

Freedom of research, arm's length and transparency in research collaboration with external parties for which AU publishes the product

Many researchers have requested a comprehensive outline of the rules for research collaboration at ST. Therefore, here is a number of specific guidelines for research collaboration with external parties such as special interest organisations and companies, where the product is published by AU.

The guidelines apply for projects in which AU has a research interest, and where the results of the project are published in the form of reports, syntheses, white papers and similar (hereinafter referred to as 'the product'). The relevant head of department/centre director decides whether the project has a research interest for AU that justifies AU co-financing the project as grant-financed research.

These guidelines do not cover collaborative projects in which AU has a research interest in working with external parties on the performance of tasks and publishing peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals.

The guidelines do not apply to requisitioned research (IV, income-generating activities). Likewise, the guidelines do not apply to research-based public sector consultancy (consultancy for government agencies, businesses etc.). This consultancy has its own set of rules.

Principles must be practicable and useful

The principles on research integrity and responsible conduct of research, on freedom of research and arm's length, as well as on accountability and transparency are vitally important for AU. The principles are described in a number of documents on the AU website and on the internet (see links at the end of this document). The aim of this document is to make the principles practicable and useful in everyday work and to provide guidance on where you can seek help.

If you feel that your freedom of research is under pressure or feel challenged on the arm's length principle, do not hesitate to contact your superior or the advisers on research integrity. There is a list of contacts who can help you at the bottom of this document.

In a collaboration with external parties, the arm's length principle means that you stay independent of influence from the external parties in all research and communication: there must be no doubt that you have the final word. This independence must be unequivocal and clearly described, and this principle permeates these guidelines. Provided there is always open declaration and clarity about the collaboration, there is wide scope for collaboration with external parties, as long as your research integrity and freedom of research are intact.

If you are also employed by an external party alongside your employment as a researcher, or if you have your own company, it is your responsibility to ensure that there are no competency issues, and your dual role must be clearly described in the project.

1. Establishing a contract/cooperation agreement on the task, including financing

For all research projects, collaboration with external parties must be described in a contract for which the TTO has a standard. The contract must be clear and comprehensive, and it must ensure a clear agreement between AU and the external party on the research project. The division of roles must be well described, and AU researchers must have the right to publish their own results. Furthermore, the intellectual property rights to the results generated by AU in the project must fall to the university. The contract and communication with the external party up to conclusion of the contract must be recorded and filed. Any changes to the contract must be agreed, and all correspondence about the changes must be recorded and filed with the contract.

? Is there a standard contract?

(Yes, TTO has prepared standard wordings for a contract)

- ? What should the contract contain?
(As a minimum: title, the interests of the parties in the collaboration, start date, finances, hours, hourly rate, overhead rate, description of the project and the contributions of the parties, organisation of the assignment [project manager, advisory group/steering committee, division of roles etc.], agreed publication and its form, including principles for authorship, contributors and press, quality assurance procedures and possibly external consultation. These are all in the standard contract; the TTO will check that everything is included.)
- ? Is a letter of grant approval from an external party sufficient?
(No, a contract must be drawn up and signed by both parties. Only with regard to grants for which it is only necessary to report on how the grant is used, will a letter of grant approval be sufficient, see the AU delegation provisions.)
- ? How should any (co-)financing of the project by the external party be disclosed?
(The contract should state the amount and for what purpose the external party is financing the project. This should also be stated in the product)
- ? Who should draw up the contract? *(The TTO on the basis of your information.)*
- ? Who can help you to complete the contract?
(A person appointed by the department, for example the head of department/centre director, or section manager, can help you gather the information the TTO needs for the contract.)
- ? Do I have to draw up the contract myself?
(No, the TTO should do this. See above to find out who can help you with the right information.)
- ? Who should approve and sign the contract? *(The head of department/centre director.)*
- ? Is collaboration with researchers from another university or research institution also considered as collaboration with external parties?
(No, these guidelines only apply for collaboration with companies and special interest organisations, but in all cases there should be a contract clearly describing the division of roles, etc.)
- ? What do I do about personal data and GDPR? *(Ask the TTO.)*
- ? Can I set up a joint knowledge synthesis with a company?
(Yes, as a researcher you can prepare a joint knowledge synthesis with a company, but you should be careful on publication: If the product is to be published as an AU report, it must clearly state what the external party has contributed, and what you, an AU researcher, are responsible for and have contributed. Of course, the product can be published as a peer-reviewed article)

2. Organisation of collaboration

The organisation of collaboration with the external party should ensure that the division of roles and responsibility for conducting the project are clearly laid down and known to all parties involved. The organisation should also ensure that, as a researcher, you have the final word in relation to conducting the project. The arm's length principle also applies here.

