

Code of Conduct Applied Research for Higher Professional Education

Code of Conduct for the preparation and execution of applied research in Higher Professional Education in the Netherlands

Opinion of the Code of Conduct Commission
Applied Research in Higher Professional Education



Netherlands Association of
Universities of Applied Sciences

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Preamble

Background to Code of Conduct

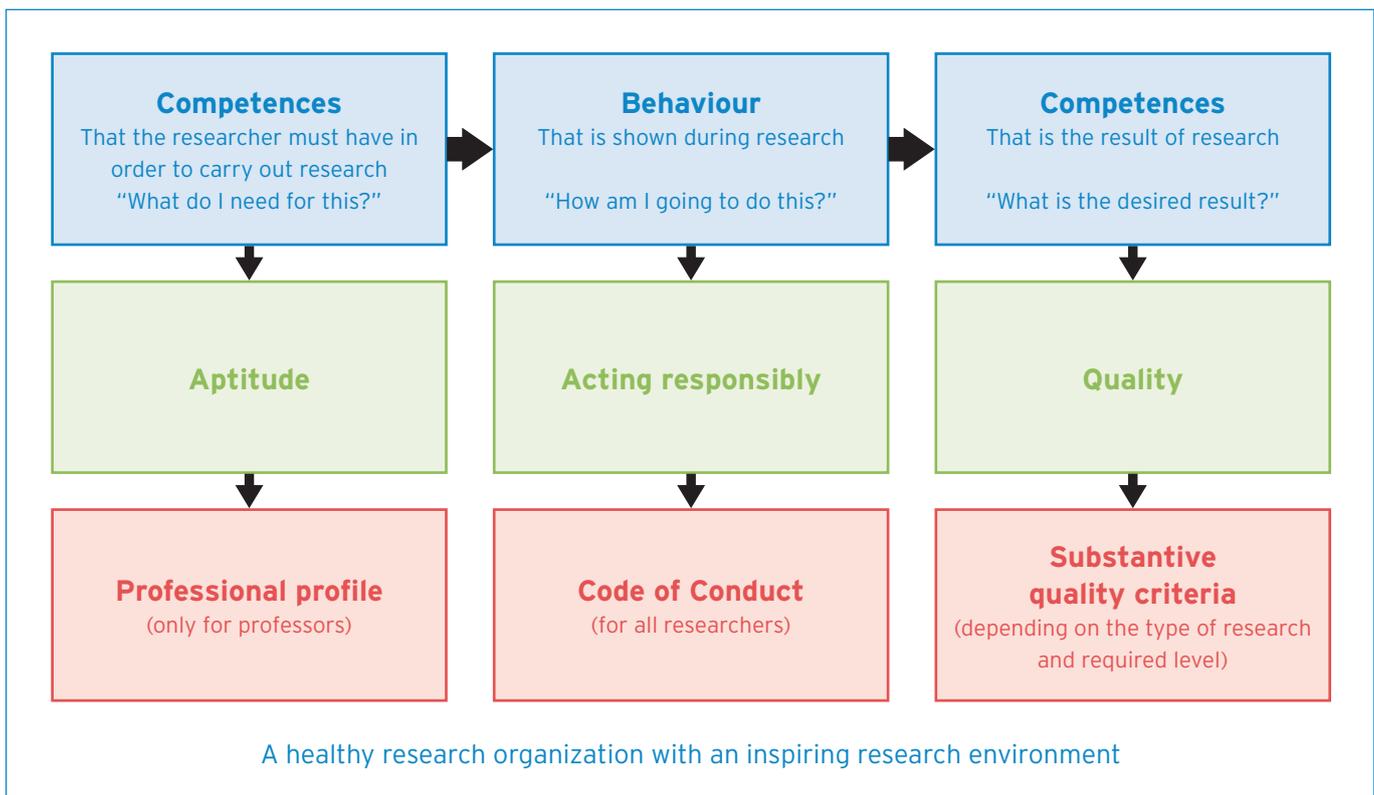
The Universities of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands conduct applied research, which is research rooted in professional practice and contributes to the improvement and innovation of that practice. This task is laid down in legislation (Article 1.3.2 of the *Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek* [Higher Education and Research Act]). Doing research at Universities of Applied Sciences is relatively new. It has been given a major boost by the introduction of professorships in 2001. Since then, a large number of initiatives have been taken to embed research well within these institutions and to improve and ensure quality of research. A code of conduct for applied research can make an important contribution to promoting research quality at universities of applied sciences. A code of conduct describes desired behaviour of a specific group of professionals in the performance of a particular task. This desired behaviour ultimately contributes to a higher quality of the end product.

Content of Code of Conduct

The code of conduct for applied research consists of five rules regarding responsible behaviour of staff and students whilst carrying out practical research in higher professional education in the Netherlands. The code describes the desired behaviour when executing the 'task' of doing research. The Code does not lay down what a high quality result of the research would be, but what accountable research - as activity - is and what this means for the conduct of the applied researcher.

