



## **Code of Good Practice in the Conduct of Research**

(Version 6 - July 2017)

### **1. Introduction**

The University is required by the Research Councils and other major funding bodies as a recipient of their funding to have in place a code of good practice for the conduct of research.

This page specifies the Code of Good Practice for staff and others conducting research on University premises or under the auspices of the University of Exeter.

### **2. Professional standards**

In the conduct of all research, the University expects the following general principles and standards to be understood and observed. These apply to all University employees and other researchers conducting research on University premises or under the auspices of the University of Exeter (hereafter referred to as researchers). The professional standards apply at all stages of a research project and throughout a research career – in the conduct of one's own research and authorship, in collaborations, peer review, supervisory responsibilities and academic leadership.

#### **2.1 Integrity**

At the heart of all academic endeavour, regardless of discipline, is the need for researchers to be honest in respect of their own actions in research and in their responses to the actions of other researchers. This applies to the whole range of research, including experimental design, generating and analysing data, publishing results, and acknowledging the direct and indirect contributions of colleagues, collaborators and others.

College Pro Vice-Chancellors should ensure that a culture of good practice and research integrity is promoted and embedded within their Colleges.

Any form of research misconduct (planned, attempted or carried out) will be regarded as a serious disciplinary offence.

All researchers to whom the University Of Exeter Code Of Good Practice in the Conduct of Research applies are encouraged to report any incident of misconduct, by staff, students or other researchers, whether witnessed or suspected.

Researchers can raise concerns about suspected research misconduct in confidence with their Head of Discipline, Director of Research, Associate Dean for Research or College Pro Vice-chancellor who will advise on the appropriate action to take. Concerns which involve the Associate Dean for Research or College Pro Vice-chancellor should be raised with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact.

Researchers should declare any real or potential conflicts of interest prior to undertaking the research to the Associate Dean for Research for their College.

## **2.2 Openness**

While recognizing the need for researchers to protect their own research interests and those of the University, research funders and collaborators in the process of planning their research and obtaining their results, the University encourages researchers to be as open as possible in discussing their research with other researchers and with the public. Researchers are expected to be aware of and to comply with the University's [Open Access and Research Data Management Policy](#).

Researchers will be required to comply with requests to the University under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Researchers should be prepared to question the outcome of their research and to check results before being made public or in response to queries after publication.

Where appropriate, researchers must seek the approval of research funders prior to publication or other forms of disclosure.

The University recognises that publication of the results of research may need to be delayed for a reasonable period to enable the University or the research sponsor to obtain intellectual property protection, such as Patents or copyright, for rights arising from research. However, any such periods of delay in publication should be kept to a minimum and must be consistent with the University's Open Access and Research Data Management Policy.

Once results have been published, the University expects researchers to make available relevant data and materials to other researchers, on request, provided that this is consistent with any ethics approvals and consents which cover the data and materials and any intellectual property rights therein.

## **2.3 Guidance from professional bodies**

Where available, the University expects researchers to observe the standards of research practice set out in guidelines published by scientific and learned societies, and other relevant professional bodies.

All researchers should be aware of and comply with the legal requirements which regulate their work.

## **2.4 Leadership and co-operation**

College Pro Vice-chancellors, Associate Deans for Research and other senior staff should ensure that a research climate of mutual co-operation is created in which all members of a research team are encouraged to develop their skills and in which the open exchange of ideas is fostered.

## **2.5 Supervision**

College Pro Vice-chancellors should ensure that appropriate direction of research and supervision of researchers is provided. Training in supervisory skills should be provided where appropriate. See also the Code of Good Practice for the Employment of Research Staff.

A code of responsibilities should be available for supervisors indicating, for example, the frequency of contact, responsibilities regarding scrutiny of primary data, and the broader development needs of research trainees.

The need should be stressed for supervisors to supervise all stages of the research process, including outlining or articulating a hypothesis, preparing applications for funding, protocol design, data recording and data analysis. Supervisors and Principal Investigators should ensure that a culture of good practice is promoted within their research groups.

## **2.6 Training**

Colleges should have in place systems which allow students and new researchers to understand and adopt best practice as quickly as possible. All researchers must complete the relevant mandatory training and undertake other appropriate training as required; for example in research design, regulatory and ethics approvals and consents, equipment use, confidentiality, data management, record keeping and data protection.

## **2.7 Documenting results and storing primary data**

There should be a clear process in place at the outset of the research programme to determine the ownership of data and samples used or created in the course of the research and the results of the research.