- ? May an external party be the project manager?
(Yes, however, it is important to make sure that the responsibilities and roles are clearly described, so that your freedom of research and the arm's length principle do not come under pressure. In general, an AU researcher should be the project manager, but there may be circumstances which make it necessary to have an external party as the project manager. Remember that, as a researcher, you govern the choice of methods and

materials, how results are presented, as well as the conclusion of your work, and that this must be clearly stated. Your conclusions as a researcher must not be limited by the external party, and you must always have the final word.)

- ? May external parties be in a steering committee/advisory group?
(Yes, if the steering committee has no controlling influence on choice of methods and materials, how results are presented and the conclusion because, as a researcher, you must always have the final word. Make sure that this is clearly stated. A steering committee can ensure progress in the project, it should never control your research. Again: Your conclusions as a researcher must not be limited by the external party.)

3. Performing the task – ensuring freedom of research

Freedom of research means that, as a researcher, you have the freedom to choose a research topic, define research issues, choose materials and methods to find the answers, and to present and discuss results and reasoning in public. As a matter of course, as mentioned under section 1, a contract restricts your freedom of research in relation to choosing a research topic, but it does not restrict your freedom to define issues, choose materials and methods, and present results. If, as a researcher, you are not able to vouch for these aspects, you should not engage in the project.

- ? Can an external party decide how to conduct the project?
(No, you have freedom of research, so you decide how to conduct the project. The external party can make suggestions, provided you have the final word, and you can vouch for your decision as a researcher.)
- ? Who can decide which research methods to use?
(Only you as a researcher can decide which methods you want to use. You are welcome to accept suggestions for methods from the external party, but you as a researcher have the absolute final say in deciding on the method. You must be able to vouch for the choice of method.)
- ? Who can decide that some data should be omitted?
(Only you as a researcher can decide, and then only by describing what data you have omitted and why.)

4. Comments and quality assurance of the product – transparency and open declaration

In any collaboration with external parties, the arm's length principle means that you have to make sure that you have the freedom of research to conduct the project with the contributions the external party wishes to include. There must be no doubt that your research and communication are independent of any decisive influence from external parties, and that you as a researcher always have the final word. Transparency and open declaration in the process are crucial: write what you and the external party have done every time.

- ? Should the product always be academically quality assured? *(Yes, always. Read more below.)*
- ? Can an external party comment on a product?
(Yes, and this must be agreed in the contract in advance. The external party may only suggest clarifications or explanations of the content and conclusions of the draft, and comments on any misunderstandings in relation managing the basis made available for the project by the external party. Comments from external party must be written and kept on the project file. You should note your own thoughts on the external comments, and then store your memo on the project file as well. Make sure that you maintain your research integrity when you deal with the comments.)

- ? Who can write about the different parts of the product?
(The general rule for authorship is described in the AU policy for research integrity (see link at the end of this document). To qualify as an author, the contribution to the product must contain as a minimum:
 1. *Substantial contributions to the conception or design, data collection, analysis or interpretation of data, and*
 2. *Substantial contributions to the drafting of the publication.**Authors must approve the final research publication, and AU expects anyone who accepts authorship also to assume responsibility for the academic integrity of the overall work. As a general rule, there should be no joint authorship between AU researchers and external parties on products published by AU. It must be agreed in advance whether and for what reason external parties can be co-authors or contributors. If there are any contributions in the form of data from the external party, this must be clearly stated in the product as well as how this data has been included. The product must also state if and how external parties have contributed in any other way to the project. If an external party is involved as the author of a chapter, the chapter should clearly show what the external party has authored.)*
- ? How do I document an external party's comments on the product?
(An appendix with the comments from the external party, and the researcher's opinion on these comments, should be kept on the project file. It is important to ensure your academic integrity. Correspondence should be filed, and the first part of the product should describe how the external party has contributed.)
- ? Who should quality assure the product academically?
(Three options: A well-known, internal peer, a well-known, external peer, and an actual peer review by an anonymous researcher, see below.)
- ? What are my options for academic quality assurance of the product?
(- Academic quality assurance in accordance with the principles of peer review of scientific publications, but primarily using reviewers from within AU. The person who completed the academic quality assurance should be stated in the publication. Remember that authors and co-authors cannot be responsible for the peer review.
- Academic quality assurance in accordance with the definition for peer review of scientific publications using external reviewers from research institutions with competencies within the field of study. The person who completed quality assurance should be stated on the publication. This procedure is typically used in connection with large projects completed in English.
- Academic quality assurance in the form of an actual peer review. Peer review is primarily used in connection with publication in a scientific journal.)
- ? How do I show how the product has been professionally quality assured and who did it?
(The colophon in the product describes how the product has been quality assured and by whom. For peer review, which is generally anonymous, just the process is described.)
- ? Is there any other form of quality assurance than academic?
(Yes, summary, language, grammar, layout, picture selection, consistency with other research, etc.)
- ? Who is responsible for other forms of quality assurance than academic?
(The department. If the product is published by DCA/DCE, DCA/DCE is responsible for other quality assurance.)

5. The project is concluded with publication of results, press, etc.

When AU publishes the product, it must clearly state how the product was produced, including who financed it, wrote it, quality assured it, commented on it, and contributed to it in general. The outside world must clearly be able to see that the project has been conducted independently of the external party. If press material is distributed, the same guidelines apply as for the product: Maintain your research integrity and do not let external parties tone the wording of the press material.

Filing all relevant documents should ensure that you and your colleagues are able to retrieve your material, and that AU is able to accommodate any requests for access to documents.

- ? How should the product be designed?
(When you conclude the contract, you should agree whether the product is to be a memo, a report, an article in a specialist magazine, a scientific journal, etc.)
- ? Who should be listed as authors if the product is published by AU?
(As a general rule, only AU researchers should be listed, so that it does not appear as if there was co-authorship with the external party. The external party's contribution must be clearly defined and must be clearly declared. This may be individual chapters, data basis, input for tables and other individual elements in the product. If there has been close collaboration throughout the entire process and the contributions cannot be separated clearly, the product must not be published by AU. Instead, it should be a peer-reviewed article)
- ? Who should be stated as contributors (acknowledgements)?
(Contributions from project partners and intellectual contributions from others should be declared, recognised and cited in the text or under 'Acknowledgements' with a wording approved by the persons being acknowledged. This is often where the external party will be acknowledged in products published by AU.)
- ? Where should the information on authorship and contributors be stated?
(At the front of the product, in the colophon and/or in the foreword.)
- ? Where should the information on funding be stated?
(In the collaboration contract prepared by the TTO on the basis of your information, as well as at the front of the product.)
- ? How should it be stated that the external party has commented on the product?
(Forms with comments and responses to the comments should be kept on the project file)
- ? What should be filed?
(All incoming and outgoing correspondence, as well as all business-critical/project-related internal correspondence, etc. See also the upcoming filing guidelines for ST.)
- ? Who is responsible for filing?
(The researcher is responsible for ensuring that all relevant material is filed. How filing is organised can be agreed locally.)
- ? Who is responsible for creating the file for the project?
(Usually the researcher, but other arrangements can be agreed locally.)
- ? Who can prepare press material?
(You can get help from the department/DCA/DCE. The external party must not have any influence on press material that is distributed from AU. Joint press releases are possible, provided it is clearly stated it is a joint press release, and provided it is clear who is making statements about what.)
- ? Can the external party write press releases issued from AU? (No.)

- ? Can I contribute to a press release from an external party?
(As a rule, AU researchers are not quoted in press material from external parties. Press material issued by the external party with reference to the product must be approved by you.)
- ? Who can talk to the press about the project?
(As a researcher, you are entitled to make statements about everything. If others misinterpret the product, you have an obligation to draw attention to this, possibly with help from your department. With regard to freedom of speech, see the link below to the guidelines on the topic from the Ministry of Justice (in Danish),)

Further questions

If you have any questions about application of these guidelines, please contact the staff at AU who are responsible for supporting you in your work:

For questions regarding these guidelines themselves: Contact the department management team at your department.

For questions regarding contracts: Contact the TTO:

<https://www.au.dk/samarbejde/teknologioverfoersel/kontakt/>

Questions about filing: Contact the secretariat at your department.

Questions about peer review: Contact the department management team at your department.

Questions about the press: Contact the department press officer.

Read these guidelines so that you understand the background

AU's updated policy for research integrity, freedom of research and responsible conduct of research:

<https://medarbejdere.au.dk/en/administration/researchandtalent/responsible-conduct-of-research/policy-for-research-integrity-freedom-of-research-and-responsible-conduct-of-research-at-aarhus-university/>

The underlying Danish code of conduct for research integrity: <https://ufm.dk/publikationer/2014/the-danish-code-of-conduct-for-research-integrity>

AU consultants on responsible conduct of research and framework for freedom of research:

<https://medarbejdere.au.dk/en/administration/researchandtalent/responsible-conduct-of-research/advisers-and-committees/advisers/>

AU's delegation provisions: <https://medarbejdere.au.dk/en/administration/finance/kap3/delegation-provisions-external-funding/>

Instructions on managing external funds (in Danish):

http://medarbejdere.au.dk/fileadmin/www.medarbejdere.au.dk/forskning_talent/fse/Project_Administration/Instruks_eksterne_midler_2013.pdf

Universities Denmark principles for good research communication (in Danish): <https://dkuni.dk/analyser-og-notater/danske-universiteters-principper-for-god-forskningskommunikation/>

Guidelines from the Danish Ministry of Justice on the freedom of speech for public employees (in Danish):

https://www.justitsministeriet.dk/sites/default/files/media/Pressemeddelelser/pdf/2016/vejledning_om_offentligt_ansattes_ytringsfrihed.pdf