrity implies the suitable selection of employees, the running of the university administration in accordance with ethical standards, and the committed cooperation with the university management as well as the research, didactic, and student body.

Compliance with these rules is monitored in the same way as it is in the case of the above violations: (1) specific complaints submitted to the Ethics Committee and reviewed in accordance with the procedure for investigating ethical concerns, or (2) summary complaints of the existence of institutional problems, which will be investigated as *general unethical practices* (not affecting persons), with a report on the systemic deficiencies observed. For both versions, the Ethics Committee can conduct its own documented inquiries, interview members of the UBB's teaching or research staff, and invite individuals to express or record their opinions in writing. Furthermore, research ethics issues can arise within the Scientific Council, leading to a reconsideration of the ethics seal of approval issued at the outset of the project.

### Collegiality and loyalty, justice and fairness

Art. 32 – 33 of the UBB [Code of Ethics](#) applies to members of the university academic community in a spirit of shared respect, art. 35–36 to the concept of loyalty – acting in the interest of the University and serving its mission, and art. 38-40, to justice and equity, non-discrimination, and equal opportunity.

Discrimination, gender, racial, or other forms of harassment, physical or psychological aggression, offensive language, or authority abuse directed at a member of the academic community, regardless of rank or role within the University (student, academic, member of the University managerial board, member of the administrative staff) are violations of the collegiality principle and are sanctioned as provided by the Code of Ethics. Violations of loyalty are defined as unjustified actions that cause patrimonial or reputation harm, as well as a loss of prestige for the University.

In the case of these laws, the Ethics Committee monitors their compliance by addressing individual complaints, but also by self-notification in the case of systemic breaches, which are investigated separately in accordance with legal obligations.

### Monitoring tools

The following tools for reviewing compliance with these rules will outline the monitoring measures proposed for each of the components of university ethics regulated in the UBB [Code of Ethics](#):

- a) Reports submitted to the Ethics Committee will be reviewed in accordance with the protocol for addressing ethical disputes, which will be outlined in the Ethics Committee's annual report.
- b) Informal allegations in the abstract against the existence of systemic problems, which would be investigated as *general non-ethical practices* (not affecting persons), with a report on the systemic shortcomings found which will be outlined in the Ethics Committee's annual report;
- c) The University Ombudsman, a factor of mediation and amicable resolution of academic disputes based on a confidential, impartial, informal, and unbiased process, will operate within the Ethics Committee. The ombudsman will also be responsible for overseeing the application of ethical behaviour rules in research and education. The University Ombudsman may be able to bring cases to the Ethics Committee's attention where alternative conflict resolution approaches have failed, may make recommendations to the Committee on their own initiative, and may recommend individual case studies to be presented and disseminated within the academic community.
- d) The Ethics Committee's annual report will provide recommendations resulting from the activity of addressing complaints, which are indicators of risks or of good practices for the university academic community, as applicable.
- e) The Ethics Committee will provide recommendations that illustrate how to address specific circumstances and guidelines for avoiding ethical breaches in research.
- f) The Scientific Council will be responsible for evaluating the ethical implications of research in order to grant research proposals the ethical seal of approval. The Scientific Council can reassess the seal of approval granted and withdraw it with effect for the future following a complaint submitted to the Ethics Committee or on its own initiative based on new evidence.
- g) The Ethics Committee, in cooperation with experts appointed by the Scientific Council, undertakes monitoring on an ad hoc basis assessing the compliance with the ethics principles within research projects financed by national or international funding, depending on the number of projects. An audit will be conducted on at least one research project each year, selected at random. The audit or report, which will be prepared independently by the Ethics Committee, cannot be influenced by UBB's management. Principal investigators and student supervisors should be mindful that, for this audit, they must keep records of ethical procedures. The audit may be conducted on the documentation (consent, other special licenses and related documents, information on data storage and sharing, as well as a report from the principal investigator on changes and relevant outlines), but it can also include visits to laboratories or other testing facilities.