

Research Collaboration Procedures

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

Purpose

- (1) Southern Cross University (University) is committed to undertaking world-class research and encourages its Researchers to collaborate with external colleagues and institutions to achieve this.
- (2) The purpose of this Procedure is to provide a clear framework for the establishment, and management of research collaborations at the University. This ensures that collaborations align with the University's strategic goals, comply with relevant legal and ethical standards, and contribute to high-quality research outcomes.
- (3) This Procedure supports compliance with Section 4.1 of The Australian [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#).
- (4) This Procedure supports compliance of research activities with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (Code).
- (5) This Procedure has been prepared in consideration of the following documents, which should be read and understood by Researchers undertaking related collaborative research:
- a. [NHMRC and ARC Collaborative Research Guide](#);
 - b. [Montreal Statement on Research Integrity in Cross Boundary Research Collaborations](#);
 - c. [Cape Town Statement on fostering Research Integrity through Fairness and Equity](#);
 - d. [Australian Research Council Research Integrity Policy](#);
 - e. [AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research 2020](#);
 - f. [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](#);
 - g. The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2023;
 - h. [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th Edition 2013 \(updated 2021\)](#);
 - i. [Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector](#);
 - j. [Research Quality, Standards and Integrity Policy](#);
 - k. [Research Integrity Procedures - Staff](#);
 - l. [Research Integrity Procedures - Higher Degree Researchers \(Students\)](#);
 - m. [Research Integrity Advisor Procedures](#);
 - n. [Human Research Ethics Committee Terms of Reference](#);
 - o. [Animal Ethics Committee Terms of Reference](#);
 - p. Research Data Management Procedures;
 - q. [Code of Conduct](#);
 - r. [Work, Health & Safety Policy](#);
 - s. [Complaint Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) - Staff;
 - t. [Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Policy](#);

- u. [Sexual Misconduct \(Prevention and Response\) Policy](#);
- v. [Risk Consequence and Likelihood Descriptors](#);
- w. [Risk Management Process](#); and
- x. [Joint Doctoral Enrolments \(Cotutelle\) Policy](#).

Scope

(6) This Procedure applies to all Researchers undertaking collaborative research under the auspices of the University, and all collaborations between the University and external partners, including but not limited to: other academic institutions; industry partners; government agencies; non-governmental organisations; and international collaborators.

Section 2 - Definitions

(7) The following definitions apply to these Procedures:

- a. Associate Dean (Research): means the Associate Dean (Research) for the Faculty in which the Researcher is affiliated, or, the Dean, Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples where the Researcher is affiliated with Ginibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples.
- b. Code: means the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018](#).
- c. Higher Degree Researcher: means a higher degree by research student.
- d. Lead Researcher: is an individual who has primary responsibility for the planning, design, approval and conduct of a research project from its conception through to its finalisation. For collaborative research involving researchers at more than one institution, one researcher from each participating institution may be designated a Lead Researcher.
- e. Research: As defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research or any replacing Code or document - "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".
- f. 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.
- g. Research Outputs: communicate or make available the findings of research that may be in hard copy, electronic or other form. Examples of research outputs include, but are not limited to journal articles, book chapters, books, conference papers, reports, open access repositories, datasets, patents and patent applications, performances, videos and exhibitions.
- h. Researcher: means a person who conducts, or assists with the conduct of, research.
- i. Staff: 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 supervisory and other research roles on behalf of the University.
- j. 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.
- k. University: means Southern Cross University
- l. University Processes: includes references to Rules, Policies, Procedures, Guidelines, Codes and Standards.

Section 3 - Planning and Initiating Collaborative Research

(8) The University recognises that research collaborations that cross national, institutional, disciplinary and sector boundaries are important to the advancement of knowledge.

(9) University Researchers are encouraged to seek out collaborations with researchers from other disciplines, institutions and industries.

