Scientific integrity Charter

1 Objective

This charter is a preliminary project and the present version is therefore not definitive.
The evolution of science and its current practices require regular updates and the present scientific integrity charter has been drawn up with this in mind.

The Director of the school may decide at any time to refer to the President of the scientific integrity committee in order to have the charter modified. The said charter must be considered as an evolving tool aimed at reconciling the ethics, deontology and scientific integrity requirements inherent in the exercise of scientific activities in a constantly changing professional and social context.

It applies to all **MBS** staff, with priority given to those whose work is related to scientific activity.

2 Scientific integrity, a subject that is being structured and increasingly formalized

If scientific integrity is as old as science itself ("*Science without conscience is but the ruin of the soul* " Rabelais), in this 21st century it has become an acute concern. Contemporary society gives ever stronger credit to the results of scientific research in order to enlighten public decisions and fuel societal debates (economy, companies, entrepreneurship, climate, healthcare...). In this information and innovation society, scientific activity plays an increasingly significant role and research institutions must be exemplary.

Several international texts have addressed the issue of scientific integrity: The European Charter for Researchers (2005) specifies the conditions for carrying out the profession of researcher, including ethical principles. The Singapore Declaration on Scientific Integrity (2010) has fourteen points of responsibility, the first of which is integrity: "Integrity: researchers must take responsibility for the reliability of their research". Since 2011, there is also a European code of conduct for research integrity from the *All European Academies (ALLEA*) and the European Science Foundation (ESF). Almost all European countries have their own code of conduct, such as *The Netherlands Code of Conduct for Scientific Practice: Principles of good scientific teaching and research*. World conferences on research integrity (WCRI) are held regularly (Lisbon 2007, Singapore 2010, Montreal 2013, Rio de Janeiro 2015, Hong Kong 2019, Cape Town 2022). In 2007, *the European Network of Research Integrity Offices* (ENRIO) was created in Lisbon. INSERM and CIRAD have joined this network. The French Office of Scientific Integrity (OFIS), within the HCERES, was created in March 2017.

Adopting a proactive and innovative policy in terms of scientific integrity (scientific integrity committee, charter, central archiving, etc.) is therefore both a necessity that is imposed by the changes in our ecosystem and a strong strategic act that allows us to seize multiple opportunities and avoid multiple threats.

On one hand, any **MBS** researcher may one day be a victim of a breach of scientific integrity by another researcher. Whether one publishes articles, tribunes, books, etc. any intellectual production can be either unduly appropriated by others or diverted from its meaning for other purposes than those of research.

On the other hand, like any research institution, **MBS** must have bodies to prevent possible misconduct by its own staff and to promote good research practices. Its reputation and credibility are at stake.

3 The major objectives of the scientific integrity charter

Scientific integrity is a dimension that is becoming increasingly important for many reasons: the volume of research has increased enormously in recent decades, bringing new players into the academic arena without a long tradition of scientific publication, thus requiring higher levels of control. In addition, research has become more empirical, requiring new ethical codes for data collection, handling and storage. Added to this are the increased levels of competition among researchers, as evidenced by ranking systems, impact factors, promotion programs, etc.

In this new scientific and societal world, it is necessary for scientific institutions to guarantee the credibility, reliability and rigor of the work carried out by its members. **MBS**, with its growing scientific activity, intends to clearly and formally assert its position. Researchers and scholars must remain faithful to the ethics of science. The accumulation of knowledge and the debate of ideas must be guided by honesty, integrity and independence. This is why **MBS** has adopted a scientific integrity charter and a scientific integrity committee to clarify its policy in this area.

This scientific integrity policy has four major objectives:

- Consolidate the trust of our stakeholders (students, parents, financial partners, local and regional authorities, public bodies and the scientific community);
- Guarantee the solidity of our knowledge, at all stages of the research process, from the individual or collective conception of the research to its valorisation and dissemination in the form of articles and books, and including the sharing and transmission of knowledge;
- Prevent and guard against breaches of ethics and scientific integrity;
- Establish a credible and impartial internal procedure for dealing with breaches of scientific integrity.

