Code of Practice on Research Integrity

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Who can help?

The Research Innovation and Enterprise team can provide support, advise on the application of this policy, and answer any questions that you may have. Contact the team at researchgovernance@napier.ac.uk

Document History

Version	Date	Status	Summary of Changes	Lead Author
V1.0	May 2013	Approved by Academic Board, May 2013		Gráinne Barkess
V2.0	January 2016	Approved by University Research Integrity Committee, January 2016	Revisions to reflect dissolution of faculties; additions of guidance notes approved by URIC during AY14/15; addition of a misconduct investigation procedure	Gráinne Barkess
V4.0	April 2022	Approved by University Research Integrity Committee, April 2022	Revisions to reflect changes in approved survey software, guidance on payment of participants and external participation requests, changes to reflect sector guidance regarding data protection and safeguarding	Lindsay Ramage
V5.0	April 2026	Approved by University Research Integrity Committee, April 2026	Revised to reflect the commitments within The Concordat to Support Research Integrity 2025, the introduction of questionable research practices in addition to research misconduct and the creation of separate research ethics specific guidance	Coral Hanson

1. Context

Introduction

Edinburgh Napier University is committed to maintaining the highest standards of research excellence and integrity. The University's definition of research integrity is that research has integrity when it's carried out according to the principles of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, and in a way that is trustworthy, ethical, and responsible.

This Code of Practice for Research Integrity sets out guiding principles and standards for research conduct details the responsibilities of all those engaged in research in connection with the University and applies to all staff, including but not limited to Emeritus Professors, honorary and visiting staff, consultants, and to postgraduate research students engaged or involved in research and/or research-related activity. It should be read in conjunction with the research-specific procedures and guidelines (insert link) and the Research Misconduct Policy (insert link)

The principles and guidelines in this Code have been developed taking into account relevant guidance provided for the sector, in particular The Concordat to Support Research Integrity 2025 and the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity. The aim is to set standards that enhance research quality, integrity and compliance and that provide appropriate safeguards.

2. Scope

All University staff with research management responsibilities must ensure that they themselves, their staff and research students are aware of the Code and that they have the necessary knowledge, resources and support to enable compliance with it. Postgraduate research students are also responsible for familiarising themselves with this Code and for carrying out their research in compliance with it. Academic supervisors are responsible for ensuring that undergraduate and postgraduate taught student projects are carried out in accordance with this Code. The Code should be disseminated as widely as possible by Associate Deans for Research and Innovation, and Deans of Schools, through the Doctoral College, through staff and research student induction, and through mentoring and training activities. It should be a key reference for all work relating to strategic and operational planning for research as well as for project evaluation, school and research centre review and staff appraisal.

3. Key Principles

General principles of research integrity

All research within the University should be conducted based on five key principles:

Honesty is crucial, from the presentation of research ideas and goals, through to authorship and financial contributions, and on to findings. This includes honesty in reporting research methods and procedures; gathering data and information; referencing work; representing and acknowledging the work of others; conveying interpretations; and making justifiable claims based on research findings.

Rigour is demonstrated by behaviour that is in line with disciplinary norms and standards, including the use of appropriate methods. It may be evidenced through adherence to procedures, standards of practice and agreed protocols as appropriate. It is expected when drawing interpretations and conclusions from research, including when communicating findings. The integrity of the research record should be protected through secure and rigorous approaches.

Transparency and open communication provide the foundation for the actions taken when conducting or communicating about research. Examples include declaring potential competing interests; reporting research data collection methods; acknowledging the use of tools such as emerging technologies; analysing and interpreting data; and publishing or otherwise sharing findings. This may include appropriate open research practices. It permits humility in the process, acknowledging errors committed in good faith and ensuring honest mistakes are seen as productive elements of research.

Care and respect are expected for everyone and everything involved in the research system, and for the protection of the integrity of the research record. They should be extended to everyone involved in the research process, all participants in research, and for the subjects, users and beneficiaries of research, including humans, animals, the environment and cultural objects, and to the integrity of the research record.

Accountability is expected of everyone individually and collectively to create a research environment in which diverse individuals and organisations are empowered and enabled to own the research process and be accountable for their contributions to the research record. This includes being accountable to participants involved in research, and a responsibility to hold individuals and organisations to account when behaviour falls short of the standards set by this Code of Practice.