(10) As detailed in the [Research Quality, Standards, and Integrity Policy](#), research partnerships and collaborations will maintain the highest levels of research integrity, enabling people to have trust and confidence in the research and its results.

(11) The University requires a formal collaborative research agreement to be in place, and kept on file, for all externally funded research involving collaboration, regardless of whether the University is the institution administering the research grant.

(12) For unfunded research collaborations, a formal collaborative research agreement is required where any of the following apply:

- a. All collaborating parties have agreed that it is a collaborative research project;
- b. There is an explicit definition of the project including timeline, outputs, and any financial or in-kind contributions of the collaborating parties; and/or
- c. there is any requirement for an internal approval process at one or more of the collaborating institution(s).

(13) Researchers will consult with the appropriate Associate Dean (Research) if they consider that a research collaboration requires a formal collaboration agreement.

(14) If a research collaboration requires a formal collaboration agreement, the University's Lead Researcher will prepare a research proposal outlining the objectives, methodology, and expected outcomes of the collaboration.

(15) The research proposal will include a risk aligns with the University [Risk Management Process](#) and [Risk Consequence and Likelihood Descriptors](#). In the case of collaborations with international partners, due diligence will be informed by the consideration foreign interference risks and Researchers will be required to complete the Research Project Foreign Interference Risk Assessment Form.

(16) The proposal will be submitted to the relevant Associate Dean (Research) for initial in principle approval.

(17) The Associate Dean (Research) will consider the proposed project's alignment with the University's strategic research goals, and the capacity of the University to support the research.

(18) Approval may require undertaking appropriate due diligence inquiries into potential research partners.

(19) Once initial in-principal approval is granted, a collaboration agreement may be requested from the [Grants and Contracts](#) team located in the Office of Research: grants.contracts@scu.edu.au.

(20) Higher Degree Research Cotutelle arrangements will be managed using the University's [Joint Doctoral Enrolments \(Cotutelle\) Policy](#).

(21) Where collaborative research involves engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or communities, Researchers are required to:

- a. adhere to the requirements of [Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and Communities](#) in addition to all other requirements including the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) - Updated 2018; and
- b. contact the Office of Research to seek advice on developing appropriate engagement approaches and collaborative agreements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or communities.

Section 4 - Collaboration Agreements

(22) Collaborative research agreements will be drafted by the University's Research Grants and Contracts Team in collaboration with the University's Lead Researcher and the Legal Office.

(23) The University's Legal Office maintains collaborative research agreement templates for funded and unfunded research collaborations.

(24) Collaboration agreements, should include but will not be limited to the following:

- a. The expectations of each party in terms of definitions of roles and responsibilities, including the designation of the institution or individuals that will take the lead in reporting to funders, regulatory bodies and in the management of potential breaches of the Code;
- b. Governance of the project, including management of significant changes, such as partners leaving or joining the collaboration;
- c. The use, management, sharing, and ownership of research data, primary materials, and intellectual property (including copyright and pre-existing intellectual property belonging to individual parties that is shared in the course of the collaborative research);
- d. The ongoing ownership, stewardship or control of research data and primary materials in the event a researcher or institution leaves the collaboration during the project;
- e. Access to other assets or items that are retained at the end of the project;
- f. The requirements for the disclosure and management of conflicts of interest;
- g. The allocation of responsibilities in relation to ethics and governance approval and safety clearances;
- h. The management of confidentiality issues;
- i. The protocols for authorship and acknowledgment of research outputs, including data outputs;
- j. Funding arrangements (with funding sources declared transparently)
- k. Risk reporting and management;
- l. Any plans to commercialise research outputs and any entitlements to commercial returns;
- m. The designation of which party or parties are entitled to communicate on behalf of the collaboration; and
- n. Dispute resolution procedures to facilitate the just, efficient, timely and cost-effective resolution of any issues in dispute.

(25) In the event that the collaboration agreement is drafted by an external partner, the Grants and Contracts team and the Legal Office, where required, will review the agreement.

