



Higher Commission for Scientific Research



**The Main System for the National Committee
on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology**



April 2018

Syrian Arab Republic
Higher Commission for
Scientific Research



The main system for
the National Committee on the
Ethics of Scientific Knowledge
and Technology

CONEST

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In accordance with paragraph (T) of Article (6) of the decree of the establishment of the Higher Commission for Scientific Research (HCSR) No. 68 of 2005, which states that "Establishing the necessary bases and rules to enhance the ethics of scientific research", and in continuation of Syria's adoption - as a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) - of the International Declaration of Bioethics and Human Rights in October 2005, the National Committee on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (CONEST) was formed by the Resolution No. 136 dated 1/10/2017, and the adoption of its main system by the Resolution No. 57 dated 10/4/2018.

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Preface

The sciences evolve and their practical applications accelerate, thus addressing new topics. Legal rules have not been able to cope with this acceleration to regulate and control these new applications, thus people have feared that scientific progress could adversely affect their lives. Hence, this trend was guided by a series of steps, notably the International Declaration of Bioethics and Human Rights, issued by UNESCO in October 2005.

Based on the above, and on the basis of the decree of the establishment of the Higher Commission for Scientific Research, the National Committee for the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology was formed in conjunction with the launching of the National Policy for Science, Technology and Innovation, to serve this Committee as the moral controller for the implementation of this policy. This main system has developed and adopted for the work of this Committee to be a standard and guide for its work, and a national reference in this domain. The HCSR hopes that all the concerned parties will cooperate with this Committee, and abide by what it issues for the benefit of the humanitarian community.

General Director

Dr. Eng. Hussain Aziz SALEH

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The decision to form The National Committee on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology.

The English translation of The main system for the National Committee on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology, **(by Dr. Eng. Hussain Aziz SALEH, General Director of HCSR).**

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Introduction:

The role of Scientific Research and Technological Development (R & D) is growing in the comprehensive development of communities, and their domains expand, thus addressing new and sometimes controversial issues. In the absence of an agreed legal or ethical or professional standard to organise the scientific research process and delineates its boundaries, especially in the scientific researches that directly affecting the human being; the term "ethics" appeared to bridge this gap.

Ethics are not as compulsory as they are in the law, so they are not the rules imposed by the profession on itself and on those who exercise them as in the case of profession's ethics, nor they do not aim to separate the good from evil in an absolute way as morality does, but they set out a set of guidelines so that everyone - facing situations that are often new- can make their choices freely and responsibly.

On the basis of the HCSR tasks as stated in the Decree No. 68 of 2005, and in its belief of the importance of the subject of ethics of scientific research, and in response to the International Declaration of Bioethics and Human Rights adopted by Member States, including Syria, in the United Nations Educational, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO) in October 2005, the National Committee for the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (CONEST) was formed, consisting of representatives of all stakeholders in Syria.

Chapter 1: The General Provisions

Article 1– Definitions: the following expressions, wherever they appear in this system, shall have the meanings shown alongside each other:

Committee: The National Committee on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (CONEST).

COMEST: The International Committee on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology.

The Higher Commission: Higher Commission for Scientific Research.

The Scientific Research Bodies (SRBs): All public and private bodies conducting research or scientific studies, including: universities, studies and research centres, research commissions, higher institutes, etc.

The Executive Committee: the executive committee that formed from the members of the National Committee on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology.

The Committee Chairman: The chairman of the National Committee on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology.

The Secretary: The secretary of the National Committee on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology.

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The Sub-committees: The specialized sub-committees of the National Committee on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology.

The absolute majority: majority of half + 1.

The System: the main system for the work of the National Committee on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology.

Article 2– Logo of the Committee: The logo of the Committee shall be as follows:



Chapter 2: The Objectives and Tasks

Article 3– The objectives of the committee:

1. Building a national system that ensures the commitment of researchers and SRBs in Syria to the ethics of scientific research based on the best referential practices in the world. It is an intellectual platform for the exchange of ideas and experiences, and plays the role of counsellor and consultant for decision-makers, and generally supports dialogue among scientific communities, decision-makers and the public.
2. Reaching the standards for ethical controls that take into account religious values, customs and social traditions at the national level.
3. Crystallizing and generalizing a broad national opinion on the ethical issues related to the scientific and technological progress, and to take a specific position on them.
4. Defining attitudes, visions and national standards for the ethics of scientific and technological progress, and disseminating them at the regional and international levels.
5. Strengthening the international cooperation with relevant bodies and committees that take into account the needs of developing countries.

Article 4– The committee tasks:

1. Developing a national charter for the ethics of scientific research and modern technological applications (including the ethics of the researcher, the financier, the scientific research body, the beneficiary of the research, etc.), and the pursuit of its approval. To follow up its application by the SRBs, and to assess the extent of the commitment of these bodies to it. The committee is the higher national reference that takes clear positions about the controversial issues of ethics, and asks the concerned bodies to abide by these positions.
2. Promoting the thinking and discussion on the ethical issues raised by research that is related to the science and technology and its application, and encouraging the exchange of ideas, information and data.
3. Coordinating with the SRBs and other stakeholders in the bioethics, life sciences, social sciences, humanities and other sciences at the national level.
4. Contributing to the efforts aimed at ensuring the proper direction of scientific and technological research and its ethical applications.
5. Following-up on all the aspects of the ethics of science and technology, and the exchange of experiences, opinions, and ideas on them at the national and international levels.

