Research Integrity Policy

Contact Officer

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Purpose

This policy sets out the University's definition of Research Integrity in line with sector-wide guidance and then articulates how research integrity should be put into practice in the conduct of research from design through to dissemination and highlights when research conduct can become misconduct. It distinguishes the responsibilities of researchers generally and those of research leaders and managers.

Overview

This policy is organised into 4 main sections:

1. Introduction
2. Scope
3. Defining research integrity
4. Behaviours and Responsibilities

Scope

The Policy applies to all staff and students at the University engaged in research, and any individual who is not a member of staff or student at the University but is undertaking research using University premises and facilities, and/or in the University's name. For the purpose of these procedures, these groups are referred to collectively as "researchers".

1. Introduction

The University recognises that excellent research is built upon trust and the maintenance of the highest standards of behaviour. It acknowledges that the reputation of its research is dependent on its integrity. This policy sets out the principles that underpin research integrity, and the key behaviours and responsibilities expected of its researchers, staff and student, when undertaking research.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all University staff and students who engage in research, funded or unfunded, as part of their employment or study and to anyone who engages in research in the University's name or in research using the University's facilities and resources. This will include: honorary, visiting and Emeritus staff, consultants and independent contractors. Throughout the policy these groups are collectively described as "researchers".

The policy applies irrespective of the subject area or discipline in which the research is undertaken.

3. Defining Research Integrity

Research Integrity describes the fundamental "virtues" of an excellent researcher

An excellent researcher should be able to demonstrate their:

- **Honesty**
  Researchers should be honest in relation to their own research and that of others. They should do their utmost to ensure the accuracy of data and results, acknowledge the contributions of others, and neither engage in misconduct nor conceal it.
- **Rigour**
  Researchers should seek to ensure their research data and results are accurate, valid, reliable, where appropriate, generalizable and reproducible, and authentic.
- **Transparency**
- Researchers should promote the open exchange of ideas, research methods, data and results and their discussion, scrutiny and debate, subject to any considerations of confidentiality.
- **Care and respect for all participants in research**
  Researchers should ensure the dignity, rights, safety and wellbeing of all involved in research and avoid unreasonable risk or harm to participants, researchers and others. Research should be initiated and continued only if the risks to those who might be affected by the research have been subjected to suitable and appropriate assessment and controls.
- **Accountability**
  Researchers should recognise that in and through their work they are immediately accountable to the University and should act accordingly. They should ensure that any research undertaken complies with any agreements, terms and conditions relating to the project, and allows for proper governance and transparency. Researchers should follow the requirements and guidance of any professional bodies in their field of research. Researchers who are members of a regulated profession must follow the requirements and guidance of the body regulating their profession.

Researchers are expected to be aware of the expectations placed on their behaviours by this policy but also by wider sector guidance including: the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, UKRI Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct, UK RIO Code of Practice for Research, UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research. They are also expected to be aware of subject-level and professional codes of conduct and frameworks relevant to their own area of research and to engage with these accordingly.

Research integrity is a complex area, encompassing statutory and legal requirements, and with drivers and expectations coming from funders, professional bodies, and third sector groups as well as the University. The University considers the expectations in this document to be minimum requirements: in areas where another body has more stringent, relevant or robust requirements the University expects that these should be followed.

4. Behaviours and responsibilities

This policy sets out how the fundamental virtues described in section 3 can be translated into specific behaviours in different contexts and articulates the responsibilities of the researcher in these contexts, but also those of research leaders and managers, including Principal Investigators (PI), supervisors and Head of Department, and of Senior Leaders such as Heads of School, College Director of RKE and PVCs.

4.1 Culture and Environment

Overall responsibility for ensuring operational support and institutional leadership for good practice in research lies with the Deputy PVC (Research). All University leadership, but particularly the Heads of School and College Directors of RKE are responsible for developing a culture in their subject areas which is supportive of research integrity and of researchers.

All researchers should:

a) ensure that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake their work in line with the University's standards, or where they do not, raising any needs with their PI, supervisor or manager.

b) undertake training in order to carry out their duties and to develop their knowledge and skills throughout their career and ensure that skills are kept up-to-date.

c) be willing to engage actively with peer review and / or research mentoring processes.

d) highlight areas of poor conduct and escalate where appropriate.

Principal Investigators and Supervisors should also:

a) create and maintain a research culture within their team where good conduct in research is promoted and inappropriate conduct is identified and addressed.

b) direct and supervise projects in an exemplary manner, specifying lines of accountability within their research group for the organisation and management of the activity.

c) ensure that the project team is aware of and capable of discharging their responsibilities.

d) promote the University's policies and procedures, training, resources and support.

e) support researchers in the team to meet any University, legal or ethical requirements.

f) provide sufficient support, training and direction to staff and students in the team.

g) encourage the career development of their researchers, providing training and mentoring in line with departmental processes.

