

1. Purpose of policy

The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) is committed to building and maintaining a culture of responsible and ethical research. This policy outlines the principles, responsibilities, and expected standards of responsible research practices that underpin high-quality research. This policy is based on the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

2. Policy scope and application

This policy applies to all staff, HDR students, adjunct and conjoint appointments, visiting academics, and research fellows who engage in research activity under the auspices of USC.

The institution and researchers must comply with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, other relevant state and national legislation, and relevant USC policies and procedures, regardless of the research funding source or whether the research requires ethics approval. Failure to comply will be regarded as a breach.

Records that provide reliable and accurate evidence of decisions and actions must be captured by all individuals engaged in research activities. All records must be captured in an approved records management system in accordance with USC's Information and Records Management – Procedures.

3. Definitions

Please refer to USC's Glossary of terms for policies and procedures. Terms and definitions identified below are specific to this policy and are critical to its effectiveness.

Balance of probabilities: the civil standard of proof, which requires that, on the weight of evidence, it is more probably than not that a breach has occurred.

Breach: behaviour that fails to meet the requirements of responsible research conduct as outlined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and USC policies and procedures. May refer to a single breach or multiple breaches.

The Code: the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

Conflict of interest: a conflict of interest exists where an independent observer might reasonably conclude that the professional actions of a person or institution are or may be unduly influenced by other interests.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students: students enrolled in a research master's or doctoral degree.

The Investigation Guide: the Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

Primary materials: physical or virtual objects acquired or derived through a process of scholarly investigation from which research data may be derived. It includes ore, biological materials, questionnaires or recordings.

National Statement: the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

Research: as defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Council

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

DESIGNATED OFFICER

Director, Office of Research

FIRST APPROVED

6 December 2018

LAST AMENDED

7 December 2018

EFFECTIVE START DATE

7 December 2018

REVIEW DATE

6 December 2023

STATUS

Active

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Animal Ethics - Governing Policy

Animal Ethics - Procedures

Authorship and Dissemination of Research Findings - Procedures

Compliance Management Framework - Governing Policy

Conflict of Interest - Governing Policy

External Research Grants - Academic Policy

External Research Grants - Procedures

Fraud and Corruption Control - Governing Policy

Fraud and Corruption Control - Procedures

Higher Degrees by Research Supervision - Procedures

Human Research Ethics - Governing Policy

Human Research Ethics - Procedures

Information and Records Management - Procedures

Information Management Framework - Governing Policy

Intellectual Property - Governing Policy

Managing and Investigating Breaches of Responsible Research Conduct - Procedures

Public Interest Disclosures - Governing Policy

Research Data Management - Procedures

Student Academic Integrity - Governing Policy

Student Conduct - Governing Policy

Student Grievance Resolution - Governing Policy

Student Review and Appeals - Procedures

SUPERSEDED DOCUMENTS

Research - Academic Policy | Research Misconduct - Governing Policy

RELATED LEGISLATION / STANDARDS

Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)

Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 8th edition (2013)

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)

Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities

National Principles of IP Management for Publicly Funded Research

Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of Responsible Research Conduct

Researcher: all staff, HDR students, adjunct and conjoint appointments, visiting academics, and research fellows who engage in research activity under the auspices of USC.

Research data: any data collected during research that could be used to validate the research findings and/or facilitate the reproduction of the research. This includes data in all forms (e.g. electronic, lab notes, surveys, field notes, datasets, audio recordings, test results).

Research Integrity Advisor (RIA): a senior researcher with knowledge of responsible research practices and related policies, procedures and legislation nominated to promote and support responsible research conduct and provide advice to those who have concerns or complaints about potential breaches.

Research misconduct: a serious breach of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, the Responsible Research Conduct – Governing Policy, other relevant USC policies or procedures, and/or relevant legislation that is also intentional or reckless or negligent.

3Rs: Replacement, Reduction and Refinement as defined in the Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

4. Principles of responsible research conduct

4.1 USC expects all researchers to adhere to the highest standards of intellectual honesty and integrity, and to conduct their research responsibly and ethically.

4.2 All individuals involved in USC research activities are required to adhere to the principles of responsible research conduct. In accordance with the Code, the principles of responsible research conduct are:

- Honesty

Researchers must present information truthfully and accurately in proposing, conducting, and reporting their research.