(26) Agreed amendments will be made to the collaboration agreement where required.

(27) The roles authorised to approve research collaboration agreements on behalf of the University are documented in the [Delegations Register](#).

Section 5 - Ethics and Compliance

Compliance

(28) The collaboration must be in compliance with all laws, policies and regulations to which it is subject including (but not limited to): [Australia's Foreign Relations \(State and Territory Arrangements\) Act 2020](#); [Autonomous Sanctions Act 2011](#); [Defence Trade Controls Act 2012](#); [Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018](#); [International Security Sanctions and Compliance Policy](#); [Child Protection \(Working with Children\) Act 2012](#); [Working with Children \(Risk Management and Screening\) Act 2000](#) and any other State or Territory based equivalents; and the [Commonwealth Modern Slavery Act 2018](#).

(29) Collaborating partners should determine, within the collaboration agreement, how to address conflicting laws, policies or regulations that apply to the research.

Collaborative Human Based Research

(30) [The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2023 \(National Statement\)](#) encourages the minimisation of any unnecessary duplication of ethics review both within and across research sectors. This extends to research that will be conducted in more than one Australian jurisdiction or across international boundaries.

(31) Where the University is the lead institution in a collaborative research project, the project must be approved according to the [Terms of Reference of the Human Research Ethics Committee](#) (HREC).

(32) Where the University is not the lead institution in a collaborative research project, the Lead Researcher should apply to the HREC Chair for a Minimisation of Ethics Approval.

(33) The University may recognise ethical approval granted through an external process where:

- a. A formal Collaboration Agreement is in place with the external institution or organisation; and
- b. The process of review by the external review body is commensurate with the requirements of the National Statement.

(34) External ethical reviews will only be recognised on a case-by-case basis.

(35) The Lead Researcher must seek confirmation from the Chair or Deputy Chair of the University's HREC that an external ethical review can be recognised.

(36) The HREC should be formally notified of the recognition of external ethical reviews by the Lead Researcher.

(37) Projects that involve University students and/or staff as research participants may require approval through the HREC process in addition to any external process.

Collaborative Animal Based Research

(38) Where the University is the lead institution in a collaborative research project, the project must be approved according to the [Terms of Reference of the Animal Ethics Committee \(AEC\)](#).

(39) In accordance with the [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific Purposes 8th Edition 2013 \(updated 2021\)](#) unnecessary duplication of processes will be avoided.

(40) Where a partner is the lead institution, the University may agree to the partner AEC or equivalent body (the delegate AEC) approving the entire project if it is satisfied that outcomes would be equivalent to those expected through application of the [Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes](#).

(41) In the event that the partner is in another country, the AEC must ensure that animal care and use is adequately monitored. The AEC may appoint an agent or delegate to conduct the monitoring and inspection on its behalf.

(42) External approvals will only be recognised on a case-by-case basis.

(43) The Lead Researcher must seek confirmation from the Chair or Deputy Chair of the University's AEC that a delegate AEC can act as the approval body.

(44) The Lead Researcher must notify the AEC in writing if they or co-researchers are involved in collaborative studies using animals at another institution, or if they are named in an application to the AEC of another institution.

(45) In accordance with the [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th Edition 2013 \(updated 2021\)](#):

- a. All parties involved are aware of, and can meet, their respective responsibilities under the requirements of the Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes;
- b. A project will not commence before the AEC, or the delegate AEC, approves (see Clause 48), activities to be conducted by members of the collaborative research team;
- c. Each AEC is responsible for approval and monitoring of animal care and use that occurs at the institution for which it acts;
- d. The responsible AECs must be made aware of all aspects of the proposed use of animals, and consider the cumulative effects on the well-being of the animals involved;
- e. The responsible AECs can inspect the animals so that all phases of the project are monitored, including any animal transport between sites;
- f. Animals will receive appropriate care in all phases of the project, including any animal transport between sites; and
- g. Notification of non-compliant activities must be provided to AECs at all partner institutions.

