Responsible Conduct of Research Policy

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) The University of Newcastle (the University) is committed to the development and maintenance of a research culture that reflects its core values, as outlined in the Ethical Framework. This culture of research integrity is integral to the University's commitment to undertake world-class research.

(2) The University fosters responsible and ethical research conduct to ensure credibility, confidence, and community trust in the quality of its research outputs.

(3) The University recognises the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be engaged in research that affects or is of particular significance to them. The University expects that this research will value and respect the diversity, heritage, knowledge, cultural property, and connection to country of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and comply with national codes and guidelines.

Section 2 - Purpose

(4) This policy:

a. establishes how the University and its Researchers and staff will comply with the requirements of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research ("the Code") including the governance and management arrangements for research at the University;
b. seeks to minimise risk and protect the interests of the University, Researchers, and staff when engaging in research activities; and
c. seeks to protect research participants, maintain animal welfare, and protect the environment.

Section 3 - Audience

(5) This policy should be read and understood by Researchers, staff, conjoint/honorary appointees, students, Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates, external supervisors, and volunteers involved in research at the University.

Section 4 - Scope

(6) This policy applies to all research activities conducted under the auspices of the University.

Section 5 - Document Specific Definitions

(7) In the context of this policy:

a. 'Chief Investigator' means any person assigned to a research project with ultimate responsibility for the intellectual, administrative, and ethical conduct of research. Chief Investigators may adopt alternative role titles

such as, but not limited to, Lead Investigator or Research Supervisor, however, must uphold the responsibilities of Chief Investigator as outlined in this policy;

b. 'foreign entities or individuals' refers to organisations, institutions, or associates formed in a jurisdiction, state, or country external to the University, and with whom a Researcher engages for proposed or ongoing research;

c. 'peer review' means an impartial and independent assessment of research by others working in the same or a related field; and

d. 'Researcher' means any University staff, conjoint/honorary appointments, students, Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates and volunteers who conduct research or contribute to research at or on behalf of the University.

Section 6 - Overarching and Related Documents

(8) This policy is subject to the following overarching documents and should be read in conjunction with these documents.

Legislation

a. Animal Research Act 1985 No 123;
b. Animal Research Regulation 2021(NSW);
c. Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002;
d. Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998;
e. Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022;
f. State Records Act 1998;
g. Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018;
h. Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Amendment Act 2019;
i. Defence Trade Controls Act 2012;
j. Autonomous Sanctions Act 2011;
k. Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth);
l. Work Health and Safety Act 2011 No 10;
m. Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017; and
n. Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements Act 2020).

Codes

a. Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 ("the Code");
b. Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 2013;
c. National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2023; and
d. AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (the AIATSIS code).

Guidelines

a. Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector (University Foreign Interference Taskforce) ("the Guidelines"); and
b. Supplementary guides supporting the implementation of the Code ("Guides supporting the Code").

(9) This document is supported by the following procedure documents, which should read in conjunction with this Policy:

a. Animal Research Regulatory Manual;
b. Collaborative Research Procedure;
c. Ethical Human Research Procedure Manual;
d. Research Authorship Procedure;
e. Research Breach Investigation Procedure;
f. Research Data and Primary Materials Management Procedure;
g. Research Peer Review Procedure for Ethics Applications; and
h. Publication and Dissemination of Research Policy.

Section 7 - Roles and Responsibilities

Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Innovation

(10) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (DVCRI) is responsible for establishing and maintaining:

a. research governance and management practices in accordance with the Code;
b. a research culture that facilitates the prevention and detection of potential breaches of the Code; and
c. a disclosures register for research activities, collaborations, partnerships, contracts or grants involving foreign entities or individuals, in support of the Guidelines.

College Pro Vice-Chancellors

(11) College Pro Vice-Chancellors are responsible for ensuring that:

a. all research staff are provided with appropriate induction, research integrity training and mentoring opportunities related to their responsibilities as outlined in this policy;
b. research practices:
    i. create a safe working environment for the conduct of research; and
    ii. uphold the principles and requirements of this policy and its related documents;
c. the supervision of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates is in accordance with the Code of Practice for Higher Degree by Research Candidature; and
d. research supervisors have appropriate skills and qualifications prior to commencing supervisory duties and are provided with an appropriate level of resources to conduct supervisory duties.

Assistant Deans (Research)

(12) The Associate Dean (Research) are responsible for facilitating disclosures of research activities involving foreign entities or individuals.

