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Guidelines for participation in *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course

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Table of Contents

Background	3
All new research or teaching staff are to complete the course <i>Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine</i>	3
Already employed staff should be given the opportunity to complete the course <i>Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine</i>	4
Staff affiliated with a Centre for Research & Development, other Centre or similar unit should be given the opportunity to complete the <i>Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine</i> course	4
Staff employed by Region Uppsala who are affiliated with the Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy should be given the opportunity to complete <i>Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine</i> course	4
All those who are going to be principal supervisors for the first time must complete the <i>Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine</i> course	5
All who have taken the <i>Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine</i> course should repeat it every ten years	5
Performance appraisals or equivalent should check participation in the <i>Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine</i> course	5
More about the content of the <i>Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine</i> course	5

Background

Together, the seven medical faculties in Sweden have developed a web-based course to increase knowledge about research ethics and the importance of an ethical approach in research. *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* is given in Uppsala by the Centre for Research Ethics & Bioethics (CRB) within the Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy, Uppsala University.

The course targets research and teaching staff within health and medicine in Sweden. The overall objective is to provide an overview of research ethics and an introduction to the ethical guidelines and legislation that researchers in Sweden must comply with. The course is delivered in English.

The course is part of the introduction for new employees in the Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy. Consequently, it is linked to Main Goal 4: *The Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy has an academic culture and an environment with national and international appeal* in "Implementation of goals and strategies within the Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy – Vision: Medfarm" (MEDFARM 2020/816). Sub-goal 2 of this main goal is: *The pursuit of excellence and quality in research and education is based on an approach founded on ethics and respect, shared by the entire disciplinary domain.*

These guidelines were established by the Disciplinary Domain Board on 23 June 2021, and are effective from 1 July 2021.

All new research or teaching staff are to complete the course *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine*

All new research or teaching staff in the Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy who are employed for at least one year, except those employed on doctoral studentships, must complete the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course during their first year of employment.

Other newly recruited staff groups actively involved in research or teaching who are employed for at least one year must also complete the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course during their first year of employment.

All scholarship holders in the Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy who plan to stay for at least one year, and are involved in research-related activities, must complete the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course during their first year.

Doctoral students are excluded since they instead take a research ethics course within the compulsory coursework part of their doctoral student programme.

For new employees or scholarship holders who have recently completed *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* or an equivalent course or have obtained equivalent knowledge in some other way, an equivalent assessment can be made. The equivalent assessment is to be documented and part of the recruitment team's record or similar. The Centre for Research Ethics & Bioethics (CRB) can provide assistance in assessing the possibility of credit transfers.

Already employed staff should be given the opportunity to complete the course *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine*

Already employed research or teaching staff, other staff who research or teach or participate in other ways in research or teaching should be given the opportunity to complete the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course.

Since these guidelines take effect from 23 June 2021, a large proportion of the staff in the Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy have not been given the opportunity to complete the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course. Those wanting to complete the course should be given the opportunity to do so. Similarly, group leaders should be able to give employees who they believe should complete the course the opportunity to do so.

Staff affiliated with a Centre for Research & Development, other Centre or similar unit should be given the opportunity to complete the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course

Staff affiliated with a Centre for Research & Development, other Centre or similar unit are not always employed by the Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy. Staff who research or teach or are involved in some other way in research or teaching, and who are affiliated with a Centre for Research & Development, other Centre or similar unit, should also be given the opportunity to complete the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course. Centre or unit directors or equivalent should be able to give staff who so wish the opportunity to complete the course, or staff who the Centre or unit director or equivalent thinks should get to complete the course, the opportunity to do so.

Staff employed by Region Uppsala who are affiliated with the Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy should be given the opportunity to complete *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course

Staff employed by Region Uppsala who are affiliated with, but not employed by, the Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy should be given the opportunity to complete the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course. Many people employed by Region Uppsala conduct research or teach at Uppsala University, and of course they should also have the opportunity to take the course. Heads of department or equivalent should be able to give staff who so wish the opportunity to take the course, or staff who the group leader thinks should take the course, the opportunity to do so.

All those who are going to be principal supervisors for the first time must complete the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course

Those who have not previously completed the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course should complete it before they are approved as the principal supervisor for a doctoral student.

For a period of time, the disciplinary domain will have new principal supervisors who are not new employees, thus having completed the course. That is why this requirement has been inserted here.

All who have taken the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course should repeat it every ten years

All those who has taken the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course should repeat the course or an equivalent course at least every ten years in order to maintain a good knowledge and understanding of research ethics. This is in order to maintain a high level of competence in this area within the disciplinary domain.

Performance appraisals or equivalent should check participation in the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course

During performance appraisals or equivalent, the Head of Department, or the person delegated to perform this task, should check and follow-up on participation in the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course to obtain an overview of who has taken the course.

More about the content of the *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* course

The national web-based course *Research Ethics for Postdocs and Researchers in Medicine* is provided in English by the Centre for Research Ethics & Bioethics (CRB). The description of the course states that:

“The aim is to give an overview of research ethics and to introduce ethical guidelines and regulations that researchers in Sweden are obliged to adhere to.

Content:

- Ethical principles and how to conduct ethical deliberations
- Ethical aspects of research with human participants
- The content and implications of the Swedish Ethical Review Act and when and how to apply for ethical permission
- The definition and consequences of research misconduct and how this is reported and handled in the Swedish context
- Publication ethics including the Vancouver rules and ethical conduct regarding authorship and open science
- The specific regulations concerning researchers at Swedish government agencies.”