

Practice Committee - Annual Report 2017

Introduction

The Practice Committee at CBS was established in late 2016, and hence 2017 was the first full year of the committee's work. 2017 was highly influenced by the case of the Agricultural report, see description below, but there were also other activities taking place in the committee.

First of all, the rules governing the Practice Committee were revised in order to take into account the new Danish 2017 Act on Research Misconduct. The new rules stipulate that the Practice Committee will review all complaints regarding Questionable Research Practice performed by employees at CBS. CBS shall forward complaints concerning research misconduct to the national committee.

Moreover, the chair of the committee, Søren Friis Hansen, has spent quite some time in visiting a number of departments, presenting the Committee as well as the new Danish 2017 Act on Research Misconduct as well as the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. Supplementary to this effort, the Practice Committee has produced a folder on the basics regarding concepts and procedures concerning complaints.

Meetings

On top of meeting regarding concrete cases, the Practice Committee met twice in 2017 in order to discuss relevant topics. These meetings served two purposes:

- To follow up on the new legislation in order to prepare new rules governing the Practice Committee.
- To follow up on lessons learnt in the case of the Agricultural Report.

It may be of interest to recapitulate the conclusions regarding lessons learnt in the Agricultural Report, and hence they are summarized below:

Research Practice

- A. The complaint regarding the Agricultural Report was special in the sense that it was sent by the Academic Council and Senior Management. In normal cases, complaints are expected to come from a member of the public, a researcher from a different institution or a researcher (group of researchers) at CBS.
- B. The Practice Committee does not act as prosecutor and cannot act as an investigator. When deciding a complaint, the principal source of information for the Committee is the material contained in the complaint and responses received from the parties. The Committee may decide to invite an independent expert, whose task shall be to give an opinion based on an interpretation of the material presented in the complaint and the responses received. The Committee may invite the parties to submit further material and/or to appear before the Committee to give oral evidence. However, the Committee generally has no possibility to verify the sources or the data behind the research. Thus, it is important that complaints to the Practice Committee are well founded and substantiated – for this reason the requirements were specified in the new rules governing the Practice Committee.

- C. The Practice Committee suggested to draft a manual for complainants as well as recipients of complaints. Such a manual has been made produced.
- D. All departments were advised to take time to reflect on the concept of good research practice and the role of the Practice Committee. All departments were offered to be visited by the chair of the committee.
- E. The Practice Committee noted that all researchers are responsible for the research they perform. Hence, they are obliged to reject research projects that do not live up to the Danish code of conduct on research integrity. Moreover, it is their duty to reject requests from funders, if these requests fall outside the given contract.
- F. The Practice Committee found that good research practice must not prevent cross disciplinary collaboration. Thus, researchers are e.g. in publications only responsible for research within their own field(s).

Contracts and legal framework

- G. The Practice Committee found it to be most relevant that CBS as an institution provides the relevant administrative setup for researchers to take part in collaboration, particularly with private companies.
- H. Legal was advised to set up an annual seminar in which all relevant legislation regarding cooperation with private companies and foundations.
- I. Legal was advised to set up a hotline and draft a manual on topics that researchers and heads of departments should be particularly aware of when setting up projects with private companies and foundations.
- J. The Practice Committee noted that all contracts with CBS researchers are signed by a representative of CBS management, as CBS is responsible for any liabilities in case of a failed project. The Practice Committee found it to be relevant that this point is communicated widely across CBS, e.g. via the above mentioned manual.
- K. The Practice Committee suggested that it is specified in contracts and in guidelines that the researcher has the final decision on methodology and sources to be used, in accordance with the Danish Code of Conduct on Research Integrity.
- L. CBS' contractual guidelines must clearly specify the responsibility of the researcher and the head of department in assuring that the research setup (steering groups etc.) fits with the criteria for good research conduct and freedom of research.
- M. The contractual guidelines must further specify to which extent a researcher is responsible for verifying information concerning external parties' costs etc., e.g. payment in kind.

Communication

- N. The Practice Committee found it to be highly relevant that the existing guidelines regarding communication are revised, e.g. to make clear when CBS' logo can be used and how external partners can be involved in drafting press releases etc.
- O. Guidelines regarding communication of research must make it clear that preliminary results must be clearly presented as such and that all results (preliminary or not) must live up to the criteria for good research conduct.
- P. The Practice Committee specified that it communicates via the chair of the committee and within the interpretation of the law stipulated by CBS, e.g. concerning confidentiality. It is noted that it is the task of Senior Management to decide on and communicate consequences of a verdict from the Practice Committee.

Concrete cases

In 2017 the Practice Committee received two complaints regarding Research Practice, and the committee completed work on a third complaint, received in 2016 (the complaint regarding the Agricultural Report). It should be noted that CBS is not able to publish the decisions made by the Practice Committee and that anonymized must not be referable to individuals.

Case 1: The Agricultural Report

In December 2016, the Practice Committee received a complaint regarding the so-called Agricultural Report. The complaint was made by the Academic Council and Senior Management, and it was made public on CBS' homepage. The Practice Committee concluded its investigation in April 2017, but it is not possible for CBS to publish the conclusions (they are, however, available on the Internet from other sources).

Case 2: Complaint regarding modification of material

In January 2017 (and late December 2016), the Practice Committee received a complaint concerning modification of material (an Urkund-report) sent to the Practice Committee in a previous case. The Practice Committee dismissed the complaint as unfounded as the accused had not been involved in producing the Urkund-report (which was made by the library at CBS as back ground material for the Practice Committee), and the Practice Committee had been made aware of this.

Case 3: Complaint regarding possible plagiarism

In June 2016 the Practice Committee received a complaint regarding possible plagiarism by a former employee at CBS. After hearing the parties and receiving an opinion from an independent expert, the Committee remained in doubt as to the nature of the problem. Since the Committee was not certain whether the case concerned plagiarism or Questionable Research Practice, the Committee decided in accordance with the 2017 Act on Research Misconduct, to forward the case to the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct in order to be advised if the case shall be dealt with by the Practice Committee or the national committee. CBS awaits answer from the national committee.