Section 6 - Managing the Collaboration

Project Management

(46) A Lead Researcher must be nominated for all collaborative research projects irrespective of whether the University is the lead institution.

(47) The Lead Researcher is responsible for:

- a. Registering their project with the Grants and Contracts team;
- b. Taking primary responsibility for communication with the partner institutions;
- c. Overseeing the day-to-day management of the research project, ensuring that milestones are met, and deliverables are completed on time.
- d. Ensuring that the protocols outlined in the collaboration agreement are adhered to;
- e. Facilitating regular meetings will be held with external partners to monitor progress and address any issues that arise;
- f. Documenting meetings and keeping records;
- g. Monitoring the project's budget and expenditure in line with any grant funding or collaboration agreement obligations;
- h. Advising their Associate Dean (Research) if there are any significant delays or issues that may prevent them from meeting their obligations or delivering Research Outputs under the collaboration agreement; and

- i. ensuring reporting requirements of any funding bodies are adhered to.

Data Management

(48) As detailed in clause (24)(c) of this Procedure, collaborative research agreements should specify data access, use and governance conditions for all parties.

(49) At the commencement of the research project, a data management plan will be drawn up that aligns with data management policies and procedures of all parties. Refer to the Management of Data in Research Procedure.

(50) A data custodian will be appointed at each partner to oversee the enactment of the data management plan.

Conflict of Interest Management

(51) A 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.

(52) As detailed in clause (24)(f), the collaboration agreement will outline requirements for disclosure and management of conflicts of interest.

(53) Collaborative research, through involving a greater number of parties, may increase the likelihood of conflicts of interest.

(54) Identification, disclosure and management of conflicts of interest in research should be undertaken in alignment with the [Conflicts of Interest relating to Research - Procedures](#).

Conflict and Dispute Management

(55) In the first instance, it is recommended that complaints, disputes, or interpersonal conflicts relating to the collaboration be dealt with by the research team on an informal basis.

(56) The Lead Researcher will immediately address any conflict or dispute that arises between research team members where they are comfortable to do so.

(57) Where conflict cannot be resolved, the Lead Researcher will seek assistance first from the Associate Dean (Research), or the Executive Dean if the Lead Researcher is the Associate Dean (Research).

(58) If the Associate Dean (Research) or Executive Dean cannot resolve the matter then they will refer the matter to the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, who may arrange independent mediation if required.

(59) The resolution of any dispute or conflict should be conducted in accordance with appropriate University policies and procedures, including but not limited to:

- a. [Code of Conduct](#);
- b. [Complaint Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) - Staff;
- c. [Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Policy](#); and
- d. [Sexual Misconduct \(Prevention and Response\) Policy](#).

(60) The University has zero tolerance towards sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexist behaviour and gender-based violence. These behaviours are unacceptable.

(61) A Research team member who experiences sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexist behaviour or gender-based violence should follow the procedures outlined in the [Sexual Misconduct \(Prevention and Response\) Policy](#).

Section 7 - Managing Research Integrity

(62) Researchers must have a good understanding of their responsibilities as researchers under the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

(63) Researchers must be familiar with University policies including; [Research Quality, Standards and Integrity Policy](#); [Research Integrity Procedures - Staff](#), [Research Integrity Procedures Higher Degree Researchers \(Students\)](#), and [Research Integrity Advisor Procedures](#).

(64) In the case of concerns regarding research integrity, it is recommended that in the first instance, discussions be held at a local level between members of the research team, across all partners.

(65) If the concerns are not alleviated at a local level, or it is not possible to have those conversations, an appropriate Research Integrity Advisor (RIA) should be contacted to discuss the concerns.

(66) The concern will then be managed according to the [Research Integrity Advisor Procedures](#), or the equivalent at a partner institution.

Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Mary Spongberg Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor +61 7 55893361
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