Heads of Department/School and College Directors of RKE should:

a) create a culture which fosters and supports the behaviours required of researchers and encourages researchers to embed good research practice as a routine part of their work.

b) ensure that good research practice is integral to the local research strategy or policy.

c) ensure provision of support, career development opportunities, departmental training and mentoring processes to facilitate the career development of researchers. Particular attention should be given to research assistants and student researchers, ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities and supported to fulfil the expectations placed upon them.

d) where appropriate, establish clear departmental guidelines, policies and procedures that support compliance with the discipline-specific professional standards.

e) ensure that local guidance is fully compatible with other University policies, such as those for health and safety, raising concerns at work, management of finances or of intellectual property, and equality and diversity.

f) ensure that researchers are aware of relevant policies and procedures and that all relevant activities are undertaken in compliance with them, arranging provision of departmental training where appropriate.

4.2 Design

All research should have a clear aim and should be designed to address that aim in a way which is rigorous, transparent, efficient, effective and fair. Timescales, resources and methodologies should be justifiable and proportionate to the project.

All researchers should:

a) ensure that activities are designed in compliance with all University, legal, ethical and professional standards that apply to their activity. This includes but is not limited to those for ethics, health and safety, raising concerns at work, management of finances or of intellectual property, staff recruitment, redundancy, and equality and diversity.

b) ensure projects are well designed to address pertinent questions and, in the case of research projects, either add to existing knowledge about the subject in question or develop methods for research into it.

c) identify risks, both potential and actual, at the outset of the project and strategies for their effective management.

Principal Investigators and Supervisors should also:

a) ensure that all relevant University, legal, ethical or other requirements have been considered in the design of the project.

b) set out in detail the design and conduct of the project, including how data will be gathered, analysed and managed.

c) ensure the project team have the required skills and experience to carry out the project and arrange for / facilitate training as required.

d) ensure that all relevant risks have been considered, and put in place plans to effectively manage potential sources of bias and risk.

e) consult with all relevant services at the planning stage.

f) ensure sufficient human and financial resources are available to carry out the proposed project to the relevant standards, including the costs of any licensing requirements and of disposal of materials and equipment at the end of the project.

g) attempt to resolve any issues prior to the start of the project.

h) ensure the project design has been understood and agreed by all key potential stakeholders involved within the research prior to beginning.

i) ensure peer review has taken place where applicable.

Heads of Department/School should:

a) check that the human, physical and financial resources identified by the PI are available to carry out the proposed project and facilitate access to the agreed resources (subject to securing appropriate funding where applicable).

4.3 Ethics, Governance & Safety

The safety and wellbeing of those involved, including participants and the project team, is the paramount consideration in any activity. Work must always be undertaken within the law and University policy. This includes ensuring that appropriate insurances and statutory obligations are considered, managed and implemented.

All researchers should:

a) ensure that activities are undertaken in strict accordance with relevant University policy.

b) where activity is to be carried out outside the UK, ensure compliance with the ethical and legal requirements existing in the UK, as well as those existing in the countries where the research is carried out (whichever is more robust). Similarly, where activity carried out in the UK involves organisations or researchers based abroad, they should comply with the legal and ethical requirements existing in the UK as well as those in their country of residence.

c) highlight any deviation from required standards as soon as it is identified.

d) ensure that ethical risks are identified and addressed, including those relating to human participants, human material or data relating to individuals (living or dead) and animals.

e) consider and put in place procedures to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of the project team, participants and any others involved.

f) be mindful of ethical considerations throughout the life of the project and ensure that any additional risks are identified as they arise. This includes identifying any risks that the proposed project or its results may be misused for purposes that are illegal or harmful.

g) where they are a member of a regulated profession, ensure that the project complies with any standards set by their regulating body.

Principal Investigators and Supervisors should also:

a) ensure that all relevant ethical and legal requirements are appropriately identified and addressed, providing guidance and support to other members of the project team.

b) ensure that all activities have ethical approval before work starts, and that the project has been reviewed and approved by all appropriate University or external ethical, regulatory or peer review bodies, and has secured all statutory permissions.

c) ensure that any significant project amendments are dealt with in accordance with the Research Ethics Policy.

d) ensure that the project has sufficient arrangements for insurance and indemnity.