- Rigour

Researchers must demonstrate robust methodology and attention to detail in their research, and avoid or acknowledge biases as appropriate.

- Transparency

Researchers must share and communicate research methodology, data and findings openly, responsibly, and accurately, and must disclose and manage actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

- Fairness

Researchers must treat others involved in the research fairly and respectfully, appropriately reference and cite the work of others, and give credit to contributors to the research, including offering authorship where appropriate.

- Respect

Researchers must treat human research participants with respect and consider the needs of minority groups and/or vulnerable people, show respect in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, and minimise adverse effects on the environment.

- Recognition

Researchers must show recognition to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples engaged in their research by: valuing and respecting the diversity, heritage, knowledge, cultural property and connection to land; engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prior to any research being undertaken; and reporting the outcomes of the research back to those involved in the research.

- Accountability

Researchers must comply with relevant legislation, policies and guidelines, ensure good stewardship of public resources used to conduct research, and consider the consequences and outcomes of research prior to its communication.

- Promotion

All individuals involved in USC research activity must promote and foster a research culture and environment that supports responsible research conduct.

5. Institutional responsibilities

5.1 In accordance with the Code, and in addition to the standards outlined in section 7 of this policy, USC has a responsibility to:

5.1.1 maintain a framework that encompasses appropriate governance and management practices for responsible research conduct

5.1.2 comply with relevant laws, regulations, guidelines and policies related to responsible research conduct

5.1.3 maintain a suite of institutional policies and procedures that are consistent with the principles and responsibilities of the Code

5.1.4 provide regular education in responsible research conduct for all staff and students conducting or involved in research

5.1.5 maintain a network of RIAs who promote and support a culture of responsible research conduct and provide advice to those with concerns about potential breaches of the Code, relevant USC policies, and/or relevant legislation, and

5.1.6 adhere to the standards of responsible research conduct as outlined in section 7 of this policy.

6. Researcher responsibilities

6.1 In accordance with the Code, and in addition to the standards outlined in section 7 of this policy, researchers have a responsibility to:

6.1.1 promote and support a culture of responsible research conduct at USC and within their discipline

6.1.2 promote and undertake regular training in responsible research practices

6.1.3 comply with relevant laws, regulations, disciplinary standards, ethics guidelines and USC policies and procedures that relate to responsible research conduct

6.1.4 obtain all approvals prior to the commencement of research and ensure conditions of approvals are adhered to

6.1.5 ensure that the ethics principles of research merit and integrity, justice, beneficence and respect (as outlined in the National Statement) are applied to human research

6.1.6 engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and respect their legal rights and local laws, customs and protocols

6.1.7 ensure that the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) are considered in all activities that use animals for scientific purposes, that the impact on animals is minimised, and that the wellbeing and welfare of those animals is supported at all times

6.1.8 adopt methods appropriate to the aims of the research and ensure that conclusions are justified by the results

6.1.9 adhere to the standards of responsible research conduct as outlined in section 7 of this policy.

7. Standards of responsible research conduct

7.1 Management of research data and primary materials

7.1.1 Research data and materials generated from a research project hosted by USC resides with USC and not the researcher or funding body, subject to any written agreement between the researcher and USC, or USC and a third party. Regardless of ownership, USC as the institution hosting the research remains the custodian of the research data, materials and records.

7.1.2 Subject to any contractual arrangements, privacy or confidentiality considerations, researchers may retain copies of research data and materials and related records as per the Research Data Management – Procedures.

7.1.3 USC will provide access to facilities for secure storage and management of research data, records and primary materials.

7.1.4 Research data, materials, and related records must be stored in USC's data storage facilities with appropriate data management plans in place as per the Research Data Management – Procedures. In cases where it is not possible to use USC's data storage facilities, the researcher must seek approval for alternative storage as per the Research Data Management – Procedures.

7.1.5 For collaborative research projects, an agreement covering the arrangements of data storage must be established prior to the commencement of the research.

7.1.6 Researchers must keep clear, accurate, secure and complete records of all research, including research data and primary materials, in accordance with relevant information privacy and records management legislation, USC policy and the Research Data Management - Procedures.

