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0. FOREWORD AND SCOPE

The Code of Conduct (hereinafter “Code”) drawn up by the Institute for Research in Biomedicine or Fundació Institut de Recerca Biomèdica (IRB BARCELONA) (hereinafter, “IRB Barcelona”) sets out recommendations governing research activities and other endeavours. The aim is to consolidate an environment conducive to quality research and to establish guidelines regarding the integrity of members of the IRB Barcelona community in their daily work. The recommendations have been drawn up in compliance with current legislation and the Code of Conduct of the CERCA Institute.

The Code of Conduct complements IRB Barcelona policies and official documents such as those for health and safety, working conditions, or management of information and finances or of intellectual property, and does not replace them.

This Code is applicable to all IRB Barcelona employees, students, affiliated members and collaborators under a collaboration agreement with other institutions (hereinafter “IRB Barcelona members”) who carry out research or administrative tasks using funds, facilities, space, equipment, supplies and/or materials or other resources of IRB Barcelona. All members will be asked to sign a document stating that they know and will comply with the provisions of this Code.


1. PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY

IRB Barcelona members are encouraged to conduct themselves and interact with peers and colleagues in a professional, honest, collaborative and supportive manner, without discrimination. In compliance with the legal regulations, IRB Barcelona will promote equal opportunities in all internal and external relationships, without discrimination for birth, race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, civil status, opinion or whatever condition or social circumstance.

In particular, IRB Barcelona members are expected to:

- Conduct their research and other activities following the required standards and applicable laws.
- Follow ethical standards in research and other activities, as defined in the final approved Code.
- Comply with Internal Staff Regulations, Health and Safety Regulations, Industrial and Intellectual Property Regulations, and other internal policies.
- Protect personal, confidential and research data when required by law.
- Use the institute’s funds and resources in an efficient, accountable and cost-effective manner.
- Report potential conflicts of interest, including personal and financial conflicts, and cases of suspected scientific misconduct.

IRB Barcelona, as a public research center, is subject to the regulations on transparency, specifically to Law 19/2014, of December 29, on transparency, access to public information and good governance, or other applicable regulations.

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IRB Barcelona is committed to continuously improving its human resources policies in line with the European Charter for Researchers, the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, and the IRB Barcelona Recruitment Procedures, with the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) recognition of the European Commission.

1.1. RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH

1.1.1. RESEARCH INTEGRITY

IRB Barcelona holds that scientific integrity and the observance of the principles of good scientific practice are essential in scientific research. This is necessary also to ensure public trust as well as trust among scientists themselves. All those involved in scientific activities and research shall be aware and comply with the standards of good scientific practice thus discouraging scientific misconduct. The applicable regulations on scientific integrity, such as the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, must be followed.

The spectrum of inappropriate behaviour is wide, ranging from minor misconduct, which may happen occasionally and inadvertently, to significant acts of misappropriation, falsification, misrepresentation of data and/or interests and or involvement, plagiarism or fabrication. Other misconduct acts include failures to follow accepted procedures or to exercise due care in carrying out responsibilities for avoiding unreasonable risk or harm to humans, animals and environment, and the proper handling of information on individuals related to the research.


IRB Barcelona and the research supervisors are in charge of informing the researchers and other related personnel on what is misconduct in research, the procedures for reporting misconduct behaviours and the consequences of this inappropriate behaviour.

Regarding scientific misconduct in the framework of international collaborations, the collaboration of the different national agencies will be sought, and the principles of the Montreal Statement on Research Integrity in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations will be applied.

IRB Barcelona has appointed an interdepartmental committee, which is called the Committee for Research Integrity (hereinafter the “CRI”), whose aim is to actively share learning and good practice in scientific integrity among the IRB Barcelona scientific community, to catalyse the development of educational initiatives and to act as an independent support and resource in cases of scientific misconduct.

The CRI is formed by the Director, the Managing Director, the Head of an Administration Department, the Head of Legal Services, four representatives of the GLs and FMs, one representative of the Postdocs and one representative of the PhD students.

The CRI members are required to respect the anonymity and confidentiality of any interchange of confidential information, including Personal Data, even in the case of informal contacts.

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1.1.2. REPORTING MISCONDUCT

The researchers and related personnel have the commitment to know what constitutes misconduct in research and report any suspected cases or concerns following the IRB Barcelona Procedure in cases of suspected scientific misconduct. Those found to have committed misconduct will be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

As established by the Code of Conduct of the CERCA Institute approved by the Board of Trustees of IRB Barcelona, in certain cases where there is a conflict of scientific integrity, IRB Barcelona will inform the CERCA Institute and the CERCA Ombudsperson of the existence of this conflict in the initial moment in which the conflict is generated. The CERCA Ombudsperson may propose non-binding solutions that should be discussed and, where appropriate, approved by the Board of Trustees of IRB Barcelona.


In addition, within the framework of the Research Integrity Program approved by the Catalan Government, the Committee for Integrity in Research in Catalonia (CIR-CAT) was created in October 2018. Among the functions of the CIR-CAT is to advise on conflicts of integrity in research. The CIR-CAT will always intervene at the request of an entity, person or group of people interested in their advice. The resolution adopted by the CIR-CAT will always be in the form of a non-binding recommendation.

1.1.3. ORGANIZATION OF RESEARCH GROUPS AND FACILITIES

Research and technical development should be conducted in research groups or facilities under the supervision of Group Leaders (GLs) or Facility Managers (FMs) respectively.

On the one hand, GLs and FMs are encouraged to:

- (a) Promote and participate in the development of research and related activities of excellence.
- (b) Participate and contribute in the mentoring, training and opportunities for development of the researchers and technical staff under their supervision as well as of other staff from the institute when required.
- (c) Promote an optimal working atmosphere in which their staff can train and develop skills, following the accepted ethical standards in research.
- (d) Foster the exchange of ideas and knowledge to achieve common research and technological objectives.
- (e) Promote cooperation with other research groups or facilities in order to facilitate the exchange of ideas and knowledge among IRB Barcelona members and/or collaborators. Interact on a regular basis with IRB Barcelona members in the periodic retreats, faculty and plenary meetings, programme seminars and other institutional events, outreach activities, among others.
- (f) Participate and encourage participation in regular research group or facility meetings to discuss the progress of the research tasks and new publications that may be of interest.

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On the other hand, Research Groups and Facilities members are expected to:

- (a) Channel maximum effort into the tasks associated with their research or technological activities upon the schedules agreed.
- (b) Maintain fluent and regular communication with GLs, FMs and other members of the group or department representatives.
- (c) Keep a record of all the results and research/technological findings.
- (d) Participate in research meetings, attend training sessions, and spend internship in other centres.

1.1.4. ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Research involving animals, human tissue samples, and restricted materials

On one hand, all research projects that involve the use of animals or human tissue samples or confidential personal information must adhere to all legal and ethical requirements and other applicable guidelines. The projects must be approved by all the legally applicable bodies, ethical, regulatory or otherwise. Upon approval such projects will be executed in accordance to the applicable regulations regarding: (i) personal data protection, (ii) use of human material and biobanks, (iii) research involving animals.

On the other hand, the users of the animal house facilities will follow the rules established by the institution that manages this platform.

The experiments performed with restricted materials or substances must follow local, national and international regulations, procedures, and laws.

1.1.5. HEALTH AND SAFETY AND CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT


IRB Barcelona will ensure that the research or related activities carried out under their auspices, or for which it is responsible, fulfils all the requirements of Health and Safety, and Care of the Environment.

IRB Barcelona members performing research activities are required to follow all the measures and internal policies regarding health and safety, and environmental protection.

Any practice or product considered potentially dangerous must be carried out or used in compliance with the regulations and the good practices guides, which ensure the safety of IRB Barcelona members and collaborators and protection of the environment.

GLs should endeavour to:

- (a) Safeguard the health and safety of the employees, students, and staff under their supervision.
- (b) Ensure the enforcement of measures of safety, occupational health and those related to environment protection.

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All IRB Barcelona members are also encouraged to use energy resources responsibly, to segregate waste correctly, to incorporate the principles of sustainability and whenever possible to follow environmentally friendly practices.

1.1.6. RECORDING, DOCUMENTATION AND STORAGE OF DATA, REAGENTS, SAMPLES AND RESULTS

All data or reagents (biological or chemical materials) arising from research or technological activities should be recorded and properly stored. All collection and storage procedures for data and materials must be in accordance with applicable regulations with particular attention to the requirements of data protection legislation.

IRB Barcelona will provide procedures, resources (physical/computer), and administrative support to assist researchers in the accurate and efficient collection of data and its storage in a secure and accessible form.

IRB Barcelona members should ensure that the data collected are safely and correctly stored in order to avoid unintentional dissemination, unwanted loss, or leaks. Likewise, they should also take every measure to prevent unauthorised access to the data.


IRB Barcelona members are encouraged to use the institutional Laboratory notebooks that record original experimental work and authorship as support for publication and/or patent property rights for results.

When a member is leaving IRB Barcelona and has expressed interest in taking data, reagents, samples or results, an agreement should be drawn up between the person responsible for the research involved and the Institute. Access to original data/results should be granted to both parts, particularly in the case of a researcher who is willing to follow up his/her research career track in another institution whenever is legally possible.

In general, a researcher who moves to another centre should be able to take a copy of his/her laboratory records and data-collection notebooks, a copy of the existing electronic information, and/or aliquots of available biological or chemical materials, after a case by case study. The Innovation Department should be informed on the materials, information and data to be transferred and will give orientation to the Directorate team that will give final the authorisation of transfer. When the researcher in question is a GL, the Directorate (or a representative) will directly supervise this process.

When possible, all original information and biological or chemical material arising from a research/technological project should be stored indefinitely. Otherwise, it should be stored for a minimum of 10 years from the date of the first publication of the results, except in those cases for which the law allows shorter storage periods.

Finally, sharing of data and samples with third parties may be restricted for reasons of confidentiality, competition or availability. In all the cases, the transfer of material to a third party will require a specific Material Transfer agreement ("MTA"). The Innovation Department should be also informed about it.

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1.1.7. INDUSTRIAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

IRB Barcelona members will follow the rules set out in the IRB Barcelona Industrial and Intellectual Property Regulations (the “IPR Regulations”), which comply with the current applicable legislation. Members are required to consult this document (available on the IRB Barcelona intranet) for these matters.

With the purpose of preserving intangible assets and industrial property generated as a result of the research activities, IRB Barcelona will ensure that a fair value is applied to the research results, respecting the minimum market criteria in any valuation, negotiation or transaction with said assets.

1.1.8. PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION PRACTICES

Regarding the publication practices, IRB Barcelona is committed to promote the publication and dissemination of the research results and data. IRB Barcelona will also put the means to restrict the diffusion of confidential, proprietary and any other information not possible to disseminate for security, health or related reasons. IRB Barcelona will enforce its members and collaborators to follow the publication guidelines established by the scientific journals and publishers with specific care in the rights for (co-)authorship of the contributors. In general, any public communication will also include the (co-)authors which have been involved of the research or other outcomes communicated.


Following with good practices, it is prohibited that IRB Barcelona members plagiarize, falsify or fabricate any publication or data appearing on it. Misconduct at this level should be also reported (see section 1.1.2 of this Code).

In any public document or disseminated IRB Barcelona material, the affiliation of the institute and acknowledgement of support should be introduced correctly.

IRB Barcelona members who are not Group Leaders, Facility Managers or Administration Heads will require approval from their respective Group Leader, Facility Manager, Administration Head or ultimately from the Institute’s Director before submitting any type of publication or communication that includes their affiliation as IRB Barcelona. Publications include all types of submissions and presentations in both physical and digital formats, contributions to exhibitions or videos, as well as contributions to professional and institutional repositories. In the case of social media, for IRB Barcelona members wishing to include their affiliation in their profiles they are requested to include a disclaimer such as “views are my own” or “ views expressed here are my own” or “the postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent IRB Barcelona’s views, positions, strategies or opinion”.

Special attention should be devoted by the authors to “Open Access” policies as established by the European Commission and national legislation. The FAIR principles (findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable) shall be applied in the management of scientific data.

Furthermore, in order to ensure that the general public is informed about research conducted at IRB Barcelona in lay terms, IRB Barcelona researchers whose results have been accepted for publication should contact the IRB Barcelona Department of Communications and External Relations in advance.

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IRB Barcelona will apply a principle of rigour, objectivity and clarity in the communication of scientific contents.

The communication policy of IRB Barcelona will include the secondment to the CERCA programme of the Catalan Government.

1.2. FINANCIAL INTEGRITY

The economic and material means should be used effectively and responsibly, in such way as to ensure achievement of the goals foreseen in the research/technological projects, thus building the maximum level of trust within society. IRB Barcelona members should comply with the proper use and management of finances relating to the funding received by the institute. IRB Barcelona members must be able to provide sufficient evidence and justification of the correct use of the economic and material means provided. Members are required to avoid any kind of fraud or abuse when managing these resources and to report any concerns of irregularities as soon as they become aware of.

2. TRAINING ASPECTS


IRB Barcelona and its members recognize the mission of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential. In order to accomplish that IRB Barcelona and its members compromise to promote and maintain an environment fostering and supporting research of high ethical standards, mutual co-operation, open exchange of ideas, and professionalism.

IRB Barcelona will promote and support the career development and provide training and mentoring to its researchers with special care to young researchers. IRB Barcelona will support supervisors and researchers in meeting the legal and ethical requirements of conducting research.

2.1. TRAINING

IRB Barcelona commits to provide training for researchers to enable them to carry out their duties and develop their knowledge and skills throughout their career. IRB Barcelona will provide qualified mentors/supervisors to assist in the training and career development of young researchers and also provide career development and educational opportunities for researchers at later stages in their careers.

Researchers and technical staff should undergo training in order to carry out their duties and to develop their knowledge and skills throughout their career, repeating training where necessary to ensure that skills are kept up to date. They should identify needs for training when they arise and report them to the appropriate person (Group Leader, Facility Manager) as identified by IRB Barcelona.

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Summary of Changes

Version	Date	Description of the modification
01	21/06/2016	Approval of the document by the Board of Trustees
02	23/11/2017	Modification of section 1.1.8 to include the obligation to obtain prior approval from GL, CFM or ADH before submitting publications
03	12/06/2019	Adaptation to the CERCA Code of Conduct
04	03/03/2022	Modification of the composition of the Committee for Research Integrity (CRI) to include representatives of PhDs and Postdocs
05	31/10/2024	Adaptation to the new format