

FIRE Statistical Consulting: Code of Conduct

FIRE statistical consulting is a service dedicated to UGent Ph.D. students and postdocs. It aims to offer **two two-hour statistical consults for free**. After these, further consults are possible for a fee (to be agreed upon). Depending on the problem, FIRE may refer you to a colleague with specific expert knowledge.

We work under the following code of conduct, inspired by an ASA guideline¹. The present document should be signed by both the client and the statistical consultant.

(1) Communication and Data Integrity

- The client should give relevant background information to ensure that the statistical consultant has a good understanding of the objectives of the project.
- It is the client's responsibility to describe his/her data in a sufficiently complete and accurate fashion as this may affect the conclusions that can be drawn from analysis results.

The client should mention any problems that occurred during data collection and deviations from the study protocol. He/she should document any type of missing data or procedural error. He/she should mention any preprocessing of data, data cleaning or data selection that is already done (e.g. removal of outliers).

The client holds the final responsibility to ascertain the integrity of his/her data.

- Conflicts of interest, financial and otherwise should be disclosed.

(2) Confidentiality of Data or Study Results

- The statistical consultant will treat this consult and all information that results from it as confidential, unless agreed otherwise.
- The client should make precautions to make sure that the privacy of others is not violated in the material provided to the statistical consultant (human subjects, products, and proprietary information).
- The client is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the data and the background information when these are subject to a confidentiality agreement (or non-disclosure agreement). If necessary, a separate confidentiality agreement may have to be signed with the consultant or the consultant's superior.
- Client and statistical consultant commit themselves to respect the current European Regulation EU 2016/679 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data as well as the national applicable laws. Client and statistical consultant may share Personal Data of individuals involved in the collaboration for the purpose of administering such as: name, business telephone, address, and email ("Business Contact Information"). Each party may store and otherwise process such Business Contact Information. The parties agree that Business Contact Information will only be processed to the limited extent as required for the performance of this agreement.

If for the performance of this agreement the processing of other than Business Contact Information is necessary, client and statistical consultant commit themselves to agree and enter into a data processing agreement, which shall amend this agreement, as is reasonably required to reflect each party's rights and obligations.

- Any unclear confidentiality issue is to be further discussed with the UGent data protection officer (phone: 3239).

¹ **Acknowledgement.** Our practical and ethical guidelines are inspired by the brochure 'When You Consult a Statistician... What to Expect.' (Berman *et al.*, 2013) and 'Ethical Guidelines for Statistical Practice', both of the American Statistical Association (<http://www.amstat.org/>).

(3) Publication

- Any publications or reports the client produces out of the project should acknowledge the contribution of FIRE statistical consulting appropriately. In case of general statistical advice, a suggestion for the standard acknowledgement: “This research has benefitted from a statistical consult with Ghent University FIRE (Fostering Innovative Research based on Evidence)”. If the statistical consultant has provided a substantial contribution to the creation of a publication or report (e.g. having conducted the statistical analysis, having written the statistical methods section, ...), he/she should be included as a co-author of that publication or report.
- The client should not associate the statistical consultant's name with the project without explicit consent of the consultant.

(4) Code of Ethics for Scientific Research UGent

- Ghent University upholds the Code of Ethics for Scientific Research in Belgium and the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. Both codes set great store by the integrity of scientific research.

I,.....(surname name), client of FIRE statistical consultancy, declare that I have read and approved this code of conduct for the statistical consult.

I,.....(surname name), consultant of FIRE statistical consultancy, declare that I have read and approved this code of conduct for the statistical consult.

Date, Signature

Date, Signature