

Statement: Code of Conduct for Scientists

SUMMARY

- Current status and existing issues

The research environment surrounding scientists in Japan has drastically changed. Intensifying competition for research funding and introduction of fixed-term employment put Japanese scientists under greater pressure demanding more research outcomes in a shorter period, yet all scientists are called on for their autonomous conduct.

The Committee on the Code of Conduct for Scientists, which was established by the Science Council of Japan in October 2005, prepared a questionnaire and sent it to all Japanese institutions of higher education and scientific research, and also to Japanese academic societies and associations. By August 2006, the Committee had received 1,323 responses, which resulted in a response rate of 46.9%. According to this survey, 13.3% of respondents have already established a code of ethics in some form, while 41.3% do not have any future plan. The survey reports that 12.4% of respondents experienced problems related to academic misconduct, and 12.5% have procedures for dealing with an allegation of misconduct, while 75.9% stated that they do not.

- Summary of the Statement

- a. Introduction

The Science Council of Japan (SCJ) established the Committee on the Code of Conduct for Scientists in October 2005. After careful examination of the current situation, the Committee drafted a preliminary version of the Code of Conduct. The Committee also carried out a survey to consult with the science community at large on various issues concerning implementation of codes of conduct and ethics programs. As a result of these activities, the Committee finished the Statement, which includes the Code of Conduct for Scientists and the document entitled "Toward Autonomous Implementation of the Code of Conduct for Scientists." These two documents are complementary to each other.

The SCJ requests all scientific organizations to draw up their own ethical

codes of conduct with reference to the SCJ's Code of Conduct for Scientists and to encourage every scientist to abide by it. Also, the SCJ requests all organizations to design and implement an ethics program for research as discussed in "Toward Autonomous Implementation of the Code of Conduct for Scientists."

b. Code of Conduct for Scientists

The Code of Conduct for Scientists represents the minimum ethical standards which shall be shared by all researchers regardless of their academic disciplines. The ethical standards summarized in this Code are for the scientists who conduct independent and autonomous research under trust and commitment from society and for promoting sound progress of science. The standards should be autonomously endorsed by individual scientists.

The Code consists of eleven articles under the following headings: Responsibilities of Scientists, Conduct of Scientists, Effort to Improve Ability, Explanation and Disclosure, Research Activities, Establishing Research Environments, Observance of Laws and Regulations, Consideration to Research Subjects, Relations with Others, Elimination of Discrimination, and Conflict of Interest.

c. Toward Autonomous Implementation of the Code of Conduct for Scientists

The document entitled "Toward Autonomous Implementation of the Code of Conduct for Scientists" describes specific elements for effective implementation of the Code, which should be included in the ethics programs for research adopted by individual institutions. All scientific organizations are requested to introduce their own research ethics programs to meet to their purposes and needs, and to promote honest and autonomous activities of scientists.

The document consists of eight articles covering such issues as the responsibility of directors and managers of institutions, the need for ethics education programs, the mutual observation within a research group, the precautions in research process, the countermeasures against misconduct, and the establishment of a self-monitoring system.