Researchers should keep clear and accurate records of the procedures followed and the approvals granted during the research process, including records of the interim results obtained as well as of the final research outcomes. This is necessary, not only as a means of demonstrating proper research practice, but also in case questions are subsequently asked about either the conduct of the research or the results obtained.

For similar reasons, primary data generated in the course of research must be kept securely in paper or electronic format, as appropriate and held normally for a period of ten years (or as required by the funding body) after the completion of a research project.

Back-up records should always be kept for data stored on a computer.

## **2.8 Ethical practice**

The University requires researchers to comply with the requirements of the University's Ethics Policy and Research Ethics Framework and procedures issued by College Ethics Committees.

Researchers must obtain approval from the appropriate bodies for research involving human participants and animals.

Researchers should ensure the confidentiality of personal information relating to the participants in research, and that the research fulfils any legal requirements such as those of the Data Protection Act 1998.

## **2.9 Publication practice**

The University encourages the publication of the results of research in an appropriate form. The issue of authorship is important in the context of good research practice. Principal authorship and other publication credit should accurately reflect the relative scientific or professional contribution of the individuals involved, regardless of their relative status. For example, a student should usually be listed as principal author on any multiple authored article that is substantially based on the student's dissertation or thesis.

Anyone listed as an author on a paper should accept personal responsibility for the contents of the paper and, where appropriate, be able to identify their contribution to it.

The practice of adding authors by virtue of their position is unacceptable. The contributions of formal collaborators and all others who directly assist or indirectly support the research should be properly acknowledged.

An example of good publication practice can be found in the Committee on Publication Ethics guidelines Good Publication Practice.

## **2.10 Applications and project management**

Researchers should take all reasonable measures to ensure:

- The accuracy and completeness of information contained in applications for funding, and
- if an application is successful, compliance with the terms and conditions specified by the sponsor and with University regulations in managing the project.

### **3. Misconduct in research**

The Annexe to this Code includes a definition of misconduct in research. Failure to comply with the University's standards for research will be managed in accordance with the guidance in this Annex and the University's Disciplinary Procedure.

### **4. Evaluation**

Colleges must ensure that all researchers comply with the requirements of this Code and have procedures in place for checking periodically that the standards are being met.

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## Guidance on Misconduct in Research

### 1. Definition of Misconduct

#### 1.1

Fabrication: including the creation of false data or other aspects of research, including documentation and participant consent.

Falsification: including the inappropriate manipulation and/or selection of data, imagery and/or consents.

Plagiarism: including the general misappropriation or use of others' ideas, intellectual property or work (written or otherwise), without acknowledgement or permission.

Misrepresentation, including:

- Misrepresentation of data, for example suppression of relevant findings and/or data, or knowingly, recklessly or by gross negligence, presenting a flawed interpretation of data.
- Undisclosed duplication of publication, including undisclosed duplicate submission of manuscripts for publication.
- Misrepresentation of interests, including failure to declare material interests either of the researcher or of the funders of the research.
- Misrepresentation of qualifications and/or experience, including claiming or implying qualifications or experience which are not held.
- Misrepresentation of involvement, such as inappropriate claims to authorship and/or attribution of work where there has been no significant contribution, or the denial of authorship where an author has made a significant contribution.

Mismanagement or inadequate preservation of data and/or primary materials, including failure to:

- Keep clear and accurate records of the research procedures followed and the results obtained, including interim results.
- Hold records securely in paper or electronic form.
- Make relevant primary data and research evidence accessible to others for reasonable periods after the completion of the research: data should normally be preserved and accessible for ten years, but for projects of clinical or major social, environmental or heritage importance, for twenty years or longer, or thirty years if required by a Clinical Trial Authorisation.
- Manage data according to the research funder's data policy and all relevant legislation.
- Wherever possible, deposit data permanently within a national collection.

Responsibility for proper management and preservation of data and primary materials is shared between the researcher and the research organisation.

Breach of duty of care, which involves deliberately, recklessly or by gross negligence:

- Disclosing improperly the identity of individuals or groups involved in research without their consent, or other breach of confidentiality.
- Placing any of those involved in research at risk of physical or psychological harm, whether as participants or associated individuals, without their prior consent, and without appropriate safeguards even with consent; this includes reputational danger where that can be anticipated.
- Not taking all reasonable care to ensure that the risks and dangers, the broad objectives and the sponsors of the research are known to participants or their legal representatives, to ensure appropriate informed consent is obtained properly, explicitly and transparently.
- Not observing legal and reasonable ethical requirements or obligations of care for animal subjects, human organs or tissue used in research, or for the protection of the environment.
- Improper conduct in peer review of research proposals or results (including manuscripts submitted for publication); this includes failure to disclose conflicts of interest; inadequate disclosure of clearly limited competence; misappropriation of the content of material; and breach of confidentiality or abuse of material provided in confidence for peer review purposes.

