Research - Peer Review Procedures

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

Purpose

(1) These Procedures support and outline the responsibilities of those undertaking research peer review activity at, or in the name of, Southern Cross University.

(2) These Procedures adopt the principles detailed in the Southern Cross University Research Quality Standards and Integrity Policy.

(3) These Procedures support compliance with Section 4.1 of the Australian Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021.

(4) These Procedures support compliance of research activities with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (The Code) and adopt the NHMRC Peer Review Guide.

(5) These Procedures should be read together with the following:

a. Australian Research Council Research Integrity Policy;
b. AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research 2020;
c. National Health and Medical Research Council's Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities: Guidelines for Researchers and Stakeholders;
d. NHMRC Research Integrity Fact Sheet 2: Concerns about Research Integrity arising during NHMRC Peer Review;
e. NHMRC Guide to Disclosure of interests and management conflicts of interest;
f. Southern Cross University Research Quality, Standards and Integrity Policy;
g. Southern Cross University Research Integrity Procedures – Staff;
h. Southern Cross University Research Integrity Procedures – Higher Degree Researchers (Students);
i. Southern Cross University Research Integrity Advisor Procedures;
j. Southern Cross University Code of Conduct.

Scope

(6) These Procedures apply to all individuals undertaking research or research support under the auspices of Southern Cross University.

(7) Additional requirements may be imposed by external organisations for whom peer review is undertaken. Each external agency is likely to have a peer review procedure which should be adhered to.

Section 2 - Definitions

(8) The following definitions apply to these Procedures:

a. Author means an individual who has made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to research and its

output and who has agreed to be listed as an author.

b. Code means the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018.
c. Conflict of Interest exists in a situation where an independent observer might reasonably conclude that the professional actions of a person are or may be unduly influenced by other interests. This refers to a financial or non-financial interest which may be perceived, potential or actual conflict of interest.
d. Higher Degree Researcher means a higher degree by research student.
e. Peer review is the impartial and independent assessment of research by others working in the same or a related field.
f. Peer Reviewer is an individual undertaking peer review of another researcher's work.
g. Research – the concept of research is broad and includes the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative. For the purposes of this procedure, research includes research training.
h. Researcher means a person who conducts, or assists with the conduct of, research.
i. Research Integrity Advisor (RIA) is a person or persons with knowledge of the Code and institutional processes nominated by the University to promote the responsible conduct of research and provide advice to those with concerns or complaints about potential breaches of the Code.
j. Staff (for the purpose of these Procedures) means all persons who are academic or professional employees of Southern Cross University, including full time, part time, fixed term and casual and all adjunct, visiting, emeritus and conjoint appointees who are engaged in research roles on behalf of the University.
k. Student means a person who is registered as a student of the University regardless of whether they are currently enrolled in a course of study conducted by or within the University.
l. University Processes includes references to Rules, Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Standards.

Section 3 - Responsibilities

Part A - Responsibilities of the University

(9) Southern Cross University recognises the importance of peer review to academic and scientific endeavour.

(10) Researchers are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities to engage in peer review activity.

(11) The allocation of an individual's workload will take account of time taken to undertake peer review activity.

(12) Training opportunities relevant to peer review will be made available to all researchers including early career researchers and Higher Degree Researchers.

Part B - Responsibilities of Researchers

(13) Peer Reviewers must ensure that they have the appropriate expertise to participate in the peer review activity.

(14) Researchers approached to peer review research connected to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities or cultures, must first consult with the Dean, Gnibi College regarding the appropriateness of their expertise to conduct the review.

(15) The Dean, Gnibi College may recommend that alternative reviewers(s) be suggested to the body requesting the review.

(16) Peer Reviewers must ensure that they adhere to the confidentiality requirements of all bodies utilising peer

review including universities, publishers and funding agencies.

(17) Peer Reviewers must:

a. inform themselves about the criteria to be applied in the peer review process;
b. review research objectively, impartially and in accordance with the review criteria;
c. apply standards equally to all research under review;
d. give proper consideration to research that challenges or changes accepted ways of thinking, which may include innovative, interdisciplinary or collaborative research; and
e. maintain professionalism in the tone of their comments, ensuring that peer reviews are as constructive as possible.

(18) Peer Reviewers must not:

a. contact the author/s or other reviewers unless authorised to do so;
b. seek to unduly influence the review process;
c. delegate their responsibilities or ask others to assist with a review, unless authorised to do so;
d. take into account factors that are not relevant to the review criteria;
e. permit personal prejudice to influence the process (Peer Reviewers should be aware of how their own biases (conscious or unconscious) could affect the peer review process, including in relation to gender, ethnicity, nationality, institutional employer and research discipline;
f. take advantage of knowledge obtained during the peer review process, or use information from research projects under review, without permission;
g. use the peer review process to disparage other researchers;
h. conduct a review for which the researcher lacks appropriate expertise; or
i. intentionally delay the review process.

(19) Researchers have a responsibility to assist research trainees under their supervision, including early career and Higher Degree Researchers, to develop the skills necessary for conducting peer review responsibly.

(20) Researchers should engage in relevant training about peer review processes, and should seek out other relevant training opportunities when they perceive a knowledge gap.

(21) Researchers whose work is undergoing peer review must not seek to influence the process or outcomes.

Section 4 - Research Integrity

(22) Peer reviewers must disclose interests, and abide by any requirements established to manage conflicts of interest, in accordance with The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Disclosure of interests and management of conflicts of interest: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

(23) Researchers should familiarise themselves with the processes involved in reporting potential breaches of the Code through the Southern Cross University Research Integrity Procedures (Staff) and Research Integrity Procedures - Higher Degree Researchers (Students).

(24) Examples of breaches of the Code that are related to peer review include, but are not limited to:

a. failing to conduct peer review responsibly and fairly;
b. taking advantage of knowledge obtained through peer review processes;

c. disclosing the content or outcome of peer review processes;
d. failing to disclose relevant interests.

(25) Concerns about potential breaches of the Code should be discussed in the first instance with an appropriate Research Integrity Advisor.

(26) Formal allegations of breaches of the Code should be addressed through the mechanisms detailed in the Research Integrity Procedures (Staff) and Research Integrity Procedures – Higher Degree Researchers (Students).

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Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	24th September 2024
Review Date	24th September 2027
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Approval Date	19th September 2024
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Mary Spongberg Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor +61 7 55893361
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