



CODE OF CONDUCT AND GOOD PRACTICES OF THE CATALAN INSTITUTE FOR WATER RESEARCH

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This Code is a living and dynamic document, open to a permanent response to possible new requirements of all types and is complemented by other regulations in force at ICRA.

INTRODUCTION

This ICRA Code of Conduct and Good Practice (referred to as "the Code") sets out the framework for the professional behaviour expected of all ICRA employees, including students, visitors and collaborators with a cooperation agreement with ICRA (all of whom are understood to be "ICRA Members"). This Code is based on several core values and is governed by guiding principles.

ICRA's core values are the foundations of ICRA's culture and define what our Institute stands for. For their part, the guiding principles of ICRA are configured as the guidelines or rules of action that will help all ICRA workers to put our core values into practice.

The first version of the ICRA Code of Conduct was approved in 2022 by the highest governing body of the Institute, its Board of Trustees, at the proposal of the ICRA Management. In 2025, given the renewal of the CERCA Code of Ethics and Conduct and the new social and technological realities, ICRA decided to adapt the Code to the new current reality, creating a second version. Subsequently, in 2026, ICRA decided to update its ethical framework to reinforce integrity as a strategic pillar. This update integrates three key axes: active prevention through ICRA's new Plan of Anti-Fraud Measures and Management of Conflicts of Interest, the creation of a Research Integrity Committee as a guarantor of our Institute's good research practices and finally, the Institute's commitment to protect against any type of harassment or discrimination.

As a scientific research institution dedicated to cutting-edge interdisciplinary research, it is necessary to ensure that our professional activities are transparent, ethical, respectful of human rights and equal treatment, and that they are maintained at a high level of integrity. This Code addresses the expectations of behaviour of all ICRA members in accordance with the Values and Principles set forth herein, while carrying out their professional activities.

In any case, compliance with this Code is promoted to all ICRA members. Violations or misuse of this Code must be reported in order to take appropriate disciplinary action.

In particular, all ICRA members must:

- Follow accepted ethical standards in research, as defined in the CERCA Code of Ethics and Conduct and the Charter and Code for researchers.
- Comply with current legislation on labour and Health & Safety.
- Comply with ICRA's Internal Policies and Regulations.
- Report possible conflicts of interest, both personal and financial.
- Protect the personal, confidential and research data required by law.
- Use the institute's funds and resources efficiently and profitably.
- Internalize the basic values and follow the guiding principles established by this Code

1. ICRA VALUES

I. Collaboration and Respect

Collaboration in the sense of mutual and constant support. Collaboration implies that people feel safe, supported, well represented, and that they are present at all professional levels, regardless of hierarchy. It means that people are service-oriented both internally and externally and predisposed to integrate knowledge and resources for the common good.

The basis of collaborative work is mutual respect, which is based on acceptance and attention to differences, and allows an approach free of prejudice and open to various ideas, as well as the construction of strong and enriching relationships.

II. Responsibility (scientific and social)

Responsibility is commitment to the profession and therefore acting in accordance with the principles of good faith, integrity, honesty and transparent communication, seeking and maintaining a clear code of ethics of conduct and adhering to best practices in science. It is based on people assuming the consequences of the decisions they make, being aware of and responsible for them, and reporting them when necessary. It makes scientific freedom possible and helps us to be reliable and relevant in the world of research.

III. Creativity and perseverance

Creativity is the driving force behind the initiatives and research proposals that lead to ICRA's success and international recognition. Creativity comes from curiosity, and it is the ability to move outside our comfort zone, valuing and integrating what already exists to transform it into something original, which otherwise could not exist. Creativity is also seen in the integration of different talents and resources to achieve innovative and high-impact results.

For the maximum fullness of creativity, perseverance is needed. Perseverance is the constant pursuit of realistic high performance, maintaining the focus on individual and corporate motivation and continuous learning to make processes, results and resources sustainable over time. It is based on understanding the demands of our jobs, knowing how to value internal and external resources and turning efforts into a source of satisfaction.