Research Integrity Advisors

(13) The University will appoint Research Integrity Advisors, in accordance with the Code and the Guidelines, who are responsible for:

a. promoting and fostering responsible research conduct; and
b. providing advice regarding potential breaches of the Code and the Guidelines.

Researchers

(14) All University Researchers (staff and students) are responsible for:

a. upholding the principles of the Code, the Guides Supporting the Code, and the requirements of both as they relate to all aspects of research;
b. accessing, understanding and adhering to this policy and its associated documents;
c. reporting suspected breaches of the Code in accordance with the Research Breach Investigation Procedure;
d. disclosing all collaborations, partnerships, contracts, grants, or other activities to the University that are relevant or could appear to be relevant to proposed or ongoing research involving foreign entities or individuals;
e. reporting instances where influence over supervision, peer, and grant review processes or research activities by foreign entities or individuals is suspected (foreign influence) to the University;
f. adhering to the University's procedures related to research, listed in this document (Clause 9) or within the University Policy library;
g. ensuring that adequate controls are developed and implemented to identify, manage, and monitor collaborations, partnerships, contracts, grants, and other activities involving foreign entities or individuals, to minimise the risk of foreign interference irrespective of the tools used. Researchers are responsible for the integrity, rigour, and originality of all research outputs;
h. ensuring consistency with the University's position on the responsible use of generative AI tools when using these for research purposes;
i. taking reasonable steps to ensure the use of generative AI does not breach any legal or ethical obligations;
j. upholding the principles of the Guidelines for Countering Foreign Interference in the University Sector, with particular attention to the protection of academic freedoms and intellectual property, and cyber security awareness;
k. undertaking research integrity training, as well as human ethics and animal care training where applicable, in addition to other induction and training courses as soon as practicable when required or requested by the University, and prior to the commencement of research;
l. playing an active role in supervision and peer review processes where applicable; and
m. not seeking to influence a peer review or its outcome.

(15) Volunteer Researchers are also subject to the Volunteer Management (including Volunteer Researcher) Policy.

(16) Responsibilities for Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates and supervisors, in addition to those outlined above, are reflected in the Code of Practice for Higher Degree by Research Candidature and the Student Conduct Rule which should be read in conjunction with this document where applicable.

Chief Investigators

(17) Chief Investigators are responsible for:

a. promoting a responsible research culture, including compliance with all relevant legislative obligations;
b. providing guidance and mentorship on the conduct of responsible research to Researchers and research trainees under their supervision, and monitoring their conduct of research;
c. complying with the requirements of the NSW Department of Primary Industries, the Animal Research Act (NSW), the Animal Research Regulation (NSW), the Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes, and the University's Animal Research Regulatory Manual, where animals are used in a research project;
d. complying with the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, and the University's Ethical Human Research Procedure Manual, where humans are used in a research project;
e. disclosing all relevant interests related to research activities under their supervision (refer to the Disclosure of Interest Policy definition of “relevant interest”);

f. ensuring that Researchers under their supervision receive appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure their health, safety and welfare while undertaking research activities;
g. assisting Researchers under their supervision to develop the necessary skills for peer review, and understanding their obligation to participate;
h. ensuring that Researchers under their supervision receive appropriate information, instruction, training, and supervision to ensure that research activities are resilient to foreign interference; and
i. registering clinical trials where applicable, in accordance with clause 42.

Section 8 - Training and Competency

(18) The University will provide regular training to all persons conducting research at the University.

(19) Mandatory research integrity training must be completed by all staff and students involved with research.

(20) Mandatory human ethics training requirements are documented within the Ethical Human Research Procedure Manual, and must be complied with by all Researchers.

(21) Mandatory animal ethics training requirements are documented within the Animal Research Regulatory Manual and must be complied with by all Researchers.

(22) The Research Ethics and Integrity Unit will provide training to the Research Integrity Advisors to promote the responsible conduct of research on a regular basis.

(23) Business units and staff involved in the development of training must implement adequate quality measures to ensure that the training:

a. meets the needs of training participants;
b. achieves the desired learning outcomes; and
c. is reviewed regularly to ensure currency with this policy and any overarching and associated documents where applicable.

(24) Training may also be delivered in an unstructured format through peer review, mentoring and/or supervision practices;

(25) Researchers must ensure that skills and knowledge gained from training provided by the University are applied to their research practices and conduct.

