



Karolinska Institutet's ethical policy for supervision of doctoral students from other countries and cultures

This policy deals with the supervision of doctoral students from other countries and cultures. However, all the statements in this document can be applied to doctoral students generally.

Target group

This ethical policy document concentrates primarily on relations in postgraduate education between **both** the Karolinska Institutet's supervisor/supervisors and doctoral student/students from other countries and cultures¹. A willingness to understand each others' thinking, being and working is a prerequisite. The document refers to both foreign doctoral student/students who are in Sweden for the most part of their postgraduate education and those doctoral student/students who have their main supervisor/supervisors at the Karolinska Institutet but who are receiving their education in an other country or within the frame of agreements concerning international student exchange and supervision.

Ethical Council's view of the supervisor's role

The role of the supervisor (main supervisor and co-supervisor) is not only to successfully lead the foreign doctoral student to completion of a doctoral dissertation. It also involves an understanding of the doctoral student's culture and inner world. At the Karolinska Institutet, the handbook for Successful Supervision – A Dialogue Facilitator (<http://intra.ki.se/staff>) is a useful instrument to be used for guidance in relation ethics. However, this dialogue instrument has generally been developed as an aid specifically for use throughout postgraduate education at the Karolinska Institutet. The following **aims** of this handbook need to be mirrored from a culture and linguistic perspective in relation ethics:

- To promote trusting and productive collaboration that contributes to the development of skills of those involved.
- To help develop mature individual responsibility.
- To clarify expectations, roles and realistic plans.

Ethical issues in international supervision

Increasing international collaboration necessitates the formulation of ethical policies. Bilateral learning promotes the development of mutual respect between involved parties. However, supervision of doctoral student/students from other countries and cultures is also vulnerable because of the inherent power-relation involving, for example, the foreign doctoral student's/students' rights or the supervisor's/supervisors' role in the international collaboration and how this could impact on the position of the doctoral student/students. Consequently, in supervision, culture competence in relation to ethics is essential, particularly when dealing with questions such as: *How shall I relate to the doctoral student? How can I best meet the doctoral student's needs? What is the extent of my responsibility to this doctoral student? What are the consequences of my actions for my doctoral student and other key*

¹ Definition of culture in this context: the characteristics of the student's background, research and professional training and country context; supervisor's background, research and professional training, and country context.

people? What does the doctoral student know about Karolinska Institutet and Swedish living conditions, rights, responsibilities and duties? What do I as a supervisor know about the culture, living conditions, rights, responsibilities and duties in the country of my doctoral student? What do I do if problems arise?

Culture and linguistic competence in relation ethics – prerequisites

Successful supervision can only be attained with respect, reciprocity, coherence, and justice.

Successful Supervision

The Declaration of Helsinki, which was approved by the World Medical Association in Helsinki 1964, and revised several times, should always be the benchmark for national as well as international research. It describes the needs of vulnerable groups as well as the risk of their exploitation. The importance of transparency in the research process, informed consent, and that negative as well as positive results are published are stressed. This Declaration of Helsinki and its revisions should be clarified from a culture and linguistic perspective in relation ethics between the Karolinska Institutet's supervisor/supervisors and the doctoral student/students from other countries and cultures. **Key principles involve:**

Respect and contextual sharing

This requires that the Karolinska Institutet's supervisor/supervisors and the doctoral student/students from other countries and cultures as well as other key persons involved are physically exposed to a contextual sharing of social and environmental settings. This principle, in the process of collaboration, may be a challenge to individual-centred host countries and cultures when supervising doctoral student/students from countries or cultures where the individual is not always in command of his/her situation. Instead, it may be the family, workplace or the community that decides about the conditions. In such structures there may be serious inequalities in power and pronounced differences in status between the sexes and/or ages. In order to identify research priorities, methods and equal balance between partners in international research collaboration, the Karolinska Institutet's supervisor/supervisors should involve doctoral student/students and foreign supervisor/supervisors in communication **before** the study. Intellectual property including authorship of all publications should be agreed upon and acknowledged before the start of the study. Relevant study materials and information should be translated into an international scientific language (English). Also, courses in Swedish should be easily accessible to foreign doctoral students – this is an important way for doctoral student/students to understand how things work at the Karolinska Institutet and in Sweden, particularly for those staying in Sweden for more than 6 months.

Reciprocity and coherence

Participation of all collaborators as equal partners helps to ensure that the proposed research is acceptable and relevant to the context settings. An evaluation of what the resources and benefits of the research study may bring, in relation to both the Karolinska Institutet's supervisor/supervisors and the doctoral student/s/students' from other countries and cultures, should be made **before** the start of the project as this will promote a mutual understanding of responsibilities, roles, and needs. University collaborators from other countries and cultures should be regarded as full partners in research, and not merely as collectors of data.

Justice

Results from the research should be shared with professionals, study participants in other countries and cultures, funding agencies and supervisor's/supervisors' colleagues. Policy makers in other countries and cultures should be included in any dissemination plan.

When supervision does not succeed

What happens if the Karolinska Institutet's supervisor/supervisors and doctoral student/students from other countries and cultures do not agree? It is important to inform the foreign doctoral student about supportive facilities at the Karolinska Institutet such as Karolinska Institutet's Ethical Council and doctoral Ombudsman. The Strategy Group for Diversity at the Karolinska Institutet should be generally involved in matters concerning foreign doctoral student/students. Such facilities would also be welcomed at the participating foreign universities.

Good postgraduate training

Sharing of knowledge from the supervisor/supervisors to the doctoral student/students from other countries and cultures, such as how to access funding for post doctoral studies should also be in focus during the doctoral training and after the public defence of the doctoral thesis. According to one of Karolinska Institutet's eight research strategies, good postgraduate training can only be provided within competitive and high-quality research projects. This means that it needs funding.

International successful supervision needs to consider diversity

Last but not least, in all relations, both partners (Karolinska Institutet's supervisor/supervisors, the doctoral student/students and supervisor/supervisors from other countries and cultures) need to bear in mind that every human being is unique regarding thinking, being and working. The supervisor should remember:

If one is truly to succeed in leading a person to a specific place (e.g. dissertation) one must first and foremost take care to find her/him where she/he is and begin there (S. Kierkegaard).