IV. Interdisciplinarity

Our interdisciplinary work environment is made up of versatile people with multiple talents. It also reflects the ability to contribute from different perspectives, integrating knowledge both at a group and individual level. It is based on the ability to operate in more areas than those mastered thanks to training and continuous development, which helps to create an adaptable and flexible system that is capable of achieving excellent results even with limited resources.

V. Transparency and Confidentiality

Externally, transparency means explaining, making things understood and establishing a relationship of trust with members, workers and society in general, acting openly and precisely in the delivery and communication of scientific and non-scientific results. Internally, transparency ensures consistency and accountability for our own decisions, identifying a frame of reference that allows for understanding.

ICRA, as a public research centre, is subject to transparency regulations, specifically Law 19/2014, of 29 December, on transparency, access to public information and good governance, as well as any other regulations that may be applicable to it. Thus, ICRA promotes transparency and accountability throughout the scientific process and in all its activity, deploying and applying the measures and objectives established in the Strategic Plan for Innovation and Knowledge Transfer of Catalonia and the Catalan Open Science Strategy, always in accordance with the principles established in the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science. In this regard, ICRA's operations and other strictly truthful information about our Institute are available on the Transparency portal of the ICRA website, as well as on the Public Procurement Portal.

In line, ICRA is committed to open science, as open data stimulates innovation and growth by removing barriers to access, use and exchange of data, and reduces costs. Thus, ICRA adhered to the CERCA Data Management Strategy, approved on June 3, 2020.

ICRA recognizes that well-preserved and easily retrievable research data is the foundation and integrity of all research projects. Research data have a long-term value for research and academia, as they are necessary for the verification, defense and protection of research processes and results, with a potential for widespread use in society.

The term 'data' is a very broad concept, but in general, it is any basic element of the research activity, necessary to confirm the results, and accepted by the research community (CASRAI Consortium). The data can be from source (observed, simulated, collected, processed, etc.) and presented in very different formats (numerical, textual, visual, etc.).

To achieve these objectives, ICRA works to ensure the generation of data adapted to the FAIR principles (searchable, accessible, interoperable and reusable), which emerged as a response to the need to homogenize and improve the management of research data.

Therefore, specific care will be taken to ensure that research data is as open as possible and as closed as necessary, following the FAIR principles to make them findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable for the entire community.

On the other hand, confidentiality must be maintained: all ICRA members are obliged to protect confidential information, internal or third-party. This obligation remains in force even when the person stops working for/with ICRA.

VI. Respect for human rights, equal treatment and non-discrimination

ICRA is committed to defending and respecting the human rights and dignity of all people, thus ensuring a work environment free of discrimination, where diversity is valued as an essential element for the

personal and professional enrichment of all the people who are part of ICRA.

Under no circumstances does ICRA tolerate any form of discrimination, intolerance, harassment or violence. Respect for the merits of each person is encouraged, as well as equity in the treatment of people and the distribution of resources.

ICRA respects people's right to due consideration for their dignity and therefore protects workers against any type of harassment. Precisely, ICRA has its **Protocol for the Prevention and Approach to Harassment** (available in SharePoint), in which the reference persons who offer support are named, an objective, agile and confidential procedure is created to report any fact of this nature and clearly defines which behaviors are considered to constitute harassment. In addition, regular training is given on harassment with the aim of raising awareness among the entire workforce, promoting a respectful culture and preventing inappropriate behaviour.

VII. Gender and intersectional perspective

ICRA understands that our richness lies in the diversity of our team. That is why the gender perspective is applied in a transversal way and at the same time an intersectional look in the Institute's operations. This commitment is materialized in the deployment of various and constant actions, such as the Gender Equality Plan and the Plan of Measures for the equality and non-discrimination of LGTBIQ+ people, the Protocol for the Prevention and Approach to Harassment, HR processes with an inclusive approach, as well as in the offer of periodic training in diversity, inclusive communication, gender equality and intersectionality.