Section 9 - Disclosure of Interests

(26) In accordance with the Disclosure of Interest Policy and it's associated procedure, University Researchers must promptly disclose all interests that are, or may appear to be, relevant to research or proposed research to their line manager and, when circumstances require, to:

a. the Chair of a meeting or committee;
b. the University via the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation);
c. funding bodies;
d. research participants;
e. publishers and journal editors;
f. research collaborators; and/or

g. the public.

(27) Conflicts of interest must be disclosed promptly and proactively, and be managed in accordance with the Disclosure of Interest Policy and it's supporting procedure, and Disclosure of interests and management of conflicts of interest: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

(28) Additionally, Higher Degree by Research (HDR) supervisors and candidates are required to be familiar with and comply with the conflict of interest procedures as described in Clause (40) of the Code of Practice for Higher Degree by Research Candidature.

Section 10 - Indigenous Engagement

(29) The University will engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, either through direct engagement or via consultation with the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Strategy and Leadership, and/or the Wollotuka Institute, to ensure legal rights, local laws, customs, and protocols are respected. Engagement will occur at appropriate intervals and timeframes to ensure that the University has sufficient knowledge and understanding of the significance and potential effect of research conducted by the University.

(30) Researchers should consult the University's Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) Protocol and accompanying Community Guide when undertaking engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples. Further guidance on ICIP protocols can be provided by the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Strategy and Leadership.

(31) Researchers may be required to obtain additional approvals before commencing the research and should seek advice from the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Strategy and Leadership. This includes approval from the Aboriginal Health Research Community Panel.

(32) Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities: Guidelines for Researchers and Stakeholders and Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Research provides guidance for Indigenous research engagement.

Section 11 - Research Approvals

Ethics Approval

(33) All research involving humans or animals must be approved by the relevant Ethics Committee (or other authorised approval authority) prior to commencement of any research activities.

(34) For research involving humans, compliance with the Ethical Human Research Procedure Manual is required. Please refer to the ReSearchHub for procedures and forms.

(35) For research involving animals compliance with the Animal Research Regulatory Manual is required. Please refer to the ReSearchHub for procedures and forms.

(36) Researchers must adhere to the conditions and activities stated in the approved protocol. Any deviation from this constitutes a breach of the protocol.

(37) Changes to staff, sites, or conduct of the research must be applied for and approved by the relevant animal or human ethics committee prior to the commencement of the requested change.

(38) University requirements for collaborative research projects involving ethics approvals must be met in accordance

with the Collaborative Research Procedure.

Safety Approval

(39) A risk assessment and safety review must be completed for any new research activity in order to assess and mitigate any risks to the safety of persons involved in the research, prior to the commencement of research.

(40) Safety review by the appropriate technical committee, via submission of a Safety Protocol through Tick@Lab is required for all research projects, practical teaching activities and events that fall under defined safety and compliance risk review categories. Technical Committees include:

a. Chemical and Radiation Technical Committee (CRTC): for the consultation of health and safety matters involving hazardous materials (other than biological).
b. Institutional BioSafety Committee (IBC): supports compliance with the legislative requirements of the Gene Technology Act 2000, and National Health Security Act 2007, as well as monitoring microbiological practice against Australian Standards (AS/NZS 2243 series) and other aspects of biosafety related to research and teaching.

(41) Refer to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing SharePoint for instructions and forms to complete a risk assessment and safety review. Further training is available in the Risk Management Introduction training module.

Clinical Trials

(42) Clinical trials must be registered with a recognised registry to promote access to information about all clinical trials. The University recommends that clinical trials be registered with the NHMRC Clinical Trials Registry.

Section 12 - Peer Review

(43) Peer review is the impartial and independent assessment of research by others with appropriate expertise. It has several important roles in research and research management, including:

a. assessment of research proposals (including applications for safety or ethical approvals), research outputs, and grant applications;
b. review and selection of material for publication and dissemination; and
c. evaluation of the research conducted by Researchers, research teams, academic units, and institutions.

(44) Peer review is to be conducted in accordance with the Peer Review Guide supporting the Code and where relevant, the Research Peer Review Procedure for Ethics Applications.

(45) Peer review will encompass:

a. scrutiny of research analysis, methodology and findings, ensuring that accepted disciplinary standards are met;
b. identification of any indication of fabrication or fraud;
c. identification of errors and misleading statements; and
d. verification of the calibre of research.