This policy (charter and committee) is aimed at all **MBS** staff, with priority given to those whose work is related to scientific activity.

The policy is articulated around three cardinal principles:

- Honesty: the quality of the person who expresses himself or herself with sincerity, who respects the values of justice and truth.
- Integrity: not to harm the physical and moral integrity of its research collaborators, whatever their status, and with the greatest respect for others.
- Independence: the researcher must be able to enjoy full autonomy in their professional activity and complete freedom of thought, within the limits of strict compliance with the law.

There are many other ways to describe these ethical pillars such as objectivity, transparency, reliability, impartiality, etc. Below, we focus on what not to do, more commonly referred to as the failings of scientific activity.

4 The failings of scientific activity

Ethical questioning within scientific activity generally distinguishes five types of breaches, to which we add a sixth that deserves to be underlined and identified.

- Plagiarism
- Data fabrication
- Falsification of results
- Conflict of interest
- Unauthorized and/or unreferenced use of data
- Omission of an error

Each of these failures is reprehensible and damages the researcher's reputation and that of the institution where he or she works. It is the duty of every researcher to fight against these criminal practices. **MBS** makes every effort to prevent such breaches.
Research is rarely an isolated activity. It is most often the result of collective work and is always intended for a community (peers) to evaluate, disseminate and publish the knowledge acquired. Scientific research is a social and collective activity, which explains the need for a clear and concise deontology.

4.1 Plagiarism

To effortlessly assume the work of others is theft. Plagiarism causes prejudice to those who strive to advance knowledge by always giving credit where credit is due. Nothing is produced without others. We produce nothing but for others. If the community link is essential in research, it is out of respect for all those who have contributed to the state of our knowledge. Acknowledging the work of others is not only an act of humility but it is also a necessary element in the continuity of the immense chain that links researchers to each other. Citing sources is the most natural act of scientific research.

To take over ideas without specifying the source, to take over sentences *in extenso* without specifying the original text, is one of the most common failings of scientific activity. This is appropriating the hard work done by someone else. **MBS**, like all research institutions, wishes to express its strongest disapproval of this practice.

4.2 Data fabrication

Unfortunately, the history of science has sometimes given rise to such misconduct. Researchers who want to push forward certain theories and hypotheses, may sometimes try to invent data compatible with these theories and hypotheses. Whether total or partial, fabricated data is considered a clear breach of scientific integrity and must be fought against.

4.3 Falsifying results

The data is real, the results falsified. This is an unfortunate shortcut that may make it easier for the researcher to get published. Falsification may relate to an invention of non-existing

results or amplification of existing results. In all cases, **MBS** condemns such practices which pervert the essence of the scientific spirit. The best way to guard against this is to facilitate access to data for *reviewers*. By facilitating access to the data that enabled certain results, the researcher provides an opportunity for third parties to verify the results and make their own research more robust and credible. This accessibility will develop in the years to come.

4.4 Conflict of interest

In all areas of the economy and of social and political life, scientific research can be used to support a decision. The stakes are sometimes colossal. In order to remove any form of doubt, researchers must specify any aids and subsidies used to carry out their research. This allows the reader to decide how much credit can be given to a given piece of research in the light of this connection. In this area, transparency is the rule. There are no limits, no obstacles to public or private funding of research. On the contrary, researchers are increasingly asked to do *fund-raising*. But the trade-off in these conditions is that the researcher must be transparent and specify the nature of the relationship that binds him or her to a donor-funder.

4.5 Use of data without the owner's consent

Empirical research is based on measurements, data collection and therefore on databases, access to which is sometimes expensive. The collection work can take several months, sometimes several years, as is the case in epidemiology where registers are followed over decades. Data management is becoming a profession (data manager) with ever greater societal issues (big data, open data) but is also increasingly legally regulated (data protection, GDPR...). This is an increasingly sensitive issue. **MBS** aims to respect the strictest property rights in this area and prevent data management practices where data is used without the author's consent or authorization. **MBS** also aims to defend the interests of its researchers who produce data.

4.6 The omission of an error

Research is human process. Errors are inevitably made. Researchers have the obligation to correct or to report them.
According to **MBS**, there are three different cases to address:

- The first case concerns an error related to one's own publications. In this case, honesty and integrity suggest contacting the chief editor of the journal and offering either to withdraw the article or to publish a revised version with correction of any errors.
- The second case involves an error made by a colleague who works at the same research institution. In the name of loyalty, it seems natural and preferable to alert the colleague to the error he or she has made and, if necessary, to inform the institution's scientific integrity committee.
- The third case concerns the treatment of an error made by a colleague outside the institution. Under these conditions, it is advisable to contact the person and inform them and, if necessary, to inform the chief editor of the journal. It will then be up to this researcher and the journal to act according to their conscience.

In addition to these six breaches, we see other practices appearing that are still poorly defined but which border on unethical behaviour and therefore require vigilance. Until now, it has been up to the scientific community to detect and prevent them. But as scientific integrity becomes an increasingly important dimension, these behaviours are receiving

more and more attention. The scientific community is still struggling with how to deal with it and what rules to set.

We will mention just three:

- *Slicing* is the practice of cutting research into thin slices to increase publication volume;
- *Self-plagiarism* through identical data reuse or duplicate publication is a technique for conducting multiple and similar studies from a data set although there is no explicit cross-referencing of studies;
- *Strategic authorship* is a technique where authorship is granted without any real contribution.

5 Constitution of and referral to the scientific integrity committee

MBS has set up an *ad hoc* committee to deal with any problem related to scientific integrity. The work of investigating a case must be done in an impartial manner, taking into account the best interests of the parties involved.

To this end, the committee is composed of a minimum of three people, internal or external to **MBS**, and who actively participate in scientific activities.

The chair of this committee is appointed by the school Director for a four-year term, renewable without limitation on the number of terms.

The other members of the committee are proposed by the chair from among those who meet the necessary requirements, then appointed by the school Director for a four-year term, renewable without limitation on the number of terms.

Any serious or repeated breach of the obligations of confidentiality, impartiality, neutrality, or the rules relating to recusal may result, upon decision of the school Director, in the immediate removal of the member concerned from the Scientific Integrity Committee. This removal is not a disciplinary sanction: it is a measure intended to guarantee the integrity, independence and quality of the committee's work.
This committee may be consulted either at the request of the School Director or his/her representative, or by a member of the Board of Directors, or at the request of a member of the **MBS** staff, by contacting the President or one of its members who will relay the request to the President.

The committee members may be called upon to examine a request as a matter of priority. If necessary, it may call upon experts, either internal to **MBS** or external. The procedure for processing the file is subject to **strict** confidentiality. The committee must ensure the utmost confidentiality with respect to the identity of the persons involved in a case, including after expiry of their mandate.

The minutes are written in the form of a report to the school Director. The responsibility of the Scientific Integrity Committee is to review all referrals and to render advisory opinions. Its role is also to provide informal advice and guidance in a preventive capacity. Any operational decisions are always made by the school Direction.

A researcher may refer the matter to the Scientific Integrity Committee if he or she believes that his or her work is being subjected to scientific misconduct by a third party. The scientific integrity committee is also a body that defends the interests of the researcher. **MBS** researchers can be pressured by their funders, their scientific partners, other researchers from their institution or from outside. Researchers may sometimes feel

powerless in relation to certain practices, especially if hierarchical links exist (director *vs.* doctoral student, full professor *vs.* assistant professor…). It is important that every researcher knows that an independent committee is there to help them preserve their rights.

As of January 27, 2026, the Scientific Integrity Committee is composed of

- Pr. Olivier TORRES, President
- Dr. Jinia MUKERJEE, assessor
- Pr. Frank LASCH, assessor
- Pr. Karim MESSEGHEM, assessor