These principles apply to all aspects of research, including the preparation and submission of grant and project proposals, the use of technology and other tools, the provision of expert review of the work of others, and the publication and dissemination of findings.

4. Responsibilities

Institutional	The University has an important role in ensuring that systems are in place to support and reinforce the highest standards of research integrity. These include: • Providing an environment (culture, structures, systems, and resource) that fosters and supports ethical standards in research, nurtures a culture of research integrity, mutual cooperation, professionalism and the open and honest exchange of ideas where honest errors can be openly admitted to without undue detriment, and where inappropriate conduct is identified and addressed. • Implementing The Concordat to Support Research Integrity across our research environment. • Developing transparent, fair, robust and regularly reviewed organisational research integrity related policies and procedures including, but not limited to, ethics review and approval, research data

	management, the use of emerging technology, data protection, peer review, and the monitoring and audit of research. • Providing Research Integrity Annual Statements to demonstrate progress in developing systems and cultures to support research integrity. These will be published on the University website and will include a summary table of the number and types of research misconduct allegations reported to the University and investigations undertaken. • Providing training for staff, postgraduate research students and any other students engaged in research and support them to act according to best practices and institutional policy on the conduct of research and defending them when they live up to these expectations in difficult circumstances. • Taking reasonable steps to ensure that any research carried out by a partner or subcontractor aligns with the principles set out in this Code of Practice • Adopting mechanisms to acknowledge, promote, and reward responsible research practice. • Providing clear and robust managerial arrangements for responsibility over appropriate research conduct and reporting arrangements for allegations of misconduct. This will include publishing up to date information on the University website about the named senior role responsible for oversight of research integrity and the first point of contact for research integrity matters. • Monitoring the above measures for suitability and effectiveness through annual reports from the School Research and Innovation Committees to the University Research Integrity Commitee, who will report to the University Research and Innovation Committee and any other means deemed appropriate and effective.
Research community	The research community is responsible for: • Understanding and maintaining the expected standards of integrity relevant to their research throughout the research cycle. This involves keeping their knowledge up to date on research integrity principles and how responsibilities may evolve at different stages of their careers. • Designing, conducting, and reporting research in ways that embed integrity and ethical practice throughout. This includes ensuring that all research is subject to ongoing, active, and appropriate consideration of ethical issues. • Upholding trust and confidence in research in the UK through the work they undertake, host, fund, partner or collaborate on, support, and disseminate. This includes being open and transparent about research methodologies and findings, and honest when errors are made. • Complying with ethical, legal, regulatory and professional frameworks, obligations, and standards as required by statutory and regulatory authorities, and by employers, funders and other relevant parties.

	• Finding opportunities to share research integrity ideas, good practice, and learning experiences inside and outside of the University. • Adhering to and promoting standards of research integrity when working with partners. • Maintaining trust in research, including reporting any concerns of research misconduct.
Trade Unions	• Provide confidential advice and support to their members.
HR	• Provide confidential advice and support on how to resolve concerns in a fair and consistent manner. • Provide impartial guidance to all parties involved on the application of the Code or Practice for Research Integrity.

5. Procedure

Research ethics

All individuals conducting research in connection with the University must incorporate appropriate consideration of ethical issues into the design and management of projects. Researchers must make a judgement about the potentially conflicting risks and benefits of a piece of research by considering the ethical imperatives of do no harm (non-maleficence) and do good (beneficence).

To support this, the University will:

- Ensure that there are clearly designated structures within the University and each School to support good ethical practice and provide ethical review for research studies.
- Provide research ethics training for staff, postgraduate research students and any other students engaged in research.
- Provide training for staff involved in ethics reviews and support them to act according to best practices and institutional policy.
- Carry out an annual audit of ethics reviews and resultant research activity.

Research involving interaction with human participants or communities should be informed by context-specific ethical practice. The research community should:

- Actively respect the human rights and dignities of all those involved in any project and must appropriately address questions of consent, power relations and capacity.
- Take precautions to protect research participants' confidentiality and privacy.

- Identify potential risks which might arise during the research, such as physical, social or psychological distress to participants and researchers. Ethical conduct does not require the avoidance of potentially high-risk research providing that the risks are properly recognised and managed.

- Justify procedures, explaining why alternative approaches involving less risk cannot be used.