(46) Peer reviewers are responsible for:

a. ensuring they are appropriately experienced or knowledgeable in the research proposal field of study;
b. undertaking peer review in a fair, constructive, rigorous and timely manner;
c. applying standards equally to all research proposals;

d. acting appropriately, respectfully, and in confidence;
e. declaring all interests in accordance with the Disclosure of Interest Policy;
f. ensuring that the criteria set by ethics review boards, funding agencies, or publishers are understood and followed during the peer review process giving proper consideration to analysis, theoretical framework, research methods and findings that challenge accepted ways of thinking, which may include innovative, interdisciplinary or collaborative research;
g. engaging in relevant training about peer review processes, including identifying and participating in relevant training opportunities when they perceive a knowledge gap.

(47) Peer reviewers must not:

a. contact the author(s) or other reviewers, unless authorised by the requestor of the peer review;
b. seek to unduly influence the peer review process;
c. be influenced by foreign entities or individuals (foreign influence);
d. delegate their peer review responsibilities, unless authorised by the requestor of the peer review;
e. take into account factors that are irrelevant to the peer review criteria;
f. permit personal prejudices or stereotypical beliefs to influence the peer review process;
g. take undue or calculated advantage of knowledge obtained during the peer review process; or
h. participate in peer review outside their area of expertise.

(48) Human ethics application which are more than low risk are subject to peer review prior to submission to ethics as outlined in the Research Peer Review Procedure for Ethics Applications. Prior peer review is not a requirement for low risk applications.

(49) Animal ethics applications including animal studies that do not correspond exactly to that described in the awarded funding applications, including experimental groups and animal numbers, will require independent peer review.

(50) When obtaining independent peer review for animal ethics applications, Researchers should refer to guidelines available on ResearchHub.

(51) Peer review may also identify potential deviations (breaches) from the standards outlined in this and related institutional Policies and Procedures. A peer reviewer who becomes aware of a potential breach of this policy, related University policy or procedures, or the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 must report this in a timely manner in accordance with the Research Breach Investigation Procedure.

Section 13 - Intellectual Property

(52) All intellectual property related to University research is subject to the Intellectual Property Policy and it's associated procedure.

Section 14 - Research Data, Records and Materials

(53) The University will provide appropriate systems, facilities and procedures for the safe and secure storage of research data, and for the maintenance of accurate records.

(54) Research data, records and materials must be managed and stored in accordance with the:

a. Digital Security Policy;

b. Records Governance Policy;
c. Research Data and Primary Materials Management Procedure; and
d. Privacy Management Plan where applicable.

(55) Electronic research data will be classified and handled in accordance with the Information Classification and Protection Policy.

(56) Research materials that require storage in a temperature controlled environment must be stored in accordance with the Temperature Controlled Environments Policy.

(57) Systems for the retention and storage of research data and materials implemented by the University, its Colleges, Research Institutes and Centres may be subject to auditing practices.

Section 15 - Authorship

(58) Researchers must ensure that authorship of research meets the requirements of the Research Authorship Procedure. Additional guidance is provided in the Authorship Supporting Guide to the Code.

Section 16 - Research Publication and dissemination

(59) Research findings should be disseminated responsibly, accurately, and as broadly as possible to communicate the benefits of the research to the wider community.

(60) Research outputs may consist of any form of publicly available, assessable materials embodying research, whether produced by writing, making, composing, designing, performing, or curating. Research publication and dissemination may take the form of, but is not limited to:

a. traditional research outputs e.g. books, book chapters, journal articles;
b. non-traditional research outputs (NTRO) e.g. original creative works, performances and exhibitions;
c. non-refereed publications e.g. conference publications, interviews, pre-prints and social media; and
d. dissemination undertaken as part of applications for research grants and forms of financial support.

(61) NTRO may include anything with a research basis from highly experimental works of creative art – music or visual art, for example, creative writing, dance or design – through to scholarly editions and translations, website creation, software creation, databases, clinical guidelines and commissioned reports for government or non-government bodies. Researchers should refer to the Guidelines for Non-Traditional Research Outputs for the principles that underpin the collection and assessment processes of NTROs.

(62) Researchers must ensure that the dissemination of research findings:

a. is in accordance with any relevant funding body or ethical requirements;
b. attributes fair and appropriate authorship;
c. is not in breach of any requirement of this policy or its associated documents; and
d. does not place the University at risk.

(63) Research publication must be in accordance with the Publication and Dissemination of Research Policy.

(64) Where a student has undertaken research without an Intellectual Property Agreement (as per the Intellectual Property Policy), the student should not unreasonably withhold permission for a University staff member, or an approved external supervisor, to produce a scholarly publication based on data that was acquired by the student,

provided that the students' contribution is appropriately acknowledged.

