
Code of Ethics

Preamble

The Constitution of Charles University promotes the idea of “a community in which the mutual relations of its members are determined by spiritual authority rather than by power, in which the principles of academic freedom are seen as an essential basis for the existence of the academic community and its activities, both scholarly and pedagogical”. The prosperity of such community largely depends on whether individual members strive for harmony between action and discovered truth. Charles University therefore acknowledges that it is imperative that the actions of persons associated with the University reflect the efforts to strive for the genuine good, for only in this way can we accomplish the objective of “disseminating the truth and increasing the brightness of its light in which the welfare of humankind is rooted” (ut veritas propagetur et lux eius, qua salus humani generis continetur, clarius effulgeat), to use the wording of the ancient graduation oath.

The educational, research, and other activities at Charles University, as well as the mutual relations of persons associated with the University, relations to the national and international community, and relations to the environment must therefore live up to generally recognized moral standards, provided that such moral consensus acknowledges that man should choose good over evil, and that appropriate actions should be distinguished from inappropriate ones, and permissible actions from non-permissible ones by following the Golden Rule: “Treat people as you would like them to treat you. Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you.” The specific manner in which this rule should be applied in particular areas of human conduct is found by contemplation and discussion among persons with diverse scientific, philosophical, and theological backgrounds.

The common effort to formulate certain principles of professional ethics binding on the persons associated with the University has been expressed in this Code of Ethics of Charles University:

Part I – Common Principles

1. This Code of Ethics aims to outline the ethical standards of Charles University.
2. In addition, it seeks to prevent unlawful conduct and the criminal liability of Charles University.
3. This Code of Ethics concerns members of the academic community (academics and students), researchers, as well as other employees of Charles University.
4. Students of Charles University respect the commitment arising from the matriculation oath, and they seek to comply with its intent.
5. Graduates of Charles University and of rigorous proceedings respect the commitment arising from the graduation oath, and they seek to comply with its intent. Graduates and persons who obtained their teaching and research degrees and titles at Charles University, wherever they work, are expected to comply with the principles set out in this Code and contribute to the good reputation of the University.
6. Each member of the academic community and each employee complies with the laws of the Czech Republic and other legislation, as well as the internal regulations of Charles University and units thereof. They refrain from crime.
7. In addition, they respect moral principles and precepts, comply with this Code and the basic rules of good manners, and abide by the provisions of academic oaths taken. Within these boundaries, they exercise their academic rights and freedoms.
8. They respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including primarily the right to life and health, inviolability of a person and his or her privacy, the right to human dignity, honour, and good reputation, freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and expression, as well as freedom of scientific research and artistic creation. They try to prevent any conduct that would violate these rights and freedoms.
9. They respect the principles of cooperativeness and academic collaboration.
10. They do not exercise inappropriate or improper pressure on members of the academic community and other employees. Any critical observations they present must be well founded.
11. If they find out that members of the academic community or other employees have acted unethically, and such conduct is intolerable, they take reasonable steps to try to remedy the situation in compliance with good morals. They continuously seek to prevent such conduct.
12. They respect freedom of speech and critical thinking, freedom of independent research, and free exchange of opinions and information. They present criticism and alternative opinions with fairness.
13. They do not use the academic campus to promote the interests of political parties and movements.