7.1.7 All individuals who engage in research activities under the auspices of USC must comply with any ethics or contractual confidentiality conditions relating to the research data and materials and related records, and familiarise themselves with any legislative and regulatory requirements.

7.1.8 Research data must be of sufficient detail to justify research outcomes and enable verification of the research results and must meet the minimum retention requirements as specified in the Queensland State Archives University Sector Retention and Disposal Schedule.

7.1.9 Subject to any confidentiality, contractual, privacy or patent protection requirements, access and reference to research data and materials must be permitted.

7.1.10 In the event that results from research are challenged, or where records may be subject to an investigation of a breach of the Code and/or USC policy, all associated research data, materials and related records must be retained.

7.1.11 Disposal of research data and materials must be in accordance with relevant legislative requirements, USC policy and the Research Data Management – Procedures.

7.2 Supervision of HDR students

7.2.1 USC will ensure that supervisors have the adequate skills, qualifications and resources to effectively mentor and supervise HDR students as outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Supervision - Procedures.

7.2.2 USC will provide regular training for HDR students in responsible research practices and related policies and legislation.

7.2.3 Supervisors must provide guidance and mentorship on responsible research practices to their students (such as obtaining ethics and funding, and reporting research outcomes), and, where appropriate, monitor their conduct.

7.2.4 Supervisors must display and promote to their students, professionalism, integrity and mutual respect.

7.2.5 Supervisors must offer their students authorship in cases where the student meets the authorship criteria outlined in section 7.3 of this policy and the Authorship and Dissemination of Research Findings – Procedures.

7.2.6 Where possible, authorship arrangements must be agreed upon at the initial stages of the student's project, and reviewed throughout the project.

7.2.7 Supervisors must assist their students in developing appropriate peer review skills.

7.2.8 Supervisors must ensure that discipline-based research methods and other relevant skills, such as the ability to interact with industry and to work with diverse communities, is incorporated into the research training experience.

7.3 Authorship and dissemination of research findings

7.3.1 USC supports fairness and best practice in authorship and the responsible dissemination of research findings. This applies to all forms of dissemination (formal publications in academic journals, web publishing, exhibitions or films, professional or institutional repositories).

7.3.2 Authorship must only be offered to those who have made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to the research and its output, which is based on a combination of:

- conception and design of the project
- analysis and interpretation of research data
- drafting significant parts of the work or critically revising it so as to contribute to the interpretation.

7.3.3 Those who meet the criteria for authorship must not be included or excluded without their permission as outlined in the Authorship and Dissemination of Research Findings – Procedures.

7.3.4 Researchers must acknowledge those who have contributed to the research as outlined in the Authorship and Dissemination of Research Findings – Procedures.

7.3.5 Authorship arrangements must be agreed upon at the initial stages of the project, and reviewed throughout the project as per the Authorship and Dissemination of Research Findings – Procedures.

7.3.6 General supervisors of research teams or research students, individuals holding positions of authority, or those providing routine assistance must not be included as authors unless they have made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to the research and its output as outlined in 7.3.2.

7.3.7 Researchers must cite and acknowledge other relevant work appropriately and accurately when disseminating research findings.

7.3.8 Researchers are expected to disseminate research findings responsibly, accurately and broadly as per the Authorship and Dissemination of Research Findings – Procedures.

7.3.9 Researchers must consider confidentiality requirements, intellectual property, contract requirements and/or culturally sensitive material when publishing or disseminating research findings.

7.3.10 In cases where an error or anomaly has been identified in a publication or in the research findings, researchers must act to correct the record as soon as practicable.

7.3.11 In cases where an error, anomaly or breach of the Code and/or USC policy has been identified in a publication or in the research findings, USC will act to correct the record as soon as practicable.

7.4 Peer review

7.4.1 USC encourages participation in peer review to help maintain high standards, integrity and to provide public credibility to the reporting of research.

7.4.2 Researchers must participate in peer review in a way that is fair, rigorous and timely.

7.4.3 Researchers must maintain confidentiality and not disclose the content of the work being reviewed or use information obtained for personal advantage.

7.4.4 Researchers should not peer review research for which they have a conflict of interest. In cases where conflicts cannot be avoided, for example, limited availability of reviewers with relevant expertise, the conflict must be declared and appropriately managed in accordance with the Conflict of Interest – Governing Policy.

