

Action plan for the work on academic integrity at the University of Bergen 2009-2012

Approved by the University Board at a meeting on 30 April 2009

The fundamental values for academic activities at UiB are openness, verifiability, scientific integrity and critical discussion.



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Introduction

In recent years, there has been considerable focus on academic and scientific misconduct as a result of a number of serious cases being reported in the media. It is claimed, and not unjustly, that academic misconduct has increased partly due to the introduction of new assessment methods and new technological possibilities. The students' work situation has changed significantly, both as a result of the Qualify Reform and technological developments.

The University of Bergen's 'Strategic plan for the period 2005-2010' states that UiB

aims to offer high-quality education at a high level in disciplines and programmes of professional study, so that the studies focus on knowledge, applied skills and personal development. The education shall be based on critical reflection in order to familiarise the students with issues relating to ethics, philosophy of science and methodology as well as practical problems.

In light of this, the university has examined the field of *ethics and integrity in education*, and this work has resulted in the present *Action plan for the work on academic integrity in education at the University of Bergen (2009-2012)*.

Through this action plan, the University of Bergen aims to ensure that awareness of academic norms and integrity is fundamental to all academic activities and one of the preconditions for good study quality and a good institutional reputation. It is important to the study quality at the University of Bergen that students are familiar with ethical dilemmas and the fundamental values of academic work, and are trained in good scholarly practice and academic integrity.

The fundamental attitude of the University of Bergen is that we have full confidence in the students, and we wish to provide them with the information and tools that are necessary to prevent them from unwittingly ending up in academic situations where their ethical standards and academic integrity can be called into question.

The rationale for the action plan is a desire to prevent academic misconduct and to address an increasing problem in a proactive manner. At the same time, it must be beyond doubt that the University of Bergen's policy is that cheating, plagiarism and other types of misconduct by students or staff will not be tolerated. The reactive procedures must therefore be made readily accessible and clear to everyone through regulations and relevant information channels.

The fundamental values of the action plan

It is both desirable and necessary for the university to have a clear and uniform profile when it comes to ethics and academic integrity, and it is important that the institution has a concrete and well-thought-out plan for this work. The focus will be on proactive and preventive measures as well as reactive measures. In order to strengthen, highlight and communicate the university's profile, we need clear fundamental values for the university, clear institutional rules and guidelines, more knowledge about ethics and greater ethical awareness, efforts to instil and communicate the right attitudes, and sanctions in accordance with the law. This work must include the whole institution and all educational levels.

The cornerstone of the university's philosophy shall be as follows:

'The fundamental values for academic activities at UiB are openness, verifiability, scientific integrity and critical discussion.'

The objectives of the action plan are

- to display a clear and uniform profile in this area, with clear, fundamental values for academic activities at UiB,
- to focus on preventive and proactive measures, with *increased knowledge* about ethics, greater ethical awareness and training in academic integrity,
- to ensure that the students are educated in ethics and academic integrity to qualify them as students, scholars and professionals later in life,
- to highlight what is considered misconduct and which sanctions this may lead to,
- to prepare common procedures for handling suspicion of cheating, plagiarism or misconduct,
- to base this work on clear institutional rules and regulations.

The proactive measures in the action plan

The University of Bergen wishes to focus most on proactive work as regards ethics and integrity, although reactive measures are also required. The goal is to ensure that the students are educated in ethics and academic integrity to qualify them as students, scholars and, in later life, as professionals. It has been proposed that the acquisition of academic norms and values should be included as a desired learning outcome for all study programmes and at all levels.

On the one hand, the university recognises that a certain degree of coordination is required, while, on the other hand, we must not stifle local initiative and well-functioning systems by imposing new, centralised structures and instructions. It has therefore been proposed that the faculties specify general *minimum requirements* with which the academic environments/entities must comply. At the same time, the university's central administration must assist any academic environments that wish help.

It is important to emphasise that the academic environments themselves have primary responsibility for including ethics in study programmes, and steps must be taken to ensure that this integration can take place in the best possible manner.

Most of the proactive measures must be carried out in the individual academic environments and study programmes. The closer the students get to completing Master's degrees and researcher training programmes, the more knowledge and awareness of research norms must

be required. At the same time, clear requirements must also be set for material norms such as truthfulness, avoiding plagiarism, norms for citations etc. at lower degree levels. These requirements must be clear and they must be communicated and imparted in a systematic manner.

The reactive measures in the action plan

In the university's view, the most important means of countering academic misconduct is through the use of proactive measures, i.e. through communication, compliance and the requirement that students must comply with the norms for academic integrity.

The university is nevertheless required to strengthen and further develop its reactive measures. Current UiB regulations only refer specifically to cheating and misconduct to a limited extent, and the boundaries for what is deemed to be academic misconduct are unclear, and they may also vary between academic environments and individuals. Efforts will be made to address this issue, and specific adjustments will be made to the examination regulations, while provisions concerning sanctions for violations of these rules will also be included in the programme descriptions.

Moreover, little information and guidance is available to lecturers and examiners at UiB who suspect that cheating or another type of misconduct has taken place. It is important to strengthen this side of the work and introduce regulations with known procedures. Everyone who participates in exam work must therefore have clear procedures for cases involving suspicion of cheating, plagiarism or misconduct, including procedures for feedback to the candidate(s). Such case processing procedures must be included in the university's central regulations.

It is also necessary to further examine a number of aspects of cheating, plagiarism and other types of misconduct. The action plan therefore recommends that the Education Committee is given responsibility for examining the line between cheating and other types of misconduct. The idea is to reach a common view and understanding of this problem in the academic environments, and to establish whether such a shared understanding can be used as the basis for inclusion of the issue in the university's regulations. At the same time, it is desirable to carry out a review and assessment of the Central Appeals Board's role and mandate while this action plan is in effect.

MEASURES

1. Proactive measures: teaching ethical values and attitudes

1. 1 Proactive measures: ethical values and attitudes				
	Measure	Responsibility	Time frame	Comment
1.1.1	Specification of requirements for ethical awareness in education: Guidelines will be prepared for the work on the formulation of learning objectives/ outcome for ethical awareness.	The University Library, the Centre for the Study of Sciences and Humanities or the programme for university teaching	2009	Provided that the support services have resources, they can assist the academic environments if required.
1.1.2	Follow-up of ethics in the student-teacher-relationship: The Education Committee revises the applicable ethical rules for the student- teacher relationship at UiB. The rules will be extended to include the student- supervisor/teacher relationship in general, not only sexual harassment.	The Education Committee, the working group	The Education Committee appointed a working group in spring 2009, and the group will submit its proposal by the end of 2009.	The Education Committee will appoint a working group to prepare a proposal for revised ethical rules.
1.1.3	Measures aimed at staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent, independent courses in research ethics/ ethics in science and information competence (critical and honest use of information). The courses must also have sufficient capacity to offer places to other participants than new members of staff. 	The programme for university teaching, , the Centre for the Study of Sciences and Humanities, the University Library	During 2009.	
1.1.4	Measures aimed at staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programme for university teaching, in collaboration with the Division of Academic Affairs, will examine the possibility of and need to train research fellows with a teaching obligation, for example by means of a short introductory course (1-2 days) in pedagogy, UiB's ethical values and norms, and how to prevent and uncover academic misconduct. 	The programme for university teaching, the Division of Academic Affairs	To be prepared during 2009.	
1.1.5	Information and dissemination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The information to students must be developed and updated in step with the introduction of new requirements/procedures. This applies to information in brochures etc. as well as online. The information for staff must be developed and updated in step with the introduction of new requirements/procedures. This applies to information in brochures etc. as well as online. 	The Division of Academic Affairs, the faculties	Continuously.	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All relevant information should be available in both Norwegian and English. The website uib.no/etikkiutdanning will be developed into a key portal for all information relating to ethics and integrity in education. Information about the standing committee on scientific misconduct and its website will also be given particular attention. 			
1.1.6	<p>Measures in connection with the admission of students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students arriving at UiB (whether as first-semester students or at other levels/through other schemes) will be given precise <i>written</i> and <i>oral</i> information about the basis for ethics in education at UiB and what it entails, as well as about the consequences of misconduct. All students who are offered a place at UiB or who will be making use of UiB's study programmes in other ways must submit written confirmation that they are familiar with and accept UiB's ethical rules <i>as part of the written acceptance of the offer</i>. 	The Division of Academic Affairs	To be prepared by the Division of Academic Affairs in collaboration with the Director of Studies. Proposed measures are to be presented to the Education Committee in autumn 2009. Any measures resulting from this will be implemented in spring 2010.	The Division of Academic Affairs must consider whether this is practically possible or whether other measures would have the same effect, e.g. using the programme plan.
1.1.7	<p>Special measures and information during studies aimed at students on short-term stays/ exchange programmes and international degree students.</p>	The Division of Academic Affairs, the University Library and the faculties	A working group was appointed in autumn 2009, and possible measures will be developed in the course of spring 2010	Any such measures and information requirements will be prepared by the above-mentioned units. The Division of Academic Affairs is in charge of the work.

Abbreviations: PUP – the programme for university teaching, SVT – the Centre for the Study of Sciences and Humanities, UA – the Division of Academic Affairs, UB – the University Library, UU – the Education Committee

1.2 Proactive measures aimed at the different educational levels					
		First semester	Bachelor	Master	PhD
1.2.1	Measure	All study programmes must specify the desired learning objectives/ outcome for ethical awareness in the programme description. This can be specified as knowledge, skills and insights. Where it is desirable or natural, the individual course descriptions can also include the learning outcome for ethical awareness and/or professional ethics.			
	Responsibility	The faculties and the programme boards			
	Time frame	By 2010			
1.2.2	Measure	To develop an overall system for the teaching of ethics, from the first encounter with academia, via Bachelor's and Master's degrees to the role of a researcher or a professional.			
	Responsibility	The Department of Philosophy and first-semester students,* the Education Committee			
	Time frame	By 2010			
1.2.3	Measure	A brief course (1-2 days) in ethics, academic norms and values and critical/honest use of information will be developed for newly-arrived students at UiB who do not follow the seminar model of <i>Examen Philosophicum</i> .	A minimum requirement will be introduced regarding tuition in research ethics and ethics in science in addition to what is taught in the first semester.	A minimum requirement will be introduced regarding tuition in research ethics, ethics in science and critical and honest use of information in addition to what is taught at lower degree level.	The Action Plan Committee for the doctoral degree programme is responsible for how ethics and integrity can be addressed in researcher training.
	Responsibility	The Department of Philosophy and first-semester students, the University Library, the Centre for the Study of Sciences and Humanities, the Division of Academic Affairs, the Committee for First-semester Students	The faculties will draw up minimum requirements that will be followed up by programme boards and teachers.	The faculties will draw up minimum requirements that will be followed up by programme boards and teachers.	The Action Plan Committee
	Time frame	To be prepared during spring 2009; possible measures will be implemented in spring 2010.	By 2010	By 2010	By 2010

1.2.4	Measure		In connection with the Bachelor's thesis or similar, tuition and training will be given in norms for academic integrity. The tuition should be given by the academic environments themselves, or in collaboration with the University Library and the Centre for the Study of Science and Humanities.	Aspects related to research ethics in Master's theses or similar work will be given attention by the student and the supervisor through joint and/or individual supervision and discussion, and one of the assessment criteria should be that such aspects are sufficiently discussed.	
	Responsibility		Programme boards, supervisors	Programme boards, supervisors	
	Time frame		By 2010	By 2010	

Abbreviations: SVT – the Centre for the Study of Sciences and Humanities, UA – the Division of Academic Affairs, UB – the University Library.

* The project was initiated by and is supported by grants from the Programme for evaluation and quality development.

Learning objectives/ outcome for ethical awareness:

The working group's recommendation outlines how the desired learning objectives/ outcome for ethical awareness can be described in terms of knowledge, skills and insights:

Knowledge

- knowledge of the cornerstone of UiB's ethics in education: *The fundamental values for academic activities at UiB are openness, verifiability, scientific integrity and critical discussion*, and knowledge of the reasoning behind this (above all, academic values and norms)
- knowledge and understanding of the importance of academic values and their implications for concrete action
- knowledge of ethical reasoning and, more generally, knowledge of normative argumentation and understanding of value pluralism and its importance
- knowledge and understanding of the reasons for conflicts of value and interest that are relevant to the education and the subsequent practicing of a profession.

Skills and insights

- acquire and comply with UiB's ethical values and norms in concrete actions as a student and a participant in the university community
- the ability to reflect on and critically discuss ethical and other normative issues and justify actions, norms and values that are relevant to the education and the subsequent practicing of a profession
- the ability to see the connection between one's own and other people's concrete actions, on the one hand, and norms and values, on the other
- the ability to identify and reflect on conflicts of value and interest that are relevant to the education and the subsequent practicing of a profession, including in specific instances.

2. Reactive measures: academic integrity

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	Measure	Responsibility	Time frame	Comment
2.1.1	<p>Measures to strengthen case processing in cases of cheating in exams and in other evaluated student work: Common guidelines and procedures must be prepared for cases involving suspicion of cheating, plagiarism or misconduct, including procedures for feedback to the candidate(s).</p>	The central administration, the faculties and the departments.	Central guidelines to be prepared during 2009.	
2.1.2	<p>Measures to strengthen case processing in cases of cheating in exams and in other evaluated student work: The faculties must be informed and provide sufficient information about these guidelines and case processing procedures for cases of cheating and academic misconduct. A professional system must be established to help teaching staff and the departments with initial reactions and preparatory case processing, if applicable, in the event of 'cheating cases'.</p>	The central administration and the faculties.	Continuously.	
2.1.3	<p>Measures to strengthen case processing in cases of cheating in exams and in other evaluated student work: Simple guidelines must be prepared for the academic environments that describe the procedure from suspicion arises until the case is forwarded (from the academic environment/department) to the faculty. Standard forms will be prepared for completion by subject teachers and others in such cases.</p>	The Division of Academic Affairs and the faculties in collaboration.	Autumn 2009	
2.1.4	<p>Measures to strengthen UiB's common understanding of what constitutes cheating and other types of misconduct: The Education Committee will appoint a working group consisting of representatives from all the faculties, the University Director's Office, the appeals board, the students, the Division of Academic Affairs and the Department of Research Management. The committee will, among other things, look at the distinction between cheating and other types of misconduct, the question of requirements for independence, the need to revise UiB's regulations and the possibility of sanctions <u>before</u> a case is considered by the appeals board.</p>	The Education Committee and the working group.	The report will be submitted in autumn 2009.	
2.1.5	<p>Measures to strengthen UiB's common understanding of what constitutes cheating and other types of misconduct and the sanction for violations of the rules: The role and mandate of the Central Appeals Board will be revised and assessed, and proposals for changes made.</p>	The central administration.	Autumn 2009	
2.1.6	<p>Measures to uncover misconduct in exams and in other evaluated student work: The text recognition services will be further developed and offered for use throughout UiB. The report from the group that has evaluated the use of Ephorus will form the basis for future work.</p>	The Division of Academic Affairs (owner), the faculties and the academic environments.	Continuously.	

Abbreviations: UA – the Division of Academic Affairs

