

# Research Responsible Conduct Policy

## Section 1 - Definitions

(1) This Policy contains a number of embedded definitions. Where a term is not defined herein, refer to the Academic Board's Definitions Policy.

## Section 2 - Introduction

### Object and Functions of the University

(2) Two of the objects of the University are the promotion of research and the interaction of research and teaching. One of the functions of the University for the promotion of these objects is the provision of facilities for research of university standard, having particular regard to the needs of the north coast region of NSW.

### Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)

(3) With research forming an essential component of the core function of the University, the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research ('the Code'), which has been jointly developed by the NHMRC, the ARC, and Universities Australia, underpins University policy on research and research training. This Policy describes how the University implements the requirements of The Code and articulates the policy arising from The Code. This Policy must be read in conjunction with The Code.

(4) Staff need to be aware of all guidelines and legislation relating to the conduct of research, particularly documents setting out the policies and procedures based on The Code. Documents which should inform the conduct of research at Southern Cross University include the following:

- a. [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#)
- b. [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes](#)
- c. Postgraduate Research Supervision at SCU — Guidelines for Postgraduate Candidates and Supervisors
- d. Authorship on Publications and Conference Presentations — Guidelines for Students and Supervisors
- e. Intellectual Property Policy.

(5) The research student must be considered as a researcher within the context of this Policy, and will be expected to adhere to the same research responsibilities, obligations, standards and practices as any other academic member of the University. However, research misconduct by students may be dealt with under different provisions to those applying to staff. Refer to clause (57), (59) and (60).

## Section 3 - General Principles of Responsible Research

### Promote the Responsible Conduct of Research

## **Intellectual Context of Research**

(6) The University recognises the diversity of research approaches. The practice of research, from initial planning through to the completion of output, will be guided foremost by The Code. Where institutional practice is in conflict with The Code, The Code shall take precedence.

## **Maintenance of Standards**

(7) Researchers are obliged to achieve and maintain the highest standards of intellectual honesty and appropriate standards of rigour in the conduct of their research. Members of the University engaged in research should be committed to the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct.

## **Professional Ethical Standards and Practice**

(8) Subject to clause (13), researchers should only participate in research that conforms to acceptable and established ethical standards within their academic profession, discipline or field of research, and those outlined in The Code (Refer to Sub-section 1.8 of The Code). Researchers should be competent, through prior experience and/or appropriate training, to perform the research they undertake. The maintenance of research records, the retention and publication of data, the management of intellectual property, the training of research personnel, and the management of confidentiality and conflict-of-interest issues, shall be conducted in accordance with The Code.

## **Personal Ethical Standards**

(9) Researchers must adhere to ethical principles of justice and veracity, and of respect for people and their privacy and the avoidance of harm to them. Research must be conducted in such a manner as to ensure the respect of the dignity and worth of people and communities and the welfare of research participants. This respect shall take precedence over self-interest of researchers or the interests of the institution, employers, clients, colleagues or groups.

## **Personal Confidentiality**

(10) Where research involves personal or community information of a confidential nature, confidentiality must be observed and researchers must not use such information for their own personal advantage or that of a third party.

## **Contractual Confidentiality**

(11) Secrecy may be necessary for a limited period in the case of contracted research or of non-contractual research which is under consideration for patent protection. In general, however, research results and methods should be open to scrutiny by colleagues through appropriate dissemination of the results of the research, but confidentiality agreements may be entered into in accordance with clause (22).

## **Researcher Responsibility**

(12) Principal researchers are responsible for the ethical conduct and practical standards of all researchers involved in the study. This responsibility includes ensuring that all members of a research group are adequately supervised appropriate to their level of competence. There is a reciprocal responsibility among all members of a research group, and between the research group and the University, to ensure that appropriate ethical conduct and practical standards are maintained.

## **Dissent from Conventional Disciplines or Professional Practices**

(13) Research and scholarship thrive on debate, critical analysis and, in some cases, the questioning of conventional disciplinary or professional practices. Researchers who choose to dissent from conventional disciplinary or professional practices should fully disclose, to the appropriate Director of Research and/or Director of Higher Degree Research Training, what they propose to do and seek advice at the earliest opportunity.

