

Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the conduct of Science (CFRS)

Work Plan (2014-2017)

1. Introduction

Pursuant to its Terms of Reference and the ICSU Statute 5 “Principle of Universality (freedom and responsibility) of Science” (Annexe 1), this work plan presents the Committee’s planned core activities and continuing goals for the coming triennium:

- Promote the freedoms of scientists (movement, association, expression, access to data and information, etc.) and defend them when threatened in individual cases and/or on the systemic level
- Promote the associated responsibilities of scientists within the scientific community as well as towards the public and policy-makers
- Provide information and advice to the ICSU Executive Board and to ICSU Members on such issues
- Promote international discourse on matters of research integrity and scientific misconduct

The degree to which this programme can be carried out depends on funds raised. Adequate funds are available from the Swiss Academy of Sciences (SCNAT) to support a half-time CFRS Executive Secretary until September 2015.

2. Proposed Activities

a. Advise and promote dialogue with the ICSU Executive Board and ICSU Members on scientific freedom and responsibility as they relate to the Universality of Science

CFRS workshops: balancing freedoms and responsibilities

The Principle of Universality encompasses the protection, promotion and preservation of scientific freedoms as well as the recognition, communication and promulgation of scientific responsibility. Accordingly, CFRS proposes workshops on issues of concern to the science community. Greater understanding of such issues involves aspects of both freedom and responsibility. These workshops generally would be arranged in collaboration with ICSU Members, who would host them and provide financial and logistical support. While the nature of the workshops will depend on the topics of interest, they should:

- Be international and interdisciplinary
- Involve younger scientists, both in planning and implementation
- Include 30-50 participants to facilitate discussion of challenges and potential solutions
- Generate specific products (discussion notes, educational materials, publications) of use to ICSU Members and the scientific community
- Incorporate media and press activities in their design, including inviting science journalists to participate as appropriate

The following themes for potential workshops have been identified as relevant by CFRS, based on its interests and experience to date, but the final selection of topics depends on the outcome of discussions with interested partner institutions:

- Brain drain and the universality of science
- Biosecurity regulations and transnational controls
- Biotechnology, GMOs and stem cells

- Access to international research facilities
- Intellectual property rights and patents
- Scientific publishing, including open access and misconduct
- Science assessment and research integrity
- Conflicts of interest
- The knowledge divide
- Converging technologies
- Academic freedom
- Science, ethics and the cyber-world
- Research in scientific areas of public controversy
- Science without borders in conflict areas

Proposed Action

- Sponsor joint workshops with ICSU Members
- Produce CFRS Discussion Notes as a major outcome of the workshops, to serve as guidelines for individual scientists and the scientific community

Research integrity

The promotion of responsible scientific conduct and the prevention of misconduct are critical to scientific progress. ICSU joined other bodies to organise the 1st, 2nd and 3rd World Conferences on Research Integrity in 2007 (Lisbon), 2010 (Singapore) and 2013 (Montreal) respectively. CFRS members attended these meetings and made valuable contributions. CFRS proposes to continue its involvement in this area. The previous WCRI goals of aligning international best practices in handling reports of misconduct and strengthening guidelines for journal editors and publishers to protect the integrity of the scientific record will continue to be emphasised by CFRS. In addition, CFRS will try to develop a new focus on the research system, including research assessment, and its influence on scientific behaviour.

Proposed Action

- Play a lead role in organising the 4th World Conference on Research Integrity in 2015

b. Raise awareness of and promote the Principle of Universality within the scientific community as well as with policy makers and the broader public

Outreach and publications

Since its establishment, CFRS has produced a number of proposals and recommendations on issues relating to the freedom and responsibilities of scientists. Some of these were prepared in response to specific cases or occurrences, others were generated as products of CFRS workshops, including the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity that resulted from the 1st World Conference on Research Integrity. Co-operation will be sought with ICSU Union and National Members to engage them in disseminating these CFRS recommendations within their scientific communities, and in providing CFRS with feedback regarding their application.

Proposed Action

- Make recommendations on relevant issues publicly online, through letters to and articles in scientific journals
- Seek co-operation with the ICSU Membership to introduce these recommendations to the scientific community
- Develop the “Freedom and Responsibility Portal” to further improve accessibility by ICSU Members and the wider scientific community to the products of the Committee’s work
- Develop a communication strategy for CFRS, with the support of the Communications section at the ICSU Secretariat

Strategic partnerships

An important way in which CFRS can multiply the impact of its activities is by building strategic partnerships with other organisations. A good example of this is in the area of research integrity, where CFRS worked together with several international organisations to plan and organise the three World Conferences on Research Integrity that have taken place so far.

Proposed Actions

- Work with ICSU Members to develop workshops and widely disseminate the resulting products (see above)
- Exploit opportunities to work with other organisations, including regional university and/or academy networks

Regional meetings

Since its inception, CFRS has alternated many of its biannual meetings between Paris and other international locations (Taipei 2007, Maputo 2008, Singapore 2010, Bogotá 2010, Berne 2011, Rome 2011, Montreal 2013, Beijing 2014). These meetings provide a valuable opportunity for the Committee to interact with members of the local scientific and policy communities.