14. They protect the mission of the University enshrined in its Constitution. They do not place their private interests above this mission.
15. They respect Charles University and they refrain from any conduct that could harm its good reputation. They are aware that they represent the University externally through their conduct, manners, and work.
16. They care about the University's property, and handle it with due care. They prevent any harm to such property. They do not misuse such property or their position for private interests or for the benefit of themselves or of third persons. They do not accept presents or other advantages if it is unethical.
17. They avoid conflicts of interest and if such situations arise, they notify thereof in an appropriate way.
18. They refuse discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, nationality, ideology, religion, faith, world view, age, gender, sexual orientation, physical handicap, language, social origin, or property. They treat everybody with respect, irrespective of social or cultural differences. They comply with the principle of equal approach and equal opportunities. They refuse any form of sexual harassment.
19. They support a positive approach to persons with special needs and seek improvement of conditions for their work in the academic community.
20. They engage in teaching, research, or study with full commitment and always continue their self-education. They continuously improve their knowledge and skills, and share them suitably and appropriately within the academic community and use them for the benefit of society.
21. Both at the University and elsewhere they make sure that their workload or study commitments remain reasonable and manageable; they usually should not exceed 1.5 of full work load. They respect the University and try not to jeopardise its activities through other commitments they may have.
22. Experienced staff members are aware of their special responsibility for the development of their units and younger colleagues. They pay special attention to their role as managers, project coordinators and similar positions.
23. If they assume an academic office, membership of an academic body, or a managerial role, they discharge their office properly, responsibly, and with fairness, acknowledging that by assuming greater responsibility they are even more committed to strict compliance with this Code, and they must encourage others to comply with it as well.

Part II – Principles in Educational Activities

1. Academics and researchers treat students with honesty, fairness, cooperativeness, and openness. They do not humiliate students, do not act immorally, and do not exercise pressure.
2. They are an example to students.
3. They assess students' achievement with fairness and transparency.
4. They do not abuse their teachers' or other authority, and they do not require students to carry out activities which they should carry out themselves. They do not appropriate the results of students' work.
5. Students do not plagiarise, do not cheat during assessment, and do not allow other students to cheat. Students do not pass another person's work off as their own. Students do not disparage the results of their work, their teacher's work, or another person's work.
6. Students do not plagiarise their own work, do not use their earlier work repeatedly without properly citing the author.
7. Neither students nor academics at the University make use of writing theses to order (so-called "academic ghost-writing"), nor they offer such services.

Part III – Principles in Scientific, Artistic, and Creative Activities

1. Academics, researchers, and students are ready to engage in teamwork and academic discourse. They communicate in a matter-of-fact, open manner, using fair arguments without humiliating other persons or disparaging their work.
2. They do not disparage research methods and they respect the opinions of other researchers, as well as the plurality of scientific and creative disciplines.
3. They approach their colleagues with a reasonably critical mind which they use also with respect to their own scientific, artistic, and creative work.
4. In their scientific and creative work they take account of the latest developments in their field, and they ensure that the methods applied are reasonable, accurate, objective, and not distorted. They exercise due care when handling data or examining materials, they provide an accurate description thereof, and use standard methods of protection and archiving. They ensure that the procedures and results of scientific and creative work may be reviewed. They comply with the specific rules of professional ethics in a given field.
5. They use the funds for research sensibly and effectively. They are aware of their responsibility to the society, employer and investors whose means they utilise.
6. They comply with the principles of intellectual property protection, both when carrying out their work and when dealing with the work of others, and they ensure that the results of scientific, artistic, and creative activities are correctly attributed. If they create a work within their employment duties they apply to it the employee's work regulations.
7. They do not publish their work unethically, for example via dubious publication platforms. They do not misappropriate someone else's work, they do not plagiarise.
8. If they lead a research team, they encourage fairness and openness in mutual communication, refraining from autocratic methods of management. They ensure that performance requirements and professional competition do not lead to dishonesty.

9. If they are asked to provide an expert's report or scientific, artistic or other expert opinions, they act responsibly, impartially, objectively, and with regard to state of the art. They do not allow any bias or external influence. When formulating their opinion, they adopt a matter-of-fact style, using standard criteria, argumentative practices, and they vouch for their expert judgement with their professional honour.
10. If, as part of scientific, artistic, or other creative work, it is necessary to carry out activities where there is a risk of criminal liability or other risks, they carry out such activities in compliance with their position and expertise, with utmost caution, in compliance with legislation, best practices, and good morals.

Part IV – Ethics Commission

1. The Ethics Commission is established to deal with submissions concerning compliance with the Code of Ethics.
2. The details about the Ethics Commission, the procedures for accepting submissions and its relationship to other ethics commissions acting at the University are stipulated in the Code of Procedure for the Ethics Commission, which is issued in a Rector's directive after consideration by the Academic Senate of Charles University.

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