Code of Good Practice in the Conduct of Research

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Code of Good Practice in the Conduct of Research

Contents

1.   Introduction

1.1   The university is required by UK Research and Innovation 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. The University of Exeter is fully committed to the five commitments of the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* which frames institutional approaches to good practice and allegations of misconduct in research[1].

1.2   This document has been written to apply to staff and others conducting research on university premises or under the auspices of the University of Exeter. It exists in parallel with the *Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct*[2] ('*the Procedure*') which sets out the formal institutional process for the oversight and consideration of allegations of breaches of research integrity in staff. Separate provision exists for students as indicated in the *Teaching Quality Assurance Manual*[3].

2.   Professional standards

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[1] https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/topics/research-and-innovation/concordat-support-research-integrity
[2] https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/codesandpolicies/
[3] https://as.exeter.ac.uk/academic-policy-standards/tqa-manual/

2.1   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 authorship, in collaborations, peer review, supervisory responsibilities and academic leadership.

3.   Integrity

3.1   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.

3.2   Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellors and Executive Deans should ensure that a culture of good practice and research integrity is promoted and embedded within their faculties.

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

3.4   All researchers to whom the University of Exeter *Code of Good Practice in the Conduct of Research*[4] applies are encouraged to report any suspected incident of research misconduct, by staff, students or other researchers, whether witnessed or suspected in accordance with *the Procedure* (that applies to staff) or the relevant routes for students (as set out in the university's *Teaching Quality Assurance Manual*[5]). The institutional lead for research integrity is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact who performs the 'Named Person' role within *the Procedure*.

3.5   Researchers can raise concerns informally in the first instance about suspected research misconduct in confidence with their supervisor, Head of Discipline, Director of Research, Associate Dean for Research or College Pro Vice-Chancellor who will advise on the appropriate action to take. it is recognised that members of staff or students may fear that their own position could be jeopardised if they raise a particular concern directly. In this instance, individuals may choose to raise a concern in the first instance with an appropriate confidential liaison point and ask that person to bring the matter forward on their behalf.

3.6   Concerns which involve a Faculty Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research or Faculty Pro Vice-chancellor should be raised with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact.

3.7   Researchers should declare any real or potential conflicts of interest prior to undertaking research to the Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research for their Faculty.

4.   Openness

4.1   While recognising 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

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[4] https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/codesandpolicies/
[5] https://as.exeter.ac.uk/academic-policy-standards/tqa-manual/

research and obtaining their results, the University encourages researchers to be as open as possible in discussing their research with other researchers and with university's *Open Access Policy* (2022)[6].

4.2   Researchers will be required to comply with requests to the University under the Freedom of Information Act 2000[7].

4.3   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.

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

4.5   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 Policy*.

4.6   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.

5.   Guidance from professional bodies

5.1   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.

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

6.   Leadership and co-operation
6.1   Faculty Pro Vice-chancellors, Associate Pro Vice Chancellors for Research and Impact 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.

7.   Supervision

7.1   Faculty 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.

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[6] https://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/researchdatamanagement/policies/university/
[7] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents

7.2   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.

7.3   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.

8.   Training

8.1   Faculties 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 research ethics approvals and consents, equipment use, confidentiality, data management, record keeping and data protection.

9. Documenting results and storing primary data

9.1   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.

9.2   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.

9.3   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.

9.4   Back-up records should always be kept for data stored in university approved file storage systems.

10. Ethical research practice

10.1   The university requires researchers to comply with the requirements of the university's *Ethics Policy* and *Research Ethics Framework* [8] and procedures issued by Research Ethics Committees.

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

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[8] https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/codesandpolicies/

10.3   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 UK Data Protection Act (2018)[9].

11.   Publication practice

11.1   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.

11.2   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.

11.3   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.

11.4   An example of good publication practice can be found in the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines *Good Publication Practice*[10].

12.   Applications for funding and project management

12.1   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.

13.   Misconduct in research

13.1   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 *Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct*.

14.   Evaluation

14.1   Faculties 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.

15.   Annual Reporting

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[9] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents/enacted
[10] https://publicationethics.org/news/revised-good-publication-practice-guidelines-published

15.1   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 Head of Research Ethics and Governance will be responsible for presenting an Annual Research Integrity Statement to the Research and Impact Executive Committee for publishing the statement following its approval by the University's Council in the autumn of each academic year.

