



Agencia Andaluza del Conocimiento
CONSEJERÍA DE ECONOMÍA, INNOVACIÓN, CIENCIA Y EMPLEO

ANDALUSIAN AGENCY OF KNOWLEDGE

Code of Ethics

The present Code of Ethics was approved by the Rectors' Council of the Andalusian Agency of Knowledge in the meeting held on July 25th, 2013 and comes to replace the code of ethics of the previous quality agency AGAE.

Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics is a **key element in the management of the social responsibility of an institution or public entity**. From the outset, the concept "Social Responsibility" was linked to companies, referring to the incorporation of socially responsible practices, attributing a "social" sense to its activities.

The public sector has also integrated the concept of "Social Responsibility" in the management of its agencies and institutions, although at a later stage than the companies.

The search for efficiency and effectiveness in the use of the resources (material and human), the reduction of operating costs, the efficiency in public administration, the use of shared resources and their exploitation; and respect for environmental values through recycling and energy saving, are behaviours linked to the concept of social responsibility and have a positive impact on public policy and the main client of the public sector, the citizen.

The Code of Ethics makes up the main tool to **transmit the core values and code of conduct of an entity**, as well as to spread the mission statement and its functions. **It sets forth the principles that guide and govern the functions of the employees of any institution**, including the Governing Board and its governing bodies.

Purpose of the Code of Ethics

- The **ethics and conduct of the employees have a direct effect on the image of the institution**. It is therefore necessary to establish a code of good conduct to be adapted at the internal and external levels, especially when interacting with other entities, companies, institutions and citizens in general.

- It **sets out and delineates the conduct of the employees at the institution**, regardless of their professional functions.
- It **contributes to the social cohesion of the entity** and brings a sense of team awareness.
- The **constellation of core values** based on transparency, objectivity, strictness and social commitment – among others-, adopted and applied by all workers, **enhances reputation building and a clear perspective of the institution and of its principles**.
- The employees of the Andalusian Agency of Knowledge (henceforth AAC) are **public servants, thus expected to act at the citizen's service**. The AAC is an instrument of the Regional Government and as such subject to comply with the principles of public service. These principles are gathered in the Spanish Constitution, in Act 30/1992 of November 26, laying down the Legal Framework of the Public Administrations and Common Administrative Procedures, and in Act 6/1997 of April 14, on the management and operation of the General State Administration.
- At regional level, the Agency is also ruled by the Statute of Autonomy of Andalusia, and by Act 6/2006, of October 24, of the Government of Andalusia and Act 9/2007, of October 22, of the Administration of the Junta de Andalucía.

Objectives

The main objective of the Code of Ethics is **to reflect and regularize guidelines of conduct** for the employees of the AAC in their professional activities and their relations at work, rooted in righteousness, responsibility and transparency. Their conduct will be directed by the Agency's values, listed under 'Fundamental Ethical Principles'.

This document **informs of the Agency's values and principles to employees as well as interest groups** such as universities, research institutes, companies, researchers, public and private bodies in R&D, etc.

Scope

The Code is relevant to **all employees at the AAC**, regardless of their professional functions or fields in which they work. It is also relevant to those who collaborate with the Agency on matters of assessment, certification and accreditation and to the members of the Governing Board.

All have been invited to participate in the drafting of this document through consultations, revision and comments previous to the approval of the Code of Ethics.

These principles set forth ideals to which each employee should aspire. They have to be taken into account in decision making at the AAC.

Fundamental Ethical Principles

The daily activity at the AAC should be consistent with the principles of this Code. The Agency is an entity managing public resources within key areas of the Andalusian society. For this reason, the procedures, management and services must be exemplary, as should be the conduct of its workers.

1. TRANSPARENCY

All actions of the AAC should be based upon transparency, a principle that implies clarity and veracity when disclosing in-house information or to other bodies, institutions, public or private companies and others.

As a public entity, the AAC aspires to build relationships with its stakeholders (universities, research institutes, companies, researchers, public and private bodies in R&D, etc.) based upon cooperation and mutual trust.

This principle entails to act diligently and in accordance with existing procedures and through established channels without compromising the integrity of sensitive information of public interest.

The Agency will abide by the core values and guidelines enforced upon any administrative entity of public resources. Within its competences, special attention will be paid to the principle of transparency:

- When communicating results of assessment, certification and accreditation processes.
- When announcing the outcomes of calls for fellowships or advanced training and postgraduate aids.
- When treating information and data concerning the activities of the AAC.
- When handling information requests from stakeholders. The employees will inform them in a quick manner, especially on issues by which they are affected or procedures in which they intervene.
- When performing procedures of recruitment and procurement carried out by the AAC.