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6. Working on increasing the community awareness of matters related to the ethics of scientific knowledge and technology.
7. Suggesting the introduction of topics on the ethics of scientific research in the educational programs, and organising training courses for cadres engaged in the R&D.
8. Monitoring the real situation of the research and technology practice in terms of ethics in Syria in cooperation with the concerned bodies.
9. Cooperating with the executive sector committees in the HCSR during the practical implementation of the national policy for Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) in the related subjects.
10. The active participation in conferences and seminars held locally and internationally on topics relevant to the work of the committee.
11. Coordinating with trade unions in terms of the ethics of scientific knowledge and the use of modern technologies and applications.
12. Communicating with the committee's website and promoting it.
13. Developing a clear operational mechanism for achieving the previous tasks, and realization the desired objectives.

Chapter 3: The Representation and Membership

Article 5– The represented bodies in the committee:

1. The public universities: Damascus, Aleppo, Tishreen, Al-Ba'ath, Al-Furat, Hama, Tartous.
2. The private universities: two private universities selected by the executive committee.
3. The scientific research centres and commissions: The General Commission for Biotechnology, the General Commission for Scientific Agricultural Research, The Atomic Energy Commission, the Higher Institute of Applied Science and Technology, the General Organisation for Remote Sensing, the National Centre for Energy Research, the Syrian Commission for Family and Population Affairs.
4. The Ministries: Higher Education, Education, Industry, Health, Justice, Endowments, Local Administration and Environment, Communication and Technology, and Information.

Article 6– The selection of members:

Each body nominates – from the represented bodies in the committee - one representative of its staff for membership of the Committee, and may select him/her in person or in position.

Article 7– The duration of membership:

The duration of membership is four years, a renewable maximum once of candidates in person, and for candidates in position according to the duration of retention of their positions, provided that they are required to attend meetings.

Article 8– The termination of membership

The membership terminates at the end of its duration, or in the absence of the member three consecutive meetings, or four separate meetings, without an acceptable excuse from all members of the Committee. A member may make an apology for his/her membership in the committee when he/she wishes.

Chapter 4: The Executive Committee

Article 9– The members of the executive committee:

1. The chairman of the committee.
2. Two representatives from the universities selected by the representatives of universities in the committee.
3. Two representatives from the scientific research centres and commissions selected by the representatives of the research centres and scientific commissions of the committee.
4. Two representatives from the ministries selected by the representatives of the ministries in the committee.
5. The Secretary.

Article 10– The tasks of the executive committee:

1. Following-up to the implementation of the committee's proposals and recommendations.
2. Setting out a working mechanism for the implementation of the Committee's tasks in cooperation with the secretariat of the committee.
3. Proposing the inclusion of new bodies in the committee.
4. Selecting the candidates for COMEST Membership.
5. Proposing to add new sub-committees to the committee, or to modify the tasks of the sub-committees.
6. Proposing to organise activities and events that support the objectives of the committee.
7. Any other tasks proposed by the committee.

Article 11– The executive committee shall meet whenever necessary, based on the invitation of the chairman of the committee.

Article 12– The members of the executive committee shall be re-elected every four years.

Chapter 5: The Chairmanship and Secretariat of the Committee

Article 13– The chairman of the committee:

The General Director of the HCSR is considered to be the Chairman of the committee, and the executive committee by means of his position.

Article 14– The tasks of the chairman of the committee:

1. Inviting the committee and the executive committee to the meeting.
2. Inviting the sub-committees to meet based on the proposal of the chairmen of the sub-committees.
3. Chairing the meetings of the committee and the executive committee.
4. Supervising the preparation of the reports issued by the committee.
5. Nominating the candidates to attend relevant training courses and workshops.

Article 15– The secretariat of the committee:

The Secretariat of the committee consists of a maximum of 3 to 5 members of the committee, including the secretary.

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Article 16– The secretary:

One of the heads of the scientific departments or offices in the HCSR shall be the secretary.

Article 17– The tasks of the committee secretariat:

1. Preparing the committee meetings and their agendas in consultation with the committee chairman.
2. Preparing the meetings minutes and distributing them by e-mail to the members.
3. Drafting the initial versions of the committee's working documents and proposing their amendments.
4. Proposing the organisation of events and activities to support the committee's objectives.
5. Proposing the Invitation of the committee to an emergency meeting.
6. Following up the work of the sub-committees.

Chapter 6: The Meetings

Article 18– The committee meets at least twice a year, the first one in the second half of April, and the second one in the first half of September.

Article 19– The meetings shall be legal in the presence of the absolute majority of the members of the committee, the decisions and recommendations shall be issued with at least two thirds of the number of attendees.

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Article 20– The committee meets under the chairmanship of the oldest member in the absence of the committee chairman.

Chapter 7: The Sub-Committees

Article 21– The following sub-committees are emerged from the committee:

1. The national committee on the ethics of Biotechnology and Health.
2. The national committee on the Ethics of Pharmaceutical and Food Industries.
3. The national committee on the Ethics of Natural Resources and Environment.
4. The national committee on the Ethics of Humanities.
5. The national committee on the Ethics of Law.
6. The national committee on the Ethics of Economy and Market.
7. The national committee on the Ethics of Engineering Applications and Technology Use.

Article 22– The heads of the sub-committees shall be members of the committee.

Article 23– The sub-committees meet at least twice a year.

Article 24– The sub-committees carry out the tasks assigned to them in the decisions of their formation.

Chapter 8: The Final Provisions

Article 25– The electronic correspondences are considered as approved correspondences within the committee and sub-committees work.

Article 26– When it is necessary, the committee shall seek the assistance of those it deems appropriate.

Article 27– That decisions that form and amend the committee and the sub-committees shall be issued by the General Director of the HCSR.

Article 28– The compensation and rewards due to the members of the committee and sub-committees shall be paid out of the HCSR budget.

Article 29– This system comes into effect on the date of approval by the committee.

Article 30– This system may not be amended until one year has elapsed from its adoption by the committee, and the amendment's shall require the approval of at least two thirds of the committee members.