ICRA wants to guarantee well-being and real intersectionality through measures adapted to different realities, embodied in the Policy for the reconciliation of personal, family and work life (available at ShrePoint): establishment of flexible working hours, the option of teleworking, adaptation of paid leave for people with disabilities or even with the recommendation to organize meetings at a time that favors the balance between personal and family life.

VIII. Guarantee of linguistic rights

ICRA, as a member of the Public Sector of the Generalitat de Catalunya, adheres to and is committed to the objectives and measures established in the Plan for the strengthening of the Catalan language in the university and research system of Catalonia.

ICRA will work for a correct and sustainable management of multilingualism, guaranteeing special attention to the protection of Catalan as the official language of Catalonia. ICRA is also committed to promoting the learning, use and consolidation of the Catalan language through free courses.

IX. Ethics in the use of artificial intelligence

All ICRA staff must bear in mind and comply with the obligations arising from the Artificial Intelligence Regulation (RIA) and Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the

free movement of such data and as repealed by Directive 95/46/EC.

That is why **ICRA staff is committed to:**

- Do not use AI systems for applications considered unacceptable risky, such as biometric classification systems based on sensitive characteristics such as political opinions or religious beliefs or emotion recognition or that manipulate human behaviour in a way that can cause significant harm.
- Do not enter internal, confidential, sensitive information or personal data into invalidated AI systems.
- In the case of using ChatGPT's ICRA business license, to do so without using sensitive information or personal data.
- Know the privacy and data use policies of generative artificial intelligence tools.
- Always validate the veracity and ethics of the results generated by AI before applying them to the work, ensuring that they are fair and non-discriminatory.
- Explicitly indicate the authorship of the content generated by generative AI in documentation and presentations, thus ensuring transparency.
- Inform individuals who are directly responsible for any vulnerabilities or related security concerns.
- Consult the Research and Universities Data Protection Mailbox, if in doubt about the safe use of an AI tool.

These measures are part of ICRA's commitment to the ethical and safe use of artificial intelligence.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2.1. PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRITY

I. Institutional Integrity

Responsibilities of PIs (Principal Investigators) Heads of Area and Heads of Department

All ICRA members in supervisory roles (PIs, area and department heads) are responsible for conveying the importance of integrity and setting an example with their own behaviour, while ensuring that their officers have the training, time and resources necessary to carry out their duties at ICRA.

Respect for ICRA's reputation

ICRA members must respect, preserve, and nurture ICRA's reputation.

The free expression of the personal opinion of those who are part of ICRA is not restricted, provided that it is clearly indicated that in no case does it reflect the opinions of the Institute.

Responsible research

ICRA promotes carrying out its research responsibly, in accordance with the principle of research integrity and contributing to the training of responsible scientists.

ICRA maintains that scientific integrity and adherence to the principles of good scientific practice are essential in scientific research. This is also necessary to ensure the trust of the public and the scientific staff themselves. All people who participate in scientific research activities must know and comply with the rules of good scientific practice, thus discouraging scientific misconduct. In any case, ICRA's Research Integrity Committee can always offer advice and guidance in this regard.

Prevention of conflicts of interest

ICRA members must avoid situations of personal, professional, institutional or financial conflict of interest. A conflict of interest can arise from secondary employment or contractual obligations to third parties, the use of institutional assets, professional interaction with close family members, financial interests, or the acceptance of gifts from third parties. Any actual or potential conflict of interest must be notified.

In any case, for the prevention and correction of situations of conflicts of interest that may have an impact on the financing of ICRA, it is necessary to comply with the ICRA Plan of Anti-Fraud Measures and Management of Conflicts of Interest.

Integrity in relations with collaborating companies and organizations

The personal interests of ICRA members may not influence professional decisions with collaborating or non-profit companies and organizations. ICRA opposes illegal, inhumane or discriminatory labour practices, and encourages suppliers and collaborators to do the same.