- Clearly justify the use of covert research or deception if proposed and ensure that the reasons are explained to participants afterwards when appropriate.

- Clearly state but not overestimate the potential benefits of the research.

- Sensitively and appropriately handle any cultural, religious, political, social, gender or other differences in a research population.

- Address any complex issues around developing and maintaining respectful and ethical relationships with all research partners based on mutual respect for academic traditions and institutional and local circumstances without compromising research standards or legal obligations.

- Ensure that research is only undertaken after appropriate ethical consideration/review.

Research involving animals and animal materials should adhere to all legal and ethical requirements and other applicable guidelines. The research community should:

- Ensure that research involving animals is reviewed by the Edinburgh Napier University Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) and amend applications in accordance with recommendations of the review.
- Ensure that research projects have been approved by all applicable bodies, ethical, regulatory, or otherwise before starting the research.
- Ensure responsible use of animal-derived materials (where possible).
- Apply the principles of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) to all research using animals and should refer to relevant guidance.
- Ensure that they are trained in all procedures necessary to conduct the research.
- Be open about animal research and abide by the commitments set out in the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK.
- Suspend any activity that is deemed harmful and then report their concerns to their manager or other appropriate person(s) as identified by their organisation, and, where required, to the appropriate regulatory authority (e.g., Home Office).
- Researchers should comply with appropriate standards by following the PREPARE checklist when planning animal research, in conjunction with the ARRIVE guidelines for transparent reporting and dissemination of outputs from research involving animals and/or animal material.

Where complex ethical or integrity issues arise, researchers should actively initiate and engage in a wide debate among appropriate people. Researchers should seek advice from their School Research Integrity Convenor on the most appropriate committee or channel for addressing specific queries.

The University does not knowingly collaborate with, or accept monies from, any illegal body (under UK law or under the laws of any other relevant international jurisdiction). The University recognises funder guidance on funding associated with the tobacco industry, including Cancer Research UK guidance.

Questionable research practices and research misconduct

All members of the University are under a general obligation to preserve and protect the integrity and probity of research. There may be circumstances where there is a reason to suspect that there may been questionable researcher practices or misconduct in research.

Questionable research practices refer to minor infractions or research practices, including avoidable errors, which fall short of the definition of intentional research misconduct. They may arise due to a lack of knowledge or attention to detail, negligence, or deliberate action, and may occur where there is no evident intention to deceive.

Research misconduct constitutes the behaviours and deliberate actions that fall short of the principles in in this Code of Practice and can occur at any point in the research lifecycle. This includes behaviours associated with the ideation of research proposals, reviewing the work of others, and the reporting of research findings. It can take many forms, including:

- *Fabrication:* making up results, other outputs (for example, artefacts) or aspects of research, including documentation and participant consent, and presenting and/or recording them as if they were real
- *Falsification*: inappropriately manipulating and/or selecting research processes, materials, equipment, data, imagery and/or consents
- *Plagiarism*: using other people's ideas, intellectual property or work (written or otherwise) without acknowledgement or permission
- *Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations*, for example:
    - Not observing legal, ethical, and other requirements for human research participants, animal subjects, or human organs or tissue used in research, or for the protection of the environment.
    - Breach of duty of care for humans involved in research whether deliberately, recklessly, or by gross negligence, including failure to obtain appropriate informed consent.
    - Misuse of personal data, including inappropriate disclosures of the identity of research participants and other breaches of confidentiality.
    - Improper conduct in peer review of research proposals, results, or 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 the purposes of peer review.

- *Misrepresentation* of:
    - Data, including suppression of relevant results/data or knowingly, recklessly, or by gross negligence presenting a flawed interpretation of data.
    - Involvement, including inappropriate claims to authorship or attribution of work and denial of authorship/attribution to persons who have made an appropriate contribution.
    - Interests, including failure to declare competing interests of researchers or funders of a study.
    - Qualifications, experience, and/or credentials.
    - Publication history, through undisclosed duplication of publication, including undisclosed duplicate submission of manuscripts for publication.
- *Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct*: failing to address possible infringements, such as attempts to cover up misconduct and reprisals against whistle-blowers, or failing to adhere appropriately to agreed procedures in the investigation of alleged research misconduct accepted as a condition of funding. Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct includes the inappropriate censoring of parties through the use of legal instruments, such as non-disclosure agreements

Honest errors and differences in, for example, research methodology or interpretations, do not constitute research misconduct.