Proposed Action

- Organise regional workshops in conjunction with CFRS meetings

c. Defend scientific freedoms and promote responsibilities in specific and generic cases

Individual cases concerning freedom of movement

Individual cases relating to freedom of movement concern, primarily, the ability of scientists to obtain visas to conduct research or participate in conferences in countries other than their own. Instances of visa refusals to scientists are normally brought to the attention of CFRS by ICSU Members. Such cases can reflect more systemic problems, relating to national visa policies. The approach proposed by CFRS is to address both individual cases and any underlying policy issues.

Proposed Actions

- Address individual visa problems on a case-by-case basis
- Take actions to influence visa policies and practices that undermine freedom of movement of scientists
- Raise awareness among ICSU Members and other organisations that CFRS can help protect and promote free circulation and association

Boycotts and their impact on freedom of association

Periodically, boycotts that either specifically target scientists or scientific institutions or indirectly affect them are proposed or implemented. For example, Israel has been subject to actual or threatened boycotts in recent years. CFRS opposes such boycotts because they violate the ICSU Principle of Universality of Science and hinder the international scientific co-operation that ICSU supports.

Proposed Actions

- Oppose calls for scientific boycotts privately and, when deemed appropriate and more effective, publicly
- Work with ICSU Members to ensure that boycotts affecting scientists are prevented and/or opposed

Human rights interventions

Cases of infringement of the human rights of individual scientists can be brought to the attention of CFRS by ICSU Members or through the International Human Rights Network of

Academies and Scholarly Societies, whose executive director is a member of CFRS and vigilant in bringing relevant cases to the Committee. Each case is unique and CFRS is normally only one of several international organisations involved in addressing such cases. Nevertheless, because there are instances when additional interventions by CFRS specifically can be helpful, it plans to continue to take action in this area as warranted.

Proposed Action

- Work with ICSU Members and other organisations to gather the facts and intervene in human rights cases that concern scientists whose basic rights, promulgated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and described in various multilateral agreements, are violated because of their scientific work and when ICSU's involvement could be helpful.

Freedom of access to data, information and research materials

From time to time, other issues that relate to scientific freedoms are brought to the Committee's attention. While ICSU's Committee on Data for Science and Technology (CODATA) and the World Data System (WDS) deal with some issues related to data access, CFRS can make a contribution from the perspective of protecting scientific freedoms. For example, CFRS was involved in a symposium in 2011 on access to data with particular relevance to developing countries. It is also contributing to the development of ICSU's overall policies on 'open access' related to data and information.

Proposed Action

- Work with ICSU's Executive Board, Interdisciplinary Bodies and Members on relevant issues

Annexe 1: CFRS Terms of Reference and ICSU Statute 5¹

CFRS: Terms of Reference

Under the aegis of the Executive Board, the Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the conduct of Science (CFRS) has both policy development and management responsibilities relating to the Principle of Universality of Science. This encompasses the rights of scientists both to freely associate and to freely pursue their science and the responsibilities incumbent in these rights.

1. Monitor and advise the ICSU Executive Board and ICSU Members on issues relating to the Universality of Science;
2. Work with the ICSU Members actively to promote the Principle of Universality; to act as the ‘corporate memory’ and international reference point on these issues; to ensure exchange of best practices between ICSU Members;
3. Advise ICSU Members and, in consultation with the ICSU Executive Director and Secretary General, take action as necessary in relation to breaches of Universality;
4. Ensure close liaison and appropriate partnerships with the International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies as well as with other international and national committees on human rights; and, to work with these bodies to provide quantitative analyses that can inform policy development;
5. Liaise with other ICSU interdisciplinary bodies and committees, in areas such as access to data, information, and research materials, which impact on the Principle of Universality;
6. Establish dialogue and shared understanding with the international scientific community beyond the immediate ICSU family, including the private and government sectors;
7. Prepare and disseminate information and educational materials that raise awareness of the Principle of Universality, for scientists, policy makers and the broader public;
8. Undertake any other such actions as are appropriate for promoting and securing the Principle of Universality.

ICSU Statute 5 “Principle of Universality (freedom and responsibility) of Science”

The Principle of Universality (freedom and responsibility) of Science: the free and responsible practice of science is fundamental to scientific advancement and human and environmental well-being. Such practice, in all its aspects, requires freedom of movement, association, expression and communication for scientists, as well as equitable access to data, information, and other resources for research. It requires responsibility at all levels to carry out and communicate scientific work with integrity, respect, fairness, trustworthiness, and transparency, recognising its benefits and possible harms.

In advocating the free and responsible practice of science, ICSU promotes equitable opportunities for access to science and its benefits, and opposes discrimination based on such factors as ethnic origin, religion, citizenship, language, political or other opinion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or age.

¹ As agreed by the 30th ICSU General Assembly, September 2011.