Complying with the principle of transparency shall not preclude the correct use of confidential information by the employees.

Confidential information will be handled with due care and following the legal provisions that regulate its disclosure.

2. OBJECTIVITY

The AAC guaranties objectivity and strictness when performing its activities and procedures within the framework of its competences.

At all moments, it will work to preserve neutrality, bolster public confidence in integrity, impartiality and equity of its decisions and actions.

This principle has special weight:

- In the assessment, certification and accreditation processes of the universities and their faculty.
- In the management, assessment and accreditation processes of research, development and innovation activities of the agents of the Andalusian System of Knowledge System.
- In the granting of fellowships and advanced training and postgraduate aids.
- In carrying out its functions of inspection.
- When certifying data and documents within their competences
- In the selection and hiring/recruitment process of personnel

3. INDEPENDENCE

The Andalusian Agency of Knowledge is a public corporate agency, with its own legal personality and managing autonomy. Its activities fall under the guidelines and standards determined by the Regional Ministry with competences in innovation and science.

Nevertheless, **in the assessment, certification and accreditation processes** of the universities and their faculty, as well as in the management, assessment and accreditation processes of research, development and innovation activities of the Andalusian Agency of Knowledge agents, the workers of the Agency and its collaborators hired for this area shall **enjoy complete independence**.

The principle of independence has special relevance when performing the processes of assessment, certification and accreditation.

4. EQUALITY AND EQUITY

The AAC ensures equality and equity in its relationships with people and institutions involved in its processes and activities. The Agency complies with the principle of equality of opportunity between men and women by encouraging equal participation of both sexes in the development of the Society of Knowledge and by contributing to the elimination of imbalances.

Compliance with the principle of equality and equity means avoiding discrimination or favouritism on the basis of sex or any other reason, particularly in the following cases:

- When granting fellowships and advanced training and postgraduate aids.
- In the assessment, certification and accreditation processes of the universities and their faculty.
- In the selection and recruitment process of personnel executed by workers of the Agency.

Complying with the principle of equality and equity, the AAC should ensure access to the premises for employees with disabilities, facilitating the normal implementation of the tasks assigned to them.

5. CONFIDENCIALITY

Notwithstanding the principle of transparency, the employees of the Agency **should make proper use of confidential information** such as personal data or information coming from companies and public entities.

Confidential information will be managed with due care and complying with the legal provisions governing the use and treatment of this information.

Employees of the AAC and particularly the executives should protect the confidentiality of all information in the course of professional service, with the exceptions legally established in the legislation.

Moreover, in the event of termination of practice, the employees should not disclose confidential information for their proper benefit or to achieve favourable treatment.

Employees should not communicate confidential information to third parties and must keep in secrecy the custody of this information in accordance with the Civil Service Basic Statute. The Civil Service Basic Statute stipulates the obligation to withhold classified information or works whose disclosure is prohibited by law, to exercise discretion in information related to one's position without disclosing information for their proper benefit or the benefit of third parties, or at the expense of public interest.

6. PUBLIC SERVICE AND SOCIAL COMMITMENT

Being an instrument of the Public Administration, **the AAC will safeguard common and general interests of the Region of Andalusia**, showing an overall attitude of respect and commitment.

At all time, the Agency will seek that citizens benefit from its activities and procedures. The employees must be fully aware that their work is a public service towards the citizen.

The employees of the AAC should abide by the ethical values of public service such as integrity, neutrality, impartiality, transparency in management, responsiveness, professional responsibility and strict service towards the citizen.

7. LEGALITY

The AAC **should always act according to current legislation** strictly applying the law,

standards and procedures regulating its activities no matter the circumstances.

The principle of legality includes protection of assets, tools and data pertaining to the Agency. Its use is prohibited without previous authorization, as is the transfer to third parties, unlawful or improper use or misappropriation.

8. COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

When performing its tasks, the AAC will **act, at all times, in coordination with the Regional Ministry of innovation and science** and other related entities and institutions, contribution to and **boosting the alignment of politics** and actions in its area of competence.

The Agency and its workers shall cooperate—when required and to the extent of its possibilities and resources at hand—**with other entities and institutions dependent on or attached to the Regional Government**, acting with maximum efficiency.

It will seek to cooperate with entities, public and private, whose skills, interests and scope are similar or complementary, at national and international level, whether these are dependent on the Spanish Government or the EU.

Implicit in the principle of coordination and cooperation is the commitment of the employees of the Agency to perform their tasks with team spirit, and bearing in mind contributions of others to enhance working together.

9. EFICIENCY

All the Agency's activity is governed by the principle of **efficiency and effectiveness when performing its tasks and making use of its proper or others resources**, including those from other entities of the Public Administration, whether material or human.

The employees of the Agency must seek to make optimum use of the resources assigned

to them with due respect for equipment, material and common spaces. The AAC encourages sharing resources amongst workers, whenever requested and depending upon the availability.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENT

The Agency's employees will **respect internal procedures and recommendations on contributing to sustainability and respect for the environment**. The workers will do whatever possible in order to minimize the impact of their work on the environment by fostering practices like recycling and adopting measures for efficiency and energy saving. They will promote environmental respect for the immediate surroundings, by spreading the AAC's commitment to the environment and applying it in their day-to-day operations.

Likewise, the Agency will attempt to reduce the use of toxic and pollutant materials and products by replacing them with recyclable ones respectful to the environment. The workers will alert the Agency's management when detecting any circumstance or situation involving inefficient use of energy, materials or other resources, even when this occurs in processes not under direct control of the Agency.

All activities performed by the Andalusian Agency of Knowledge will be conducted in line with the guidelines set by national and regional government regulations on environment and sustainable development.

11. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and safety at work is an essential component for the workers of the AAC. Employees therefore **have to comply rigorously with the rules and procedures in occupational risk prevention (Risk Prevention Plan)**, according to the rules and internal practices of each specific job position.

Every worker shall perform their work in a secure manner, looking after their own safety and that of the persons at work, encouraging compliance with the procedures, safety measures and measures of occupational health amongst co-workers and also people that collaborate or participate in the activities of the Agency.

Commitment to uphold the Code

The principles of the Code of Ethics must be understood and applied by all employees of the Andalusian Agency of Knowledge. Specific responsibilities according to the different professional profiles are:

Employees

- Read and observe the standards contained in the Code.
- Ensure dissemination of the Code in the work environment and between interest groups of the AAC, users, collaborators, suppliers, and others that interact with the entity.
- Pay attention to any changes that might modify the content of the Code.
- Be pro-active and suggest improvements.

Middle Management

In addition to the above mentioned, middle management has other responsibilities attributed:

- Promote ethical behaviour and solve any doubts about the Code, respecting confidentiality.
- Openly demonstrate their conscious commitment to the Code.
- Perform surveillance and resolve non-fulfilments in a fair, transparent and consistent manner.

Managers

In addition to the above mentioned, managers of the Agency have the responsibility to model and promote this Code, as well as to take into account remarks of the employees to improve

the Code. Managers also ensure that employees understand the Code and set the tone for conduct, as well as the middle management.

Conflict of interest

Employment/activity outside the public service shall not imply a loss of efficiency or productivity in the workplace. No means, on-call time, material or premises of the AAC shall be used for personal aims or profit.

When performing public or private activities others than those of the Agency that might give rise to a conflict of interest, the employee should report these to management.

A conflict of interest arises when public service employees perform or intervene in activities related to issues in which the interests of their work as public servants converge with their own personal interests, with those of direct relatives or third parties.

By accepting this Code of Ethics, assessors/evaluators state explicitly that there are no conflicts of interest with regard to the activities carried out. The following situations may lead to conflict of interest:

- Supervising the doctoral thesis of a project's applicant
- Having collaborated with project's applicants on publications or patents over the past five years
- Having a contractual relationship with or share funds or research projects with a project's applicant over the past three years
- Participate in similar situations in other economic or science & technology activities
- Having been disqualified by a project's applicant or maintain friendship or enmity with them
- Participate in the research project in process of assessment
- Participate in the proposed degree or program in process of assessment
- Whatever activity performed by the assessor/evaluator outside the public service related to the performance of the public function



The above listed situations also apply to other employees of the AAC. It is equally binding to all of the workers of the Agency.

Excellence and commitment

All the activity of the AAC is focused towards excellence, both the services offered, and its functions, its ability to meet the demands of its interest groups/stakeholders and the conduct and skills of its employees.

The AAC seeks to enforce the creativity of its workers in order to promote innovation and the generation of new ideas to stimulate the Agency's growth as well as the development of Andalusian society.

The employees of the Andalusian Agency of Knowledge perform their duties willing to surpass expectations and spare no effort to be of service to the citizen.