(65) With reference to clause 64, the University staff member or approved external supervisor is required to seek permission from the student to publish from research data acquired by that student.

Section 17 - Research Reporting

(66) Parties to research within the University must fulfil their research reporting obligations, including:

a. annual reporting to Council and required reporting to government by the Animal Ethics Committee and the Human Research Ethics Committee;
b. annual reporting of research activities, collaborations, partnerships, grants, and contracts involving foreign entities or individuals;
c. amendment to protocols, progress, and final reporting to funding bodies or ethics committees by Researchers, as required in research funding agreements or ethics protocols;
d. adverse events (in accordance with the Ethical Human Research Procedure Manual or the Animal Research Regulatory Manual); and
e. dissemination with the community as per Section 16.

Section 18 - Research Promotion and University branding

(67) Promotion of research and the use of University branding or logos in research activities must be in accordance with the Publication and Dissemination of Research Policy and the Marketing, Communications and Reputation Policy.

Section 19 - Concerns and Complaints

(68) Concerns about animal research can be raised in accordance with information provided on the Animal Ethics - Concerns About Research Animals webpage.

(69) Concerns about human research can be raised in accordance with information provided on the Human Ethics – Policies and Guidelines webpage.

(70) Concerns regarding research not involving humans or animals can be raised in accordance with the Managing concerns about research webpage.

(71) Concerns regarding foreign interference involving research activities, collaborations, partnerships, grants, and contracts can be made to the National Security Compliance Manager who may escalate the matter to the University of Newcastle Foreign Interference Committee.

(72) Complaints that are unable to be resolved via any of the above mechanisms can be raised in accordance with the Complaint Management Policy.

Section 20 - Breaches

(73) A breach is a failure to meet the principles and responsibilities of the Code, and may refer to a single breach or multiple breaches.

(74) Any person who suspects a research code breach has occurred must report the allegation in a timely manner in accordance with the Research Breach Investigation Procedure.

(75) Examples of breaches of the Code may include, but is not limited to:

a. not meeting required research standards, including misuse of research funds;
b. fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation;
c. plagiarism;
d. failure in research data management;
e. failure to provide adequate supervision;
f. failure to meet authorship requirements;
g. failure to disclose conflicts of interest; or
h. failure to conduct peer review responsibly.

(76) The University has no tolerance for any misconduct or unethical behaviour in its research activities. The University will investigate reported breaches in accordance with the Research Breach Investigation Procedure, consistent with the NHMRC Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

(77) Suspected breaches in relation to the Guidelines should be reported to the University of Newcastle Foreign Interference Committee (the Committee), via the National Security Compliance Manager. The committee may convene a specialised Sub-Committee to investigate reported breaches.

Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Rohan Walker Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Enquiries Contact	Jodie Marquez Director, Research Ethics & Integrity Research Ethics and Integrity Unit

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Risk" - Effect of uncertainty on objectives. Note: An effect is a deviation from the expected, whether it is positive and/or negative.

"Risk assessment" - The overall process of risk identification, risk analysis, and risk evaluation.

"Area of expertise" - An area in which a staff member or a student have been peer-reviewed or published.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Candidate" - With regard to Higher Degree by Research it has the same meaning as student. For all other instances it is a person considered for appointment to a position.

"Intellectual property" - Intellectual property (IP), as defined by the World Intellectual Property Organisation, refers to creations of the mind: inventions; literary and artistic works; and symbols, names and images used in commerce. Intellectual property is divided into two categories: Industrial property includes patents for inventions, trademarks, industrial designs and geographical indications; and Copyright covers literary works (such as novels, poems and plays), films, music, artistic works (e.g. drawings, paintings, photographs and sculptures) and architectural design. Rights related to copyright include those of performing artists in their performances, producers of phonograms in their recordings, and broadcasters in their radio and television programs.

"Learning outcome" - In accordance with the AQF definitions, the expression of a set of knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning.

"Policy library" - The repository of policy documents published on the University website.

"Research" - As defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, or any replacing Code or document.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"College" - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.

"Foreign influence" - All governments, including Australia's, try to influence deliberations on issues of importance to them. These activities, when conducted in an open and transparent manner, are a normal aspect of international relations and diplomacy and can contribute positively to public debate.

"Foreign interference" - Foreign interference occurs when activities are carried out by, or on behalf of, a foreign actor that are coercive, clandestine, deceptive or corrupting and are contrary to Australia's sovereignty, values and national interests.