Within the field of science, collaboration is an important tool for research activities, providing a platform for projects that address global challenges, advancing knowledge transfer and fostering mobility. ICRA has established and continuously fosters collaborations and alliances with research institutes and organizations in Spain, Europe and around the world.

Good environmental practices and toxic waste management

ICRA, in its commitment to quality, safety and the environment, shares the principles of social responsibility and sustainable development and defends work under the principles of good scientific practices.

ICRA is committed to sustainability and environmental protection, and strives to minimize its environmental footprint. That is why ICRA committed to adhere to the MSCA Green Charter and has developed an action plan to make its activities more sustainable ([ICRA-GREEN-CHARTER 2.pdf](#)). Consequently, the responsible use of energy resources and the incorporation of the principles of sustainability and environmentally friendly practices are promoted among all ICRA members.

II. Integrity in Research

ICRA and all its members adhere to the principles established in the **European Charter for Researchers** and the **CERCA Code of Ethics and Conduct**, which define the organizing principles, such as respect for human rights, the gender perspective or scientific integrity, with the ultimate goal

of promoting research of excellence and transferring this knowledge to society.

ICRA plays a proactive role, promoting the training of research staff to conduct research with the integrity that an Institute of Excellence requires, avoiding any scientific malpractice, and raising their awareness on the subject, thus avoiding future problematic situations.

Given that safeguarding the integrity of research is a shared task within the research community, ICRA adhered to the **European Charter for Researchers** and the **CERCA Code of Ethics and Conduct**, which has been promoted, known and applies to all ICRA members.

ICRA staff will strictly respect the applicable legislation on industrial and intellectual property.

Research Integrity Committee

In order to promote and guarantee the highest standards of scientific integrity at ICRA, in 2026, an independent advisory and supervisory body called the ICRA Research Integrity Committee is created.

The scope of the Committee includes all the ethical aspects of the research carried out under the auspices of ICRA, being configured as its own functions, among others, the supervision and investigation of malpractice in research and violations in its integrity, advice and guidance on ethical issues in research or the promotion of training activities and awareness-raising initiatives for responsible research.

For more information, please consult the document "**ICRA Research Integrity Committee**", available on SharePoint.

III. Integrity in Human Resources Policies

Provide fair and equal opportunities and respect equality and diversity

In 2014, ICRA declared its commitment to continuously improve its human resources policies and adhere to good practices in accordance with the provisions of the European Charter "*The European Charter for Researchers*" and "*The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*". Since then, ICRA has developed a new Human Resources Strategy for Research Staff (HRS4R) every 3 years, which is periodically evaluated by the European Commission.

Consequently, HR policies on selection, recruitment and training are designed on the structure of the principles established in the European Charter and Code "*The European Charter for Researchers*" and "*The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*", and in accordance with the Human Resources Strategy for Research Staff (HRS4R) of the European Commission, and with the Code of Ethics and Conduct of the CERCA Institution.

Excellence in the selection and recruitment process is crucial to ensure excellence in research and the future of ICRA. For this reason, and in accordance with the regulations mentioned in the previous paragraph, ICRA created ICRA 's **Recruitment and Selection Policy based on OTM-R** (Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment), which is an important component of ICRA's Human

Resources Strategy for Research Staff Action Plan (HRS4R), which has the ultimate objective of ensuring the selection of the best candidate for the position. guaranteeing equal opportunities and access for all.

ICRA is an entity that promotes equal opportunities for individuals and contracts without taking into account marital status, racial or ethnic origin, social status, religion or beliefs, political orientation, sexual orientation, sexual identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, membership or not of trade unions, language, disability or sex, including any unfavourable treatment given by the exercise of the rights to conciliation or co-responsibility for life family and work.

Likewise, ICRA recognises the right of all workers to respect for their privacy and due consideration for their dignity, including protection against harassment based on racial or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation and against sexual harassment and harassment based on sex, through one of the Equality Plan, a specific Plan of measures for equality and non-discrimination of LGTBIQ+ people and a Protocol for the Prevention and Approach to Harassment, without prejudice to other preventive measures.