Heads of Department/School should:

a) provide clear and accessible processes within the department to ensure that risks are appropriately assessed, that conflicts of interest are addressed, and that ethical and peer review is carried out to the standards required by the University.

b) ensure that robust systems are in place within the department to ensure the confidentiality and security of personal data and human material involved in projects.

4.3.1 Conflicts of Interest

An undeclared or unmanaged conflict of interest can adversely affect the delivery and impartiality (or perceived impartiality) of the activity and of its outcomes. It is important to note that a conflict of interest will not necessarily preclude any work from taking place provided that it has been recognised and managed appropriately.

All researchers should:

a) ensure that any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest (i.e. personal or institutional considerations, including but not limited to financial matters) are identified, declared and addressed in line with University and departmental policies, at the earliest possible juncture.

b) abide by any direction given by the University in relation to managing a conflict.

Principal Investigators and Supervisors should also:

a) where a conflict of interest can be adequately addressed through declarations and/or special safeguards relating to the conduct and reporting of the project, ensure that this is reflected in the design and delivery of the work. If it cannot be addressed in this way, and is of a type and severity that poses a risk of compromising the validity or integrity of the work, then advice should be sought about continuing with the work.

4.3.2 Health and Safety

All researchers should:

a) identify and address any project risks and requirements relating to health and safety.

b) comply with any review instituted in accordance with the University’s policy on health and safety.

Principal Investigators and Supervisors should also:

a) ensure that the project fulfils all requirements of health and safety and environmental legislation and is in accordance with the University Health & Safety Policy.

4.4 Managing Research

Management of projects should be carried out responsibly, in line with best practice and with an appropriate degree of transparency. This includes ensuring that projects are subject to sound financial management and recruitment practices.

All researchers should:

a) conduct their activities to a high standard.

b) raise any concerns regarding research management and output quality immediately.

c) keep accurate and secure records throughout the research process. This should include research results and details of experimental methodology. This is to ensure that final results are authentic and verifiable, protect researchers from misconduct allegations, and demonstrate compliance with legal and funder requirements.

Principal Investigators and Supervisors should also:

a) be as open as possible with collaborators, funders, academic community and public regarding their research. Where there are reasons for restriction such as confidentiality requirements or the need to secure first use of research results then these should be discrete in their scope and application.

b) proactively respond to allegations / concerns about research management and output quality, ensuring all concerns are investigated, escalated in a timely manner and responded to professionally.

4.4.1 Intellectual Property

All researchers should:

a) notify the University of any intellectual property created in the course of their activity, in line with the University's Intellectual Property Policy.

b) maintain confidentiality in line with any commitments to third parties, funder and University requirements (including requirements set out in the Intellectual Property policy), and obtain appropriate approval before disclosing confidential information, especially relating to current research and development work.

c) ensure there is no prior disclosure of the project or findings when this might invalidate any intellectual property rights that could result.

d) comply with any additional conditions relating to intellectual property required by funders.

e) acknowledge underpinning research work and all substantial help and advice received.

f) obtain the copyright holder's written permission for inclusion of copyright material.

Principal Investigators and Supervisors should also:

a) ensure that interactions with sensitive content are covered by an appropriate agreement.

b) prior to publication, consider whether the project contains intellectual property that may have commercial value to the university and in such cases, consult the Research Office before public disclosure or submission of work for publication.

c) aim to keep any delay in publication and dissemination of results pending protection of intellectual property to a minimum.

4.4.2 Finance

All researchers should:

a) adhere to the terms and conditions of any grant or contract related to the project.

b) comply with the University's guidelines regarding the purchasing or procurement of materials, equipment or other resources.

c) comply with the University's procedures for staff recruitment

d) co-operate with any legitimate external or internal monitoring or audit of finances relating to the project.

Principal Investigators and Supervisors should also:

a) monitor finances relating to the project.

Heads of Department/School should:

a) ensure that University procedures for the monitoring and audit of finances relating to research projects are adhered to within their department.

4.4.3 Data

All researchers should:

a) comply with the University's Research Data Management Policy, and any other legal, ethical, funding body and organisational requirements for the collection, use and storage of data, paying particular attention to data protection requirements for personal data and sensitive personal data.

b) consider how data will be gathered, analysed and managed, and how and in what form relevant data will be made available to others.

c) ensure that research data relating to publications is available for discussion with other researchers, subject to any existing agreements on confidentiality.

d) ensure that data is retained in line with the agreed retention period and is subsequently deleted or destroyed in line with all legal, ethical, funder and organisational requirements and with particular concern for confidentiality and security.

Principal Investigators and Supervisors should also:

a) ensure that data management requirements are considered at an early stage of the design of the project, normally through preparation of a data management plan.

b) ensure that data retention periods are in line with the University's Research Data Policy and any applicable legal or contractual requirements.