Annex 1: Definitions of Misconduct in Research
Extract from the Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct (8.13)

8.13   *The Concordat to Support Research Integrity* (2019), Commitment 4, pages 12-13 states that Research misconduct 'is characterised as *behaviours or actions that fall short of the standards of ethics, research and scholarship required to ensure that the integrity of research is upheld. It can cause harm to people and the environment, wastes resources, undermines the research record and damages the credibility of research. The Concordat recognises that academic freedom is fundamental to the production of excellent research. This means that responsibility for ensuring that no misconduct occurs rests primarily with individual researchers'.* Research misconduct can take many forms, including but not limited to:

a.   **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

b.   **falsification:** inappropriately manipulating and/or selecting research processes, materials, equipment, data, imagery and/or consents

c.   **plagiarism**: using other people's ideas, intellectual property or work (written or otherwise) without acknowledgement or permission

d.   **failure to meet: legal, ethical and professional obligations**, for example:

   i. 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

   ii. breach of duty of care for humans involved in research whether deliberately, recklessly or by gross negligence, including failure to obtain appropriate informed consent

   iii. misuse of personal data, including inappropriate disclosures of the identity of research participants and other breaches of confidentiality

   iv. 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

   e.   **misrepresentation** of:

   i. data, including suppression of relevant results/data or knowingly, recklessly or by gross negligence presenting a flawed interpretation of data

   ii. involvement, including inappropriate claims to authorship or attribution of work and denial of authorship/attribution to persons who have made an appropriate contribution

   iii. interests, including failure to declare competing interests of researchers or funders of a study

iv. qualifications, experience and/or credentials

v. publication history, through undisclosed duplication of publication, including undisclosed duplicate submission of manuscripts for publication

f. **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.

Annex 2: Associated University policies and procedures

Research Misconduct: Procedure for Graduate Research Students suspected of Research Misconduct
https://as.exeter.ac.uk/academic-policy-standards/tqa-manual/pgr/researchmisconduct/

Academic conduct and practice (taught students)
http://as.exeter.ac.uk/academic-policy-standards/tqa-manual/aph/managingacademicmisconduct/#principles

Code of Conduct for Staff
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/employment/codesofconduct/bribery/codeofconduct/

Financial Regulations
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/campusservices/grounds/financedocs/Finance_Regulations_July_2022.pdf

Fraud Policy
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/financeservices/pdfs/policy-fraud.pdf

Fraud Response Plan
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/finance/aboutus/policies/fraudresponseplan/

University of Exeter Statutes
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/policies/calendar/part1/statutes/

University of Exeter Ordinances
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/policies/calendar/part1/ordinances/

Student Disciplinary Procedure (Non-academic Misconduct)
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/policies/calendar/part1/otherregs/discipline/

Policy and Procedures for Fitness to Practise (FtP)
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/policies/calendar/part1/otherregs/fitness/

Disciplinary Policy and Procedure (staff)
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/humanresources/documents/grievancedisciplinaryandotherdismissalprocedures/Disciplinary_procedure_-_Dec_22.pdf

Grievance Procedure
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/humanresources/documents/grievancedisciplinaryandotherdismissalprocedures/Grievance_Procedure_2019_-_Dec_22.pdf

Public interest disclosure procedure ("Whistleblowing")
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/employment/codesofconduct/publicinterest/procedure/

Dignity & Respect Policy
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/inclusion/visionandpolicies/policies/dandrpolicy/

Open Access Policy
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/researchdatamanagement/policies/university/

Annual institutional statement on Research Integrity
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/integrity/
Clinical Trials Transparency Policy

https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/codesandpolicies/
Policy on Due Diligence
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/codesandpolicies/

Attribution Policy
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/codesandpolicies/

Privacy notice for research
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/codesandpolicies/

Review / Contacts / References	
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Related internal policies, procedures, guidance:	https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/codesandpolicies/
Policy owner:	Research Ethics, Governance and Compliance
Lead contact / author:	Head of Research Governance, Ethics and Compliance/ Antony Walsh