7.4.5 Researchers must not agree to participate in peer review where the research is outside their area of expertise.

7.4.6 Researchers whose work is being peer reviewed must not influence the process or the outcome.

7.5 Conflicts of interest

7.5.1 Researchers must disclose and manage actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest that may compromise or influence their research. Where appropriate, this must be in accordance with the Conflict of Interest – Governing Policy.

7.5.2 Researchers must disclose any conflicts in the research output, for example, when publishing or reporting research results.

7.5.3 Researchers must disclose any conflicts when proposing research, for example, in grant or ethics applications or collaborative projects.

7.6 Collaborative research across institutions

7.6.1 USC supports collaboration between researchers, institutions, and industry where the research is appropriately managed via an agreement, and where relevant, in accordance with Management of Contracts and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) – Governing Policy, External Research Grants – Academic Policy and External Research Grants – Procedures.

7.6.2 Researchers working on international collaborations must comply with the Code and relevant USC policies and legislation, in addition to any other relevant standards, such as the collaborating institution's policies. If departures from standard Australian practices are required while overseas, researchers must seek approval from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) prior to the research activity.

7.6.3 Researchers involved in collaborative research must ensure an agreement is in place prior to the commencement of the research that covers intellectual property, confidentiality and copyright issues, commercialisation, conflicts of interest, ethics and/or other relevant clearance, reporting, data management, and dissemination of research findings.

7.6.4 In addition to a formal agreement, researchers must also keep copies of relevant negotiations with collaborators.

7.6.5 All researchers involved in a collaborative research project must familiarise themselves with the formal agreement and comply with any contractual arrangements and related policies and legislation.

8. Breaches of responsible research conduct

8.1 Departures from responsible research practices as outlined in the Code, this policy and/or other related procedures and legislation may constitute a breach and will be managed in accordance with Managing and Investigating Breaches of Responsible Research Conduct – Procedures and the Investigation Guide.

8.2 Breaches deemed to also be intentional or reckless or negligent may be referred to as research misconduct.

8.3 Examples of breaches may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- not meeting required standards, for example, conducting research without ethics approval and/or the appropriate permits or licences, misuse of research funds, concealment or facilitation of breaches or potential breaches
- fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation
- plagiarism
- failure to adhere to responsible data management practices, for example, inappropriate destruction or disclosure of research records or failure to maintain research records
- failure to provide adequate guidance on responsible research practices to researchers or research students under supervision
- failure to offer authorship to others when they meet the criteria or to acknowledge the contribution of others fairly, or to offer authorship to those who do not qualify
- failure to disclose and manage conflicts of interest
- failure to participate in peer review in a fair and responsible way.

8.4 Researchers have an obligation to report suspected breaches of the Code and/or related USC policies and legislation, and are required to follow the process outlined in Managing and Investigating Breaches of Responsible Research Conduct – Procedures when doing so.

8.5 USC will facilitate the prevention and detection of potential breaches of responsible research conduct through training, education, an RIA network, experienced supervisors and mentors, and an effective complaints management and investigation procedure.

8.6 USC will support the welfare of all parties involved when managing and investigating breaches of the Code and/or related USC policies or procedures.

8.7 Management and investigation of breaches in collaborative research projects will be assessed on a case-by-case basis depending on the lead institution, contractual arrangements, where the events occurred, where the complaint was lodged, and relevant international research practices.

8.8 USC will ensure that the process for managing and investigating breaches is timely, effective and procedurally fair and is undertaken in accordance with Managing and Investigating Breaches of Responsible Research Conduct – Procedures and the Investigation Guide.

8.9 USC will base investigation findings on the balance of probabilities and ensure any outcomes are commensurate with the degree of departure from the Code and/or related USC policy or procedures.

8.10 In cases where a complaint relates to activities that have (or have the potential to) harm humans, animals or the environment, immediate action will be taken to minimise the risk of harm. In such cases, it may also be necessary to inform relevant external agencies and/or manage the matter in accordance with relevant USC governance, human resources and/or student conduct policies.

8.11 In cases where a breach involves potentially corrupt or criminal behaviour, the matter will be managed in accordance with relevant USC governance, human resources and/or student conduct policies, as appropriate. Such matters may also be referred to an external agency to investigate where relevant.

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