Function of the code

Research in higher professional education in the Netherlands is developing rapidly. Because of the particular phase in which research in higher professional education currently takes place, the code of conduct is intended primarily as a development tool to help boost the quality of research. In this way, the code is linked to other ongoing initiatives to stimulate research quality in higher professional education, such as the design of a professional profile for professors, the establishing of substantive quality criteria for results of research, and the development of a healthy research organization with an inspiring research environment. The relationship between these three initiatives is shown in the following figure:



The professional profile describes the competences required for the position of professor. The Code of Conduct then describes what behaviour the researcher should aim for whilst conducting research. Substantive quality criteria demonstrate what the product of the research has to satisfy. All this is best done within a healthy research organization with an inspiring research environment.

To what extent the rules for behaviour work well in practice can be examined once higher professional education has gained experience in applying the Code of Conduct for applied research. Then it may be possible to consider making the Code binding and to create a system for enforcement and for dealing with complaints. The Commission believes that it is too early for this "strict" variant, but recommends that the Council for Higher Professional Education issue a statement that we in higher professional education perform research in the manner described in this Code. The Code is not optional.

Code of Conduct target group

This Code applies to the behaviour of employees and students whilst carrying out applied research in the context of higher professional education in the Netherlands. Employees include professors as well as teachers and other staff members. It should be borne in mind that students are still in training to become professional. It cannot be expected of students during the training that they are already able to fully adhere to the Code of Conduct, but that they do act according to the spirit of the Code. Teachers and professors are responsible for translating the Code into learning outcomes for students and they should enable students to act accordingly. They are also ultimately responsible for the conduct and safety of their students while doing research.

Code of Conduct structure

The Code comprises five general rules of conduct, and is supplemented by explanations providing concrete details for each step in the research process.

Code of Conduct principles

The Code of Conduct is based on the following principles:

- Researchers in higher professional education assume responsibility in respect of the professional field for which they develop knowledge, the people and matters they research and for society as a whole. They also have a responsibility as researchers to conduct research according to the methodological rules and the research and professional ethics and values that apply in the field.
- Their research has often consequences for the professional field for which they develop knowledge, for the people and matters they research and for society as a whole. Research should therefore take place in a responsible manner.
- Rules of conduct describe what responsible research conduct is. They are based on the values and standards for research set out in similar national and international codes as well as the principles of research that have been described in policy documents of the Higher Education Board over the course of the years.
- Rules of conduct are intended to contribute to the quality of research in higher professional education. The rules of conduct support the substantive reflection of everyone who performs research in higher professional education, and increase the transparency of the thoughts and actions of the individual researcher. In this way, how researchers take into consideration the profession for which they develop knowledge, the people and matters they research and society as a whole can be monitored. This helps to encourage confidence in the research amongst the parties concerned, and to increase quality.
- The 'comply or explain' applies to the Code. The five rules of conduct are generally applicable. These may be waived, provided that this is explicitly supported. In cases like these, no damage or harm may be caused to the subjects of the research in any way whatsoever. Researchers must account for the implementation of the five rules of conduct in the accountability part of their research report.

Implementing the Code of Conduct

There is a risk that the Code of Conduct remains a 'paper tiger'. The document entitled 'Accountability Commission Research Code of Conduct for Higher Professional Education' contains recommendations as to how this may be prevented.

Code of Conduct for Applied Research in Higher Professional Education

1. Researchers in higher professional education serve professional and societal interests.

They contribute to the profession and the relevant professional field and are committed to public interests. They focus on relevant themes and problems in professional practice and on creative, innovative and applicable solutions in practice. They contribute to knowledge and theory development, stimulate circulation of knowledge towards practice and education and strive to make results accessible according to the principles of 'Open Access'¹.

2. Researchers in higher professional education are respectful.

They take into account the rights, interests, privacy, views, opinions, theories and methods of the parties involved and of fellow researchers. They follow the regulations and protocols that apply in their discipline of research performance. If research with people or animals poses any risk, the importance of the research must justify the taking of such risk. In such case, external experts will be consulted.

3. Researchers in higher professional education are careful.

They consider several scientific concepts and related forms of research, and the available research methods and methodological rules that apply to these, as well as the professional and research ethics and values that apply within the discipline. They make use of existing knowledge from practice and science. They report in an accurate, complete, precise and comprehensible manner. They take into consideration the desirability to preserve the data carefully and ensure the intellectual property rights pertaining to data, results and innovations are arranged properly.

4. Researchers in higher professional education have integrity.

They are critical with regards to the ideas and problem definitions followed in the practice, independent in their methodological choices, and honest about the sources they use. They are accountable for their behaviour while conducting research, autonomous in their analyses and impartial in their reporting.

5. Researchers in higher professional education justify their choices and behaviour.

They justify themselves regarding the relevance of the chosen theme, the choice of research design, the choice of method followed and the limitations thereof, the care taken in execution, the substantiation of the conclusions, the sources used, the implementation in practice and the effect on education.

1. Open Access (OA) to research results means that research results are available digitally, online, for free and free from most copyright restrictions.

Explanatory Notes to Code of Conduct

The five rules of behaviour are illustrated in the table below for each research step. The division into steps is not based on a specific model but is grafted onto formats that are common when doing research and are found in research handbooks.

<div style="text-align: right;">Rule</div> <div style="text-align: left;">Activity</div>	1. Serving professional and societal interests	2. Being respectful	3. Being careful	4. Having integrity	5. Justifying choices and behaviour
	I focus on:	I take into account:	I take into consideration:	I am:	I hold myself accountable towards others for:
a. Developing problem definition and research question	1a. Relevant topics and issues from the field.	2a. Different interests and perspectives that exist within the professional practice on this theme.	3a. The possible side effects of the research on the chosen problem definition/research question.	4a. Critical with respect to the views and problem definitions maintained in the practice.	5a. The relevance of the chosen theme, as well as the way the problem definition and research question has been established in interaction with the practice.
b. Making a plan of action	1b. A workable plan that can yield concrete results.	2b. The interests of the client, one's own institution and the research subjects.	3b. Available, usable, suitable and high-quality research methods in relation to the research questions.	4b. Independent in the choice of methods for research, and I ensure that the research question and the plan of action are not controlled by desired outcomes in line with the agenda of this or that commercial or political group.	5b. The choice of research design, research method, research subject, timing, feasibility and financing, the limitations of the research as well as the sponsor of the study and the relationship between me and the sponsor.

Activity \ Rule	1. Serving professional and societal interests	2. Being respectful	3. Being careful	4. Having integrity	5. Justifying choices and behaviour
	I focus on:	I take into account:	I take into consideration:	I am:	I hold myself accountable towards others for:
c. Exploring literature	1c. Documented knowledge from science and practice.	2c. Different perspectives that exist within the literature on this theme.	3c. Existing knowledge and research results that are available nationally and internationally on this theme, as well as available, documented practical knowledge.	4c. Honest about the sources I use.	5c. The search strategy and selection of sources used as well as the actual sources themselves.
d. Conducting research generally	1d. The research in and of professional practice in all its unpredictability and complexity.	2d. The interests of those involved, the influence that various interest groups may have on the performance of the research method, and the influence that I as researcher have on the research methods while conducting the research. I live by the regulations and protocols that apply for conducting research in my field. If the research poses any risk whatsoever on people or animals, then the need to conduct such research must justify that risk. In such case, external experts will be consulted, such as a medical-ethics assessment committee.	3d. Several scientific concepts and the forms of research related to these concepts, the methodological rules that apply to the research methods followed, as well as the methodological rules, the professional and research ethics and values that apply within the field.	4d. Accountable for my actions whilst performing research.	5d. The manner in which the research is conducted.

Activity \ Rule	1. Serving professional and societal interests	2. Being respectful	3. Being careful	4. Having integrity	5. Justifying choices and behaviour
	I focus on:	I take into account:	I take into consideration:	I am:	I hold myself accountable towards others for:
e. Collecting data	1e. Collecting the data as efficiently and effectively as possible.	2e. The privacy and interests of the respondents and stakeholders.	3e. The methodological rules for data collection that match the chosen research methodology, as well as the desirability to carefully preserve the data.	4e. Exercising caution by ensuring that the collected data is only used for research purposes.	5e. The way in which data is collected, and how various interests groups are involved in the data collection.
f. Data analysis and formulation of innovations, alternatives and solutions	1f. Developing creative, innovative and applicable solutions in practice.	2f. The insights that various methods of analysis can give.	3f. The methodological rules for data analysis that apply to the research method followed.	4f. Autonomous in the analysis and ensuring that this is not driven by desired outcomes in line with the agenda of this or that commercial or political group.	5f. The way in which data are analysed, as well as the way in which various interest groups are involved in the validation of data analysis.
g. Reporting results	1g. The practical usability and readability of the results, taking into account the knowledge level of the target group(s), as well as the contribution the results make to knowledge and theory development.	2g. The interests and privacy of those involved and their organisations, as well as other authors' copyright.	3g. That reporting should give an accurate picture that is complete, precise and comprehensible, whereby the research results are formulated in a precise manner.	4g. Impartial in my reporting whereby I do not omit research results selectively without proper argumentation, do not adjust formulations according to the desires of the stakeholders, and do not present conclusions that are not based on the data.	5g. The substantiation of the conclusions, in relation to the research question, as well as information that may contradict the conclusions.

Activity \ Rule	1. Serving professional and societal interests	2. Being respectful	3. Being careful	4. Having integrity	5. Justifying choices and behaviour
	I focus on:	I take into account:	I take into consideration:	I am:	I hold myself accountable towards others for:
h. Dissemination of the results, knowledge transfer and the effect on the professionalization of the staff	1h. Documented knowledge from science and practice.	2h. Making the research results accessible via Open Access.	3h. That research results must be carefully communicated, and that intellectual property rights of data, results and innovations must be arranged properly.		5h. The way in which the research results are implemented in professional practice.
i. Application of research in education	1i. The usefulness of the results for education.	2i. The level of quality of the teachers, students and the training's curriculum.	3i. That research results are translated well into education.		5i. The way in which the effect in education takes place.



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