The University is committed to:

- Publishing policies related to questionable research practices and research misconduct (insert link to updated document) that are accessible to the research community and that include a confidential reporting mechanism through a named point of contact.
- Maintaining fair and transparent processes, managing conflicts of interest, using external advisers where needed, and offering appeals processes.
- Ensuring investigations are completed in a timely manner, bearing in mind the need to support all parties involved.
- Documenting the process, acting on the outcomes, and, where concerns are upheld, ensuring appropriate action is taken and avoiding the use of non-disclosure agreements.
- Preparing and, when necessary, providing training for those running investigations and serving as panellists.
- Providing information to third parties as required under any formal agreements, such as with research funders or statutory bodies.

- Taking reasonable steps to protect all parties involved from undue pressure, victimisation, or unwarranted negative consequences.

Staff are expected to:

- Be honest when reporting any concerns about potential breaches of integrity and declaring conflicts of interest.
- Support and participate in any investigation, its management and implementation of any recommendations, as required.

Publication and dissemination of research results

Research findings should be shared openly and promptly, as soon as priority and ownership claims are established.

Researchers should:

- Ensure that any work put forward for publication is their own. It is the responsibility of authors to ensure that, except where properly acknowledged, claims to originality can be justified. Researchers should refer to UKRIO Guidance for Good Authorship Practice for information on what constitutes authorship and contributorship, and when acknowledgement is appropriate. Roles should be clearly described using the CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy) system where possible.
- Ensure that self-citations are for legitimate reasons as per the Code of Publication Ethics Citation Manipulation Discussion Document.
- Deposit published outputs (subject to appropriate copyright) in the University's research repository via Worktribe. The University's Research Publications and Open Access Policy provides further information on how and why to undertake this activity.
- Ensure that research datasets are identifiable, retrievable and stored in a University Repository. Researchers must be able to provide underlying data upon reasonable request.
- Cite all funding sources and significant collaborations. All commercial, financial or other "interest" relating to the work should be declared unless anonymity has been agreed as a condition of participation in a particular study.
- Consider any confidentiality agreements with funders or other stakeholders, or the need to protect data ahead of any patent applications when deciding the timescale for dissemination of research findings.

Reports to the public should be clear and understandable and accurately reflect the significance of the study.

Research data management and governance

Research data are at the very core of evidencing research quality and integrity. The University is committed to meeting the highest standards of data management and governance to comply with legislative, regulatory, audit, funding body, partner (stakeholder) and internal requirements.

The University will provide:

- A Research Data Management Policy that provides guidelines for the collection and management of all research data, information and records created, received, and maintained during research activities, in any format whether physical or electronic.
- A Data Protection Policy that provides guidelines about how to protect the rights and freedoms of individuals with respect to processing their personal data.

The research community should:

- Manage research data in accordance with the University's Research Data Management Policy.
- Ensure that they adhere to the UK Data Protection Act 2018 and associated legislation.
- Be aware that when research is conducted across multiple sites, organisations and/or countries there will be increased policy and legislation requirements. In these circumstances, checks should be made to understand any legal and information security risks before the work starts.
- Immediately forward requests for access to research data under the Freedom of Information Act or Environmental Information Regulations to foi@napier.ac.uk.

New members of staff must discuss and agree an appropriate plan for any research data that they are transferring from another institution with their Associate Dean for Research & Innovation.

Prior to departure, staff leaving the University must discuss and agree an appropriate plan for retention or movement of research data with their Associate Dean for Research & Innovation.

6. Related Policies

Research Misconduct Policy
Policy for Fraud Prevention, Detection and Investigation
Academic Integrity Regulations
Dignity at Work Policy
Disciplinary Policy
Research Data Management Policy
Research Publications and Open Access Policy
Cancer Research UK guidance on tobacco industry funding
Citation Manipulation Discussion Document
The Concordat to Support Research Integrity 2025
Singapore Statement on Research Integrity

7. Document Control

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8. Appendix 1 – Research definition

This Code uses the definition of research as described in the assessment framework and guidance on submissions for the Research Excellence Framework. It is defined as 'a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, culture, society, and/or to the public and voluntary sector; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction'.