**1.2** Misconduct in research can include acts of omission as well as acts of commission. Research misconduct does not include genuine errors which are not due to negligence, or honest differences in interpretation or judgement in evaluating research methods or results.

Research misconduct does not include misconduct unrelated to research processes, which will be managed by the University under the Disciplinary Procedure. Similarly, fraud or other misuse of research funds or research equipment may additionally be managed in accordance with any specific provisions within the Fraud Policy.

## **2. Reporting concerns**

**2.1** All researchers to whom the University of Exeter Code of Good Practice in the Conduct of Research applies, and any other member of University staff or student, should report any incident of misconduct, by staff, students or other researchers, whether witnessed or suspected.

Members of the public are also able to report any incident of misconduct, whether witnessed or suspected. The University will ensure that, at all times, a single point of contact is provided on the University's website and logged with the UK Research Integrity Office. Allegations made to the single point of contact will be reported to the relevant College or Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact as appropriate and logged with the relevant HR Business Partner.

Researchers are encouraged to raise concerns about suspected research misconduct in confidence with their Head of Discipline or Associate Dean for Research or College Pro Vice-chancellor who will advise on the appropriate action to take. Concerns which involve the Associate Dean for Research or College Pro Vice-chancellor should be raised with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact.

**2.2** Allegations should normally be made in writing, accompanied by any available supporting evidence.

**2.3** The identity of the person who has drawn the University's attention to potential research misconduct will not be disclosed to the subject of the allegation except where this is necessary to facilitate the University's investigation or necessary for the purposes of natural justice or otherwise as required by law.

**2.4** In accordance with the University's policy and procedure on Public Interest Disclosure, individuals who raise concerns in good faith will not be penalised or disadvantaged for doing so.

**2.5** If an investigation or subsequent disciplinary hearing considers that the allegation may have been frivolous, vexatious, malicious in nature or otherwise made in bad faith, these concerns should be referred to the Director of Human Resources to consider whether disciplinary action should be taken against the individual making the allegation.

### **3. Investigation of suspected research misconduct**

**3.1** The University has a responsibility to investigate allegations of research misconduct fully and expeditiously. It also has a responsibility to protect researchers from frivolous, vexatious or malicious allegations.

**3.2** The University will endeavour to undertake and complete any investigation promptly and without undue delay and expects the researcher against whom the allegation is made to co-operate to achieve that aim, including co-operating in any investigation meetings they are asked to attend.

**3.3** The University is committed to cooperating in or undertaking joint investigations with other institutions where a case of alleged misconduct spans multiple institutions.

**3.4** Where an allegation is made, the College Pro Vice-chancellor will ask an appropriate senior member of staff in the College (e.g. Associate Dean for Research or Head of Department) to undertake a preliminary assessment to enable a decision to be made on whether the concern or allegation contains such sufficient evidence to be taken forward to a formal investigation. The College Pro Vice-chancellor will also report the allegation to the appropriate HR Business Partner for inclusion in the central record. The HRBP will inform the Research Ethics & Governance Manager that an



allegation has been received. The Research Ethics & Governance Manager can provide advice and support for Colleges and HR as required and will ensure that the requirements for reporting are met (see section 8). A report of the preliminary findings should be made to the College Pro Vice-chancellor. If the relevant College Pro Vice-chancellor is involved in the allegation or there is a potential conflict of interest, the Pro Vice-chancellor of another College will receive the report of preliminary findings.

**3.5** The College Pro Vice-chancellor will discuss reported concerns and allegations of research misconduct with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact and the Director of Human Resources (or their appointed delegates) to consider whether a formal investigation under the University's Discipline Procedure is necessary.

For members of staff, the staff disciplinary procedure will apply:

[http://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/humanresources/documents/grievancedisciplinaryandotherdismissalprocedures/disciplinary\\_procedure.pdf](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/humanresources/documents/grievancedisciplinaryandotherdismissalprocedures/disciplinary_procedure.pdf)

Where the allegation of research misconduct is about someone funded by, or engaged with, RCUK (including acting as a supervisor for an RCUK postgraduate student or engaged with peer review activities), even if it is not about work connected with a grant from a UK Research Council, the panel undertaking the formal investigation must include external representation. RCUK may wish to seek observer status on formal investigations.

