

Ethics Committee Regulation

Introduction

The main purpose of the Marie Curie Alumni Association Ethics Committee is to regulate ethics and integrity issues that the association and its members have to deal with within its current activities, as well as to ensure the correct application of the MCAA Code of Conduct and to issue guiding opinions on issues, dilemmas, conflicts or with opinions on conflict arising between members or bodies. The Ethics Committee is created in the course of a number of measures that were taken to reinforce the ethical behavior within the association and amongst its members.

This document describes the functioning of the Ethics Committee. The rules laid out in these documents are made to increase transparency on the Committee's activities and procedures so that members know their rights, duties and responsibilities. The rules elaborated by the Committee aim to involve members in taking ethical responsibility by demanding that members ponder their ethical choices when referring to the Committee.

Article 1

Competences

1. The Ethics Committee is responsible for guiding members towards acting ethically as well as for reviewing actions that seem ethically questionable. Amongst its responsibilities, the Committee will:
 - a) Give guidance on the interpretation of the Code, should a member be confronted with a difficulty or ethical dilemma;
 - b) Give advice to members who have difficulties solving their ethical dilemmas;
 - c) Analyse situations whereby a member blows the whistle on an action that the aforementioned member deems to be unethical and give advice to the involved parties to solve the ethical dilemma.
 - d) Solve conflicts between MCAA bodies and/or between members.
 - e) Report to the Board of the association and to its members through formal communications. The Ethics Committee will protect privacy and abide by the confidentiality principle in its communications to the Board: only aggregated insights or data can be shared, except in situations whereby the Board has given a case to the Ethics Committee itself.
2. The Ethics Committee gives advice and guidance to members only on situations that are related to their work within the MCAA and in the scope of the Code of Conduct.
3. The Ethics Committee is not competent to judge on potential sanctions against individuals, nor is it competent to express views on electoral matters. The Ethics Committee is not competent to review research projects for ethical approval, nor to give opinions on ethical matters that do not affect the MCAA activities or exceed the Code of Conduct providings.
4. Any case involving behaviors that can constitute a legal action will be reported to the board, which can then decide whether or not to follow-up on this. When such a legal offense involves a board member, then the Ethics committee will contact other board members individually to communicate on the case.

5. The Ethics Committee does not oversee the implementation of the advice: the manner in which members accept and apply the information received from the Committee is the responsibility of the members. It is the responsibility of the Board to take action against those members that violate the Code of Conduct or behave against a guiding opinion.

Article 2

Referring to the Committee

1. Any MCAA member can report a dilemma or ethical breach to the Ethics Committee according to the rules provided within the Code of Conduct. The MCAA Board, as a group or as Board members, can also report a dilemma or ethical breach to the Ethics Committee.
2. When a member refers to the Committee with a dilemma or issue, they must
 - a) describe the problem, the situation, give contextual elements;
 - b) propose at least one potential solution to the problem they describe, which must comply with the principles and rules laid out in the Code of conduct;
 - c) explain their doubts about the solution they are considering.
3. When a member of the Committee wants to report a case involving other Committee members, an extraordinary committee composed of the remaining Committee Members is formed, excluding those involved.
4. External stakeholders can bring an ethical issue to the Ethics Committee when this issue affects their collaboration with the MCAA.

Article 3

Outputs

1. The Ethics Committee answers requests by producing a guiding opinion. This written document features information about the case, the ethical issue, the potential solution suggested by the person who referred to the Committee, a motivated discussion of this solution regarding its ethical aspects. The Opinion can point out other solutions that would be ethically acceptable and in line with the Code of Conduct of the Association.
2. When members of the committee do not reach a consensus, the members who disagree with the majority of the Committee can add their adversarial motivation to the document.
3. The output of the Opinion is decided with the majority of the members present to the deciding meeting. In case of parity, the Chair of the Committee decides the outputs and members disagreeing are granted the faculty of the adversarial motivation.
4. The Committee issues once a year - and before the Annual General Assembly - a report on its activity which can also comprehend messages to the MCAA members of focused ethical issues as well as advice or proposal for implementing the ethical purposes and activities of the Association or suggesting needed amendments, adjustments or adjunctions to the Code of Conduct.

Article 4

Composition

1. The Ethics Committee is composed of 5 individuals who are independent of the Board of the association. From the total of members of the Committee, 3 members are current MCAA members appointed by the Board according to criteria of competence and experience, and 2 are external

persons who are invited to be part of the Committee by the aforementioned 3 Committee members who are also part of MCAA. These external members are invited based on their knowledge of ethics, competence, experience or key stakeholder position. Additional 2 external members may be appointed by the 3 MCAA members as substitutive members, if required.

2. All the members have the same rights and responsibilities amongst them.
3. In no case can Board Members be part of the Committee.
4. The 5 members elect a Chair of the Committee among the 3 MCAA members. The Chair presides the meetings, and oversees the contacts with the Board and other bodies, and appoints a deputy Chair, which takes his place in case of impossibility to attend a meeting.
5. The Members cease their function when a new Board has been elected. They continue to deal with current affairs until a new Committee has been appointed. However, they remain in charge of the open cases until they are resolved. The new Board should confirm or substitute the current members within 60 days. Members cannot be part of the Committee for more than two consecutive Board mandates.
6. If an MCAA member leaves the Committee, the Board is required to promptly appoint a new member. If a Committee member leaves the MCAA, it implies leaving the committee.
7. In case of evidence of a severe violation of the Code of Conduct by a Committee member, any Committee member can ask the Board to take action for the replacement of the member who violated the Code.

Article 5

Meetings

1. The Ethics Committee meets whenever called by the Board of the association, at the request of another member of the Committee, or at the request of a person that aims to raise an issue.
2. Meetings are valid when at least 3 members are present, including at least 2 MCAA members.
3. The advice and opinions written by the Ethics Committee are valid when at least 50% of the Committee expressed their views on the matter at hand.
4. Meeting minutes should be written for all meetings of the Ethics Committee.
5. The Committee meets at least once a year for administrative purposes related to the issue of the annual report, the review of the present regulation or the issue of suggestions for updating/amending the Code of conduct.
6. If a member misses without justification three consecutive meetings in a year, the Committee should ask the Board to replace this Committee member.

Article 6

Means

1. The Ethics Committee defines and requests the information and supporting documents that they deem necessary for the exercise of their functions, as well as the manner, periodicity and deadlines for submission of reports when needed. These supporting documents must be provided to the Ethics Committee at most 60 days after being requested.
2. The Ethics Committee has access to the resources used in the association and can emit requests for special needs to the Board, who approves or rejects these requests.

Article 7

Revision of the regulation

1. The Ethics Committee annually evaluates the present Regulation, based on the concrete experience resulting from its application, the best practices in the sector, as well as the legislation, rules and other relevant guidelines in the field of competences attributed to the Committee. Amendments to the regulation are made evident in the annual reports.
2. Whenever it is necessary to review it, the members within the Committee prepare a reasoned proposal to amend this Regulation, which they submit for the appreciation of the Committee and to share with the members of the association.
3. Any member of the association may raise their opinion to see changes to this regulation and the Committee shall consider those changes and report on why and how they addressed them or not.
4. When changes are not made, the Committee shall express their opinion and justification to not include/change the regulation.
5. In order to preserve the Committee independence, the Board cannot unilaterally amend this Regulation nor the Code of Conduct.
6. The Board can propose modifications of the Regulation or the Code of Conduct to the Committee, which will consider the suggestions and issue a motivated opinion upon their acceptance or rejection.