Health and safety

Those who are part of ICRA must follow the safety guidelines indicated in the ICRA Occupational Risk Prevention Plan (work procedures).

The Occupational Risk Prevention Service is responsible for supervising health and safety regulations. ICRA members must avoid putting themselves at risk, and are obliged to safeguard the well-being of the staff under their supervision, that of contractors and that of visitors. ICRA staff is responsible for informing Occupational Risk Prevention of any hazards related to health and safety at work, and in general to biosecurity, without delay so that the necessary measures can be taken.

IV. Financial Integrity

The integrity of a public sector institution, such as ICRA, is the result of the daily actions of each and every one of the people who work within or for the Institute: from the person who exercises the highest representation to anyone who is part of ICRA or even any private company that offers a public service on behalf of ICRA. The more coherence and consistency there is between all its actions and the principles and values of ICRA, the more institutional integrity we will find.

Institutional integrity occurs when the operational functioning of the institution (policies, processes, work systems, etc.), ethical standards and corruption prevention strategies are fully integrated, thus allowing the achievement of the purposes for which ICRA was created.

Since 2022, ICRA has been adhered to the *Plan of anti-fraud measures in the execution of actions financed by the funds of the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism in the Generalitat de Catalunya*. However, in compliance with Article 22 of Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 requiring Member States to protect the financial interests of the European Union and to take appropriate measures to prevent, detect and correct fraud, corruption and

conflicts of interest, and in accordance with Article 6 of Order HFP/1030/2021, of 29 September, which requires the drafting of an anti-fraud measures plan for each fund-executing body of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, in 2026 ICRA approves its own Anti-Fraud and Conflict of Interest Resolution Measures Plan.

The scope of application of ICRA's **Anti-Fraud and Conflict of Interest Resolution Plan** is circumscribed to those implementing activities of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, ICRA's activities as a beneficiary of grants from RRF funds and any other activity financed by ICRA regardless of the origin of the funds. Its objective is to structure anti-fraud measures in line with the so-called anti-fraud cycle: prevention, detection, correction and prosecution. Creates a Monitoring Committee, a specialised and independent body for the investigation of possible events of this nature.

ICRA staff are required to report any misuse of funds and resources entrusted to ICRA. The misuse of funds and resources, deliberately or not, is a serious crime. Any infringement of this nature may be reported to the **Monitoring Committee of the Anti-Fraud Measures Plan**, without prejudice to the preferential nature of reporting regulatory infringements of the ICRA Internal Alert Channel (<https://icra.cat/nosaltres/transparencia/canal-intern-alertes/>)

Responsibilities of the budget holders

The budget holder is responsible for the funds and resources allocated to them in accordance with the relevant regulations. This includes ensuring that goods and services are delivered on time and of acceptable quality.

Responsibilities of indirect research support staff

The Indirect Research Support staff is responsible for ensuring adequate accounting, ensuring that transaction records are complete, punctual and to the best of their knowledge, accurate and prepared in accordance with current regulations.

Internal protocols ensure that funds are received from lawful sources in accordance with legislation on the prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing.

Supplier and Contractor Profiles

ICRA members involved in the processing of procurement files guide their professionalism and conduct in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Principles and Recommended Conduct in Public Procurement. Personal interests can in no way influence purchasing decisions.

Supplier and contractor profiles are selected based on quality and price and in accordance with current applicable public procurement regulations.

Bidders and contractors must adapt their activity, in their contractual relations with ICRA, in accordance with the rules established in the **Ethical Principles and Rules of Conduct to which bidders and contractors must adapt their activity** and Instruction 1/2019 DGCP of the Department of the Vice-Presidency and of Economy and Finance of the Generalitat.

Travel Policy and Protocol Expenses

ICRA governs the contracting of travel through its internal policy "Travel Policy", developed in accordance with the regulations, guidelines and principles that apply to it. ICRA's expenditures must be geared towards achieving the objectives inherent to its mission and travel expenditures are no exception.