## **Establish Good Governance and Management Practices**

(14) The research management framework at Southern Cross University comprises the following aspects:

- a. the University Council is the institution's principal policy making body;
- b. the Academic Board advises the Council inter alia on issues related to research in or associated with the University;
- c. the Research Committee is the principal advisory committee of the Academic Board on issues of research across the University;
- d. Directors of Research and Directors of Higher Degree Research Training advise staff, students and Heads of School on matters related to research and research training relevant to the School;
- e. the Research and Research Training Management Plan is a blueprint for action and is updated triennially; and
- f. the Office of Research inter alia promotes awareness of policy, guidelines and procedures and monitors compliance.

### **Train Staff**

(15) The induction, formal training and continuing education at Southern Cross University for research staff and postgraduate research students is organised by the Office of Research through activities which may include:

- a. Postgraduate Orientation Week
- b. Postgraduate Supervisors' Training Workshop
- c. Postgraduate Research Student Handbook.

### **Promote Mentoring**

(16) The effective mentoring and supervision of researchers and research students is achieved through a variety of activities which may include:

- a. the internal research funding support processes which provide advice to researchers on grant writing; and
- b. postgraduate research supervision at SCU — guidelines for postgraduate candidates and supervisors.

## **Section 4 - Management of Research Data and Primary Materials**

### **Data Retention and Storage**

#### **Appropriate Practice**

(17) All research data storage and retention should follow practice and guidelines appropriate to the academic profession, discipline or field of study within which the research is being conducted.

(18) Specifically, researchers should be fully aware of, and be able to demonstrate their adherence to, relevant codes of ethics and professional practice.

#### **Retention of Original Data**

(19) All original information should be retained, except in specific circumstances where retention of original information is culturally or ethically inappropriate. Where research protocol allows the retention of original information, the individual researcher or the research group must retain a copy of all original data, indicating, through

publication, the location and availability of public access to those data.

### **Storage of Original Data**

(20) Where appropriate, a copy of original research information should be archived at the University in a durable and appropriate form. The University is responsible for the management and maintenance of a suitable archive.

### **Duration of Data Retention**

(21) Original data must be held for sufficient time to allow appropriate external access and study. For data that is published this may be for as long as interest and discussion persists following publication. It is recommended that the minimum period for retention be at least 5 years from the date of publication. However, a longer or a shorter period may be required determined by the specific type of research. Reference should be had to Sub-section 2.1 of The Code for detailed guidelines, and to the NSW State Archives & Records General retention and disposal authority: higher and further education records (GA47).

### **Confidentiality Agreements**

(22) Confidentiality agreements to protect intellectual property rights may be agreed between the University, the researcher, a sponsor of the research and the subjects of the research. Where such agreements limit free publication and discussion, limitations and restrictions must be explicitly agreed. Researchers must be responsible for ensuring appropriate security for any confidential material, including that held in computing systems. Where computing systems are accessible through networks, particular attention to security of confidential data is required. Security and confidentiality must be assured in a way that copes with multiple researchers and the departure of individual researchers from the research team or the University. Refer also to Section 10.

### **Reporting on Data Retention**

(23) Details of data retention should be submitted with publication. The authors of research publications must submit, to the Head of School or College, written indication of confidentiality agreements and, where appropriate, arrangements for the retention of original information (see also Rules Governing Candidature 7.9, 8.7 and 9.11).

### **Disposal of Research Data and Primary Materials when the Specified Period of Retention has Finished**

(24) Destruction of research data and primary materials should be authorised by the relevant Head of School on the advice of the researcher. A record of the recommendation and the approval must be maintained in the archive. When confidential research data and primary materials are destroyed it should be done in such a way as to ensure complete destruction of the information.

### **Ownership of Research Data and Primary Materials**

(25) Research data and primary materials are owned by the University both during and following a research project unless an agreement in writing assigns ownership in another way.

### **Removal or Movement of Research Data and Primary Materials**

(26) In the event of researchers leaving the University, they may negotiate with the Head of School to take copies of their research data and primary materials for their own use, but original data and records are to remain in the archive. If such materials are archived outside Australia, the University will use its best endeavours to have that original material, or at least copies of it, relocated within the University. This is necessary to enable the University to respond to allegations of falsification of data should they arise.

### **Access to Research Data and Primary Materials**

(27) Research data relating to publications should be made available for discussion with other researchers, except

where confidentiality is a requirement. Confidentiality will be required where the University or the researcher has made