

## RE: Forskningsetiske retningslinjer - Feedback

I am Professor at the Institute of Communication Studies (IMK) at the University of Oslo. I am contacting you to provide some feedback about the draft document of the Forskningsetiske retningslinjer (<https://www.forskningsetikk.no/contentassets/c3527a26c0b142f2a0cd00c638613ecf/horingsnotat-nesh-retningslinjer.pdf>):

### 1) Point 13 “risiko og sikkerhet”

The following formulation mentions ‘psykisk’ danger in relation, as it seems to me, to ‘samarbeidspartnere, informanter, medarbeidere eller tolker’:

‘Forskning kan i noen tilfeller innebære høy risiko for skade og for urimelige belastninger, ikke bare for forskere, men også for samarbeidspartnere, informanter, medarbeidere eller tolker. Disse kan settes i fare på grunn av forskningen de deltar i, ikke bare fysisk og psykisk.’

In my view ‘psykisk’ danger should be related more explicitly also to researchers.

The University of Oslo, where I am based, differently from universities abroad and other Norwegian institutions (ex. PRIO), does not have means to deal with the effects of research that turns out to be upsetting for the researchers. I have personally witnessed cases (involving both PhD students and a member of staff) where the researcher was affected by the field work experience and the content of the data that had been gathered. It seems reasonable to me that our institutions, given that these issues arise in the course of work activities, should provide support in such cases.

I want to stress that this should not become an obstacle to investigating “uncomfortable” topics. And none of these researchers mentioned above would have expected such a reaction to the data, but it did happen.

I have noticed that, as researchers, we are currently actively discouraged from collecting data that is “difficult” to handle. I think no data, properly handled, should be off limits. This is part of our duty and mission of researcher. However, it is also part of the responsibility of our institution towards our health and well-being to support us along the way.

### 2) Point 10 «Veilederforholdet»

‘Om det utvikler seg et tett forhold mellom veilederen og student/stipendiat, for eksempel intimt, seksuelt eller terapeutisk, er hovedregelen at veilederforholdet avbrytes.’

As for the issue of close personal relationships, I can report what the rules were at past institutions I worked at in the UK, in case they can be of any help. There the rule was that there would be a change of supervisor and the relationship would be declared to the Head of Department or, in case the Head of Department was the supervisor in question, to a third party in the department. The assumption was that a ‘close personal relationship’ was not wrong per se (two consenting adults), but that there could be a conflict of interest that could damage/interfere with the relationship supervisor-supervisee. There was also an expectation of respect for the confidentiality of the matter. The formulation there was actually more general as ‘close personal relationship,’ which one could say is more vague, but also broader

perhaps than the specific kind of relationships that have been mentioned in the text here? What about those who do not fit the description but could nonetheless interfere (for ex. a very close friendship?).

Many thanks for your attention and best regards,

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