

# **Rules of Procedure of the Ethics Committee of the University of Akureyri**

At the University of Akureyri, an Ethics Committee operates in accordance with the Higher Education Act No. 63/2006.

## **1. The role of the Ethics Committee**

1.1. The Ethics Committee's tasks include:

- Discussion of alleged violations of the University's Code of Ethics.
- Presentation of the Code of Ethics within the University, e.g., by drawing the attention of Heads of Faculty and Deans of Schools to the University's Code of Ethics at the beginning of each school year and encouraging them to pass the information on to supervisory teachers.
- Advice on interpretation and handling of the Code of Ethics and coordination of procedures within the University's various operating units.
- Advice to the Central Administration on interpretation of the Code of Ethics.

1.2. This advisory role also entails:

- Directing issues to the appropriate course of action according to their nature.
- Advising administrators of operating units on matters which are related to the Code of Ethics but are the responsibility of the administrator in question. However, the procedure and final outcome of individual cases shall be the responsibility of the administrator in question.

1.3. The Ethics Committee assesses whether an issue revolves primarily around the Code of Ethics. If the issue is subject to other regulations, the committee rejects the issue and provides instruction regarding the appropriate course of action within the University.

1.4. If the Ethics Committee takes a matter for substantive consideration, the committee gives an opinion on whether the Code of Ethics has been violated. In those instances, the committee works according to the following rules.

1.5. The Ethics Committee is an administrative committee and works according to the procedural rules of administrative law. The following rules for the handling of cases shall be aimed at ensuring a thorough and factual discussion of each case.

1.6. The Ethics Committee treats case documents and its opinions as confidential. In exceptional cases, the Ethics Committee can also decide that those presenting a case enjoy anonymity, as long as it is shown that the handling of the case may otherwise harm them.

## **2. Arrangement of the committee**

2.1. The chairperson of the Ethics Committee is appointed by the University Council in accordance with the nomination of the Rector. The Association of University Teachers in Akureyri and representatives of the Association of Professors, who work at the University of Akureyri, each appoint one committee member. When the Ethics Committee receives a case that calls for expert knowledge, it can request that the Rector appoints two additional representatives to discuss the case. On behalf of the University Council, the Rector appoints these two representatives after receiving nominations from the chairperson of the committee. In cases concerning students, two representatives appointed by the executive board of the Union of Students at the University of Akureyri, shall be summoned.

2.2. The gender ratio in the committee shall always be as equal as possible.

2.3. The Rector appoints a university employee as secretary to the committee. The secretary should have a degree in law and/or public administration. The role of the secretary is to ensure that the Ethics Committee works in accordance with these rules of procedure, the Administrative Procedures Act, the Act on Public Higher Education Institutions, the Code of Ethics and other laws and regulations that may apply.

#### *Eligibility of committee members*

2.4. A committee member is ineligible to discuss a case if the ineligibility rules of Article 3 of the Administrative Procedures Act no. 37/1993 apply to them. The Rector then appoints another committee member in their place.

### **3. Proceedings**

#### *Case basis*

3.1. The Ethics Committee evaluates all cases received from parties inside and outside the University and decides whether they primarily concern an alleged violation of UNAK's Code of Ethics. In case of a dispute or violation of rules that do not concern UNAK's Ethics Committee, the committee dismisses the case with reasons and, depending on the circumstances, provides guidance on the correct course of action for the case in question. The Ethics Committee does not initiate cases.

#### *Case*

3.2. If there is a reason to suggest a violation of the Code of Ethics, the matter must be directed to the chairperson of the Ethics Committee as soon as possible and no later than three months after the alleged event or conduct became known. Within 14 days, the chairperson of the Ethics Committee will call a meeting with the committee and present the case.

3.3. The presentation of a case to the Ethics Committee shall include:

- A description of the events/conduct underlying the case
- Which articles of the Code of Ethics are requested to be taken into consideration
- Supporting documents or arguments that support the case and link it to the provisions of the Code of Ethics.

*Notification* 3.4. If the case is not dismissed, the Ethics Committee shall notify the person concerned that the matter is now being considered by the Ethics Committee and give the person a deadline to explain their side of the issue within 14 days from the date in question.

#### *Document collection*

3.5. The Ethics Committee gathers the necessary documents in order to be able to give its opinion and may require the person submitting the case for additional documents or information that they may be able to provide. Confidentiality and anonymity must be respected if applicable, cf. Article 1.6. The committee has access to the relevant documents in the University's archive while the committee is active.

3.6. The Ethics Committee only collects written documents. All documents and opinions of the Ethics Committee must be saved under a special case number in the University of Akureyri's archive.

3.7. The provisions of the Information Act no. 140/2012 apply regarding access to information obtained by the committee and the results of cases.

#### *The right to object*

3.8. The parties to the case must always have the opportunity to comment on the accusations presented, all documents obtained and the views of the other parties if applicable. The Ethics Committee can set a deadline for the party to the case, which must be at least two weeks.

#### *Conclusion*

3.9. The Ethics Committee shall conclude the case as quickly as possible. As a general rule, the Ethics Committee shall have reached a conclusion in a case six weeks after the chairperson of the Ethics Committee presents it to the committee.

3.10. The Ethics Committee's conclusion in a case shall be both reasoned and unequivocal. If the committee cannot reach a conclusion due to insufficient information about the facts of the case, the case shall be dismissed. If the committee members do not reach an agreement on whether there has been a violation of the Code of Ethics, the conclusion is determined by a majority vote.

3.11. The committee does not prescribe sanctions for violations of the Code of Ethics, but takes a position on the seriousness of the violation and whether it was a repeated violation.

#### *Publication of conclusion and reaction to conclusion*

3.12. The Ethics Committee's conclusion must be in writing and notified to the parties. The conclusion is also reported to the Rector, who acts appropriately according to law.

3.13. The Ethics Committee's conclusion on whether certain conduct violates the Code of Ethics is final.

**Confirmed by the University Council on 29 August 2024**