**3.6** For students, the relevant Faculty procedures will be followed. In the case of a researcher who is both a member of staff and a student, the University will make a decision on which is the appropriate procedure to follow, taking account of the circumstances of the case and, in particular, whether research is a paramount part of the individual's employment.

**3.7** For other researchers, such as those with honorary appointments, the College Pro Vice-chancellor will make a decision on what action should follow an investigation and this may lead to the researcher's arrangement with the University being terminated.

#### **4. Notification to other parties during an investigation**

**4.1** Where this is required by the terms of the funding or other contractual arrangement, the Director of Research Services will notify the funding/sponsor body that the researcher is under investigation. The University will advise the researcher of this action.

It is a requirement of RCUK that, where an allegation of research misconduct is about someone funded by, or engaged with, RCUK (including acting as a supervisor for an RCUK postgraduate student or engaged with peer review activities), even if it is about work not connected with a grant from a UK Research Council, the case should be reported by the Director of Research Services to the relevant Council at the stage that it is decided to undertake a preliminary assessment (see paragraph

3.4). The Director of Research Services will also notify the relevant Council when the outcome of the preliminary assessment is known (e.g. whether the allegation is dismissed or taken through to a formal investigation – see paragraph 3.5) and when the outcome of the formal investigation is known (e.g. whether the case is dismissed or a disciplinary hearing is arranged).

**4.2** In cases of suspension under the disciplinary procedure, it may also be necessary, under the terms of the funding or other contractual arrangement, for the University to notify the funding/sponsor body that the researcher has been suspended. The University will advise the researcher of this action.

**4.3** If the researcher leaves the University before the completion of any investigation/disciplinary process, the case should be referred to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact and the Director of Human Resources to consider whether it is appropriate to advise the individual that, subject to data protection, duty of confidentiality and duty of care standards, the details of the outstanding case may be passed to any future (or prospective) employer or bona fide enquirer about their career at the University, and may also be passed to any appropriate regulatory or professional supervisory body.

In appropriate circumstances, the individual may be offered the opportunity to see the investigation or disciplinary process through to its conclusion.

## **5. Dismissal of allegations**

**5.1** If the allegations are dismissed at any stage, a clear statement should be made to the researcher, to the person who has drawn the University's attention to the potential research misconduct, and to any individuals/bodies who have been informed of the allegations or are otherwise aware, and who have a legitimate interest in the outcome such as the funding body.

**5.2** Where an allegation is dismissed without a formal investigation (following a preliminary assessment – see paragraph 3.4), the person who has drawn the University's attention to the potential research misconduct should be given the opportunity for response if they believe that they have been misunderstood or key evidence overlooked.

## **6. Notification to other parties following a disciplinary hearing**

**6.1** If a disciplinary hearing finds that research misconduct has occurred, in addition to the sanction issued, the matter will be referred to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact to consider whether it is appropriate to notify the funding/sponsor body and, if the researcher is subject to the regulation of a professional body (e.g. the General Medical Council), that professional body of the finding. The University will advise the researcher of this action.

It is a requirement of RCUK that, where a disciplinary hearing considers an allegation of research misconduct is about someone funded by, or engaged with, RCUK (including acting as a supervisor for an RCUK postgraduate student or engaged with peer review activities), even if it is about work not connected with a grant from a UK Research Council, the outcome of the disciplinary hearing should be reported by the Director of Research Services to the relevant Council.

**6.2** Where the person responsible has published research, especially research to which the misconduct relates, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact shall consider whether it is appropriate to inform journal editors or others of the finding.

**6.3** Such notification will be sent at the conclusion of the disciplinary procedure, unless otherwise required by the rules of professional bodies or funders

## **7. Annual Reporting**

7.1 In compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, the University is required to publish an annual statement which includes anonymised information on cases of research misconduct. The Director of HR (or delegate) will be responsible for maintaining a central record of research misconduct allegations and investigations. The Research Ethics and Governance Manager will be responsible for interim reporting on cases of research misconduct to the Deputy Vice-chancellor Research and Impact and Ethics Dual Assurance portfolio (on a termly basis), to the University Ethics Committee on at least an annual basis and for publishing the annual statement following its approval by the University's Council in the summer term of each academic year.

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