

Action Plan for Research Ethics

A High Standard of Research Ethics as the Ethos of the University of Tokyo

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The University of Tokyo

Forward

This action plan highlights actions that should be adopted by the University in order to build an environment where research ethics is observed based on “The Charter of The University of Tokyo” and “Code of Conduct for Research Activities”.

If the meaning of “research ethics” is taken in a broad sense, it can be taken that in addition to preventing fraudulent activities, diverse issues such as ethics relating to research involving humans as well as experimenting on animal, problems with misuse of research funds and conflict of interests will also be addressed. However, the primary objective of this action plan is the prevention of misconducts, represented by fabrication, manipulation and plagiarism in research, as well as the promotion of responsible research, and therefore this action plan points out what actions should be adopted to achieve this.

The plan for the future is to implement, short-term initiatives that can be achieved in sequence, as well as to continuously examine mid-term initiatives which should be implemented. On the other hand, whenever initiatives are implemented careful attention should be made. At the same time, those initiative should be effective with reflecting relevant guidelines as well as trends in discussion within the government and in coordination with the government as well as research communities.

I. Developing Awareness of Research Ethics

1. Enhancing education and research

- Every student should receive education on research ethics

Objective

Every Faculty and Graduate School of the University should educate students in research ethics relevant to the level of students at junior and senior divisions of undergraduate study and at the graduate levels

Examples of typical approaches

- Introduction to the fundamentals of research ethics at the time of enrollment through guidance.
- Educate students on research ethics, including the skills required to be researchers in the future as well as the responsibilities of being an author of a thesis.
- Actively introduce effective methods of teaching research ethics such as discussion groups and case studies.
- Develop a system to teach research ethics that takes into account different research ethics education and ethics awareness of the various country of origins of the students.
- Implement research ethics education that takes in the peculiarities of the different fields of specialization in the senior division of undergraduate education and graduate schools.

- Training in research ethics worthy of an independent researcher.

Objective

Ongoing training programs on research ethics suitable for each carrier as an independent researcher or leader which begins from their appointments should be implemented.

Example of typical approaches

- Disseminate the relevant rules and regulations through training at the time of appointment.
- Implementation of training on research ethics through active use of e-learning and other sources (including consideration of mandatory training on research ethics on the obtaining of research funds by researchers).
- Disseminate research ethics for specific fields of research through systems such as “faculty development”.

2. Enhancing awareness

Objective

Improve the education to enhance students’ and researchers’ understanding of research ethics, so that research activities will be conducted daily with a high standard of research ethics and responsibility.

Example of typical approaches

- Disseminate the Code of Conduct for Research Activities and the related hotline using various tools in addition to leaflets and website.
- Establish a “Research Ethics Week” and hold lectures or seminars to improve the understanding of research ethics.

II. Enhancing the Organization and Environment

1. Enhance the System for Responsible Research Activities

Aim

Establish the “Office for Promoting Research Ethics” in the University Headquarters and enhance the system of promoting research ethics in each department so that responsible research activity can be carried out.

Example of typical approaches

- Establish the “Office for Promoting Research Ethics” in the University Headquarters to promote an environment where research ethics are observed.
- Allocate staff in charge of education and training on research ethics and advancing the maintenance of the system in each department.

- Conduct periodic meeting by the executive vice president and members in charge of promoting research ethics.
- Strengthen the university-wide system on compliance and collaboration between offices in charge.

2. Enhance the Environment for Responsible Research Activities

Aim

Ensure an environment where research is carried out responsibly by establishing rules on storing research data as well as ensuring smooth communication between researchers.

Example of typical approaches

- Promote the establishing of rules regarding storing, checking, and disclosure of research data, taking into consideration the characteristics of each department and academic field.
- Improve the system of inspection at the final thesis examination by, for example, using software to detect plagiarism.
- Establish a help desk for writing and publication of academic articles and provide a system of FAQs.
- Look into initiatives that would enhance communication between students and researchers.

III. Handling cases of misconduct

1. Improving methods of investigation

Aim

Provide a system that investigate cases of misconduct in research promptly and thoroughly and promotes the improving of rules.

Example of typical approaches

- Ensure investigation is carried out more flexibly by improving the system.
- Make the hotline easier to use and ensure that those reporting incidents are protected thoroughly.
- Make practical use of external experts during investigations and ensure that any conflict of interests are stringently eliminated.
- Disseminate how occurrence of misconduct should be handled through the use of hotlines and so on.

2. Learning from the results of investigations

Aim

Rigorous measures should be taken towards cases of misconduct and the lessons learnt from these cases should be taken to prevent occurrences of similar cases.

Example of typical approaches

- Ensure that appropriate measures are taken promptly and rigorously towards researchers who have performed misconducts and papers known to have involved misconducts.
- Establish and make openly available a database of cases of misconduct which includes the methods of investigation and measures taken.

IV. Independent initiatives by each department and follow-up

1. Enhance measures according to the situation at each department

Aim

Following this action plan, every department should enhance their education and training on research ethics taking in the characteristic requirements of their academic field and look at improving their system.

Example of typical approaches at each department

- Improve the system for implementation and research environment
 - System of responsibility for promoting initiatives according to the action plan
 - System for management and preservation of research data
 - Establishing guidelines in each department
- Train and instruct researchers
- Educate students

2. Follow-up and improvement

Aim

The status of the initiatives of each department should be regularly clarified and further improvement of education on research ethics and the system should be undertaken.

Example of typical approaches at each department

- Regular updates on the status of the initiatives from each department should be obligatory with a follow up by the Office for Promoting Research Ethics.
- Review the action plan based on the status of implementation at each department.
- Information on the “best practices” and trend from outside the university should be shared.