Heads of Department/School should:

a) put in place resources and administrative support to assist researchers in the accurate and efficient collection of data and its storage in a secure and accessible form.

4.5 Review and Audit

All activities can profit from regular review and audit. Peer review is encouraged and supported at all stages of the project; from design through to the peer review of outputs for publications.

Projects may also be reviewed by the University, funders and or other relevant bodies either as part of their ordinary quality control processes or in response to an allegation of misconduct or an issue.

All researchers should:

a) comply with any monitoring and audit requirements by applicable bodies, e.g. funder.

b) adopt peer review as an important part of good practice in the publication and dissemination of research and research findings, the assessment of applications for research grants, and in the ethics review of research projects.

c) follow guidelines of any organisation for which they carry out peer review, recognising the obligations of peer reviewers to be thorough and objective in their work and to maintain confidentiality.

d) report any pressure, direct or indirect, to breach these obligations.

e) not retain or copy any material under review without express written permission from the organisation which requested the review.

f) not make use of research design or findings from a paper under review without express permission of the author, and not allow others to do so.

g) ensure that all records and project documentation are kept in formats and structure which facilitate University / funder audit and review.

Principal Investigators and Supervisors should also:

a) ensure any requirements for monitoring and audit are reflected in the design of a project.

b) where appropriate ensure that proposals / applications receive at least internal peer review at the design / submission stage.

c) be prepared to act as peer reviewers for meetings, journals and other publications, grant applications and ethics review of research proposals, and support others who do so.

d) ensure that they and the project team fully engage with any audit and review process.

4.6 Publication and Authorship

The University respects the researcher's academic freedom and their right to select the most appropriate route and method for dissemination of results. The University expects that researchers will select the most appropriate publication strategy.

All researchers should:

a) publish and disseminate the outcomes of the project in an appropriate form and in a manner that reports the findings accurately and without selection that could be misleading. Where appropriate this can include providing access to underpinning data.

b) be willing to accept and present alternative points of view; not discourage or suppress appropriate publication or dissemination, nor attempt to influence the presentation or interpretation of findings inappropriately.

c) select reputable outlets which maximise the exposure and impact of the work, both to the academic community and society more broadly, in line with its Open Access Policy.

d) undertake training where appropriate in the publication and dissemination of projects that involve: confidential or proprietary information; issues relating to patents or intellectual property; findings with serious implications for public health; contractual or other legal obligations; and/or interest from the media or the general public.

e) appropriately acknowledge anyone who has directly or indirectly assisted their work. This includes collaborators, funders and participants. Sources should be cited appropriately.

f) adhere to any conditions set by funding or other bodies regarding the publication of data or findings, including the timing and manner of publication (e.g. open access).

g) ensure that reports are not submitted to more than one potential publisher at any given time (i.e. duplicate submission) or publish findings in more than one publication without disclosure and appropriate acknowledgement of any previous publications.

h) if subjected to attempts to influence the presentation or interpretation of findings inappropriately, or discouraged from publication or dissemination of findings, discuss this with their line manager.

Principal Investigators and Supervisors should also:

a) take overall responsibility for the project's publication strategy.

b) in the case of academic publications, ensure contributors are appropriately acknowledged in line with disciplinary expectations.

4.7 Misconduct in Research

Any unacceptable or improper behaviour or incidences of poor research practice, whether intentional or not, must be addressed at the earliest possible juncture.

The spectrum of inappropriate behaviour ranges from minor misdemeanours which may happen occasionally and inadvertently, to significant acts of misappropriation or fabrication.

Poor practices, such as weak procedures or inadequate record-keeping which may jeopardise the integrity of the research but might only require further training or development, do not normally require formal action. Honest errors and honest differences of interpretation or judgement of data do not constitute misconduct. It is expected that such issues can be addressed by a PI, supervisor or line manager.

More significant acts should be dealt with under the Procedures for dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct.

All researchers should:

a) report any concerns regarding poor practice to their PI, supervisor or line manager or, where they feel the practice constitutes misconduct through the Procedures.

b) proactively monitor the research and research team to identify potential issues.

c) seek advice from senior researchers if they are uncertain whether work they are involved in could breach the standards set out in this policy.

d) take any allegations of poor practice / misconduct seriously, responding to them in a timely and professional manner and escalating as appropriate.

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Related Policies, Procedures, Guidance, Forms or Templates	Research Ethics Policy; Policy for the Effective Management of Research Data; Procedures for dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct
Policy/Policies Superseded by this document	Guidelines and Code of Practice for Ethical Research