Gifts & Giveaways Policy

ICRA employees may not accept gifts or material gifts that may be offered by a person outside ICRA who has a business relationship with ICRA or is interested in having them. Exceptionally, only those gifts that constitute symbolic courtesies may be accepted, provided that they do not imply an obligation on the part of the recipient to accept, or that have the appearance or potential to impose obligations on the recipient when making a decision on behalf of ICRA. Workers must inform the person in charge and the management.

Incompatibility of second activity

ICRA staff are subject to the provisions of Law 21/1987, of 26 November, on incompatibilities of personnel in the service of the Administration of the Generalitat de Catalunya and any other regulations that refer to incompatibilities and are applicable to them.

2.2. PRINCIPLE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

The legal representatives of ICRA (Director and Management), notarial representatives, are explicitly adhered to the CERCA Code of Ethics and Conduct.

The members of the Governing Body must exercise their responsibilities in the interest of the institution, attend its meetings regularly and actively participate in its decisions and provide a favourable environment for the discussion of decisions.

3. COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE AND NOTIFICATION OF ITS VIOLATION

All ICRA employees adhere to the rules of conduct established in this Code in order to conduct themselves with integrity and in accordance with applicable regulations and internal policies and procedures. Whenever appropriate, it is encouraged that ICRA members address directly, respectfully and privately, the people involved to resolve minor behavioural or communication problems.

However, in cases of serious violations of research or security rules or misuse of resources, ICRA members must report misconduct following procedures established in the different regulations that apply. The complaint of misconduct cannot be used as a mechanism to express complaints about staff, in such cases, it will be necessary to address the person responsible for it or HR.

Consequences of contravention of the Code

Violations of the Code may result in disciplinary sanctions depending on the nature and seriousness of the misconduct or violation.

Conflict resolution

Depending on the infringement in question, various ad hoc procedures and bodies are established; however, ICRA's Internal Alert Channel is configured as a preferential way to report regulatory infringements and conduct contrary to the law, with the guarantee of protection of the whistleblower.

Any communication received through the Internal Alert Channel linked to situations of harassment,

within the scope of application of the Anti-Fraud Measures Plan or of any other nature for which there is a specialised body, will be referred internally to the Specialised Committee, without prejudice to the first steps deemed appropriate by the person responsible for the internal alert channel.

Below is a summary table where these processes are established according to the infringement:

TYPE OF CONDUCT	WHO TO TURN TO?
In general, as long as they are regulatory infringements and conduct contrary to the law (no complaints)	ICRA Internal Alert Channel
Research: Ethical advice on research, fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, manipulation or biased selection of results, misuse or mismanagement of data, audit conflicts, ethical problems in collaborations, etc.	ICRA Research Integrity Committee
Harassment	Permanent Commission for the Prevention and Monitoring of Harassment
Financial: Fraud, embezzlement, corruption, conflicts of interest linked to financing, etc.	Monitoring Committee of the Anti-Fraud Measures and Conflict of Interest Management Plan
Interpersonal conflicts: conflicts, complaints, disagreements between ICRA members	Dynamization through the person who is directly responsible or HR

Protection of whistleblowers

ICRA is obliged to respect the anonymity and confidentiality of any exchange of confidential information, including the personal data of the whistleblower if provided.

Whistleblowers will be protected from acts of retaliation that any ICRA member may violate as a cause of their report. Acts of retaliation will be considered a violation of this Code. Individuals who intentionally spread false information about CITRA members will be liable for misconduct.

4. CONFORMITY OF THE UNDERSIGNED PERSON

The undersigned hereby acknowledges having received, understood and accepted the information contained in this ICRA Code of Conduct and Good Practices and undertakes to comply with its respective and rigorous compliance.

And for the record, Mr./Mrs. _____
Sign this on date _____.

CONFORMING SIGN:

