

**CODE OF ETHICS  
AND PROFESSIONAL  
CONDUCT FOR  
THE GENEVA  
INSTITUTIONS OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION**

## PREAMBLE

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This Code responds to the pledge by legislators to entrust the examination and handling of issues regarding ethical and professional conduct to an external, independent body that is common to the University of Geneva (hereinafter, UNIGE) and the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Western Switzerland - Geneva (hereinafter, HES-SO Geneva).

The Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is divided into two parts:

- A statement on the ethical framework highlights the key values that guide the missions and activities of the institutions.
- Guidelines for professional conduct in the fields of education, research and services provided by the relevant institutions, as well as respect for the individual.

The Code applies to UNIGE and to HES-SO Geneva, which includes the following six schools: Geneva School of Engineering, Architecture and Landscape (HEPIA); Geneva School of Business Administration (HEG); Geneva School of Art and Design (HEAD); Geneva School of Music (HEM); Geneva School of Health Sciences (HEdS); and Geneva School of Social Work (HETS).

UNIGE and HES-SO Geneva are referred to in this document as «the Institutions of Higher Education».

This Code binds all members of the Institutions of Higher Education's academic community: the teaching body, honorary professors, teaching and research staff, students, and administrative and technical personnel. Any person claiming to be a member of the relevant institutions must respect the Code in his or her external work.

## ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

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The primary missions of the Institutions of Higher Education are teaching, research, continuing education, services to the community, and the provision of services and expertise. These missions must go hand-in-hand with respect for ethical values.

1. *The search for truth* in the pursuit of knowledge refers to the key role played by the Institutions of Higher Education. It implies a rigorous mindset and meets requirements of integrity.
2. *Freedom of teaching and research* is part and parcel of academic freedom. It is the sine qua non of the search for truth. Furthermore, it requires independence in managing relations with professional contacts and partners. It is the responsibility of the Institutions of Higher Education and every member of the academic community to respect this freedom.

3. *Commitment and responsibility* towards the academic community, society and the environment result from the public mandate entrusted to the Institutions of Higher Education. Academic freedom goes hand-in-hand with a responsibility towards the community in which the Institutions of Higher Education are stakeholders. This gives rise to duties and obligations.
4. *Respect for the individual* charges the Institutions of Higher Education with protection of any person called in whatever way to contribute to their teaching and research mission, either as stakeholder or subject. This requires the fair treatment of the various members of the academic community, including people in positions of vulnerability.

## GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

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The ethical framework outlined above stems from the duties and rights applicable to the academic community in its entirety.

### **1. Search for truth**

- a) The search for truth is not possible without critical thinking. The Institutions of Higher Education encourage discussion and debate about the knowledge and know-how that they produce and transmit.
- b) The search for truth requires competence, critical observation of the facts, experimentation, comparing and contrasting points of view and relevant sources. It is open to innovation and creativity. It depends strongly on methods and procedures that guarantee objectivity, impartiality and authenticity. Presenting different opinions and schools of thought represents a significant contribution to the search for truth, without in any way excluding the voicing of critical views, while respecting the individual.
- c) Any individual engaged in research must ensure that integrity is maintained in his or her quest for knowledge, in the interpretation and application of the results and in the structuring of his or her research. This requirement prohibits any form of data falsification and plagiarism.
- d) The contribution of any person who has participated in designing and carrying out a research project or the content of a course shall be recognised in a spirit of fairness. In the same way, students must clearly indicate the contributions of others to their work.

### **2. Freedom of teaching and research**

- a) The Institutions of Higher Education guarantee the academic freedom of teaching and research within the scope

of the field of training or sector of activity defined by the institution. This freedom is essential to the development, sharing and transmission of knowledge as well as to innovation and creativity.

- b) Academic freedom also gives rise to certain obligations. It is exercised in compliance with laws, study regulations, assigned duties, and competencies. In the fields of practical training, it takes into account the specific constraints of professional know-how. The exercise of academic freedom remains subject to the values of this Code and the resulting standards.
- c) Academic freedom is closely linked to individual independence and integrity. Accepting gifts, favours, invitations or other benefits is subject to an obligation of transparency in compliance with specific directives and regulations.
- d) Facts or situations that could demonstrate ties of interest or create a conflict of interest, whether of a moral or pecuniary nature, must be declared.
- e) Every individual who is a member of the academic community is subject to a duty of loyalty to the institution in his or her internal and external work.

### **3. Commitment and responsibility**

- a) The Institutions of Higher Education contribute to the scientific and cultural influence of the community and to its cultural, social, ecological and economic development from a perspective of sustainability. They guarantee the transmission of knowledge and know-how in line with the realities and professional needs of the world of tomorrow and make use of appropriate teaching methods.
- b) Members of the academic community promote the public sharing of knowledge with the widest possible audience. Insofar as this does not directly prejudice their research activities, they endeavour to ensure that the content is as accessible as possible to the scientific and artistic community.
- c) In the context of their missions, the Institutions of Higher Education guarantee the quality of the training provided to students. The training of future generations is a key objective. It is their responsibility to constantly assess the education provided, the study plans and their content. It is also their responsibility to respect the standards and procedures governing their own operations, in the areas of teaching, research and provision of services.
- d) The Institutions of Higher Education and all their members must assess the consequences of their actions and be able to report on them. It is expected that scientific, technical and artistic research shall take into account the precautionary principle, and that it questions its own purpose and the potential consequences of its outcomes on society and the environment.

- e) The utmost attention is given to individuals who are the subject of research in the social and life sciences in order to preserve their independence and personal integrity and to ensure they are safeguarded against the disclosure of data that could harm them. Research based on experiments involving living beings is conducted in strict accordance with the specific ethical principles that guide its use.
- f) Members of the academic community shall respect the laws and regulations that apply to them. They shall recognise the values and standards in this Code when exercising their activities. In their contractual relations with third parties, the Institutions of Higher Education must be able to demonstrate their respect for the values stated in this Code, and the standards of operation and behaviour that it lays out.
- g) The production, collection, use and transfer of data are subject to transparent procedures. They must ensure compliance with respect for the individual, the interests of the Institutions of Higher Education and those of the community in general.
- h) Members of the academic community shall use wisely the resources made available to them, whether public or not, and justify their rational and transparent use. They shall refrain from fraudulent or dishonest acts.

#### **4. Respect for the individual**

- a) The Institutions of Higher Education promote the principle of equal opportunity. They prohibit any discrimination based on, among other things, sex, ethnic or social origin, genetic characteristics, religious beliefs, political opinions, membership in a national minority, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity, both in fulfilling the tasks of teaching and research and in the relationships within the academic community. Particular consideration and safeguarding shall be granted to individuals in a position of vulnerability.
- b) All sexist behaviour or psychological or sexual harassment is prohibited.
- c) The Institutions of Higher Education, together with every member of the academic community, are committed to fostering a work environment where people are treated equally and with respect, regardless of their posting, remit or hierarchical position. The Institutions of Higher Education promote a stimulating working environment and a climate of trust that meet the expectations of the institution together with the professional development and personal fulfilment of staff. Everyone's expectations must be communicated clearly and everything must be done to ensure that potential conflicts are resolved quickly. It is a responsibility shared by all to ensure that a well-understood collegiality is maintained, allowing for the expression of diverse points of

view and criticism in mutual respect and recognition of the rights of others to express their opinion.

- d) The same spirit of fairness and respect is applied to the procedures for appointing, assessing and hiring staff. These procedures are based on criteria pertaining to the qualifications and competences of the relevant individuals. Where there are equivalent qualifications, preference is given to the individual belonging to the under-represented gender. This spirit of fairness applies also to disciplinary procedures and decisions.
- e) The organisation and conduct of examinations guarantee that students are treated fairly based on objective and impartial criteria.
- f) Respect for the individual guarantees all members of the academic community under contract the right to fair remuneration for their services, a description of their responsibilities, and periodic assessment interviews and briefings based on transparency and in accordance with the appropriate procedures, as well as the protection of personal data.

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#### **HES-SO Geneva**

Text given pre-approval by the HES-SO Geneva Representative Council (CR) on 2 October 2019. The HES-SO Geneva Governing Board adopted the Code at its meeting on 7 October 2019.

#### **UNIGE**

Text given pre-approval by the University Assembly on 30 October 2019. The Rectorate adopted the Code at its meeting on 18 November 2019.

The Code entered into force on 5 December 2019.

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This translation is provided for information purposes only and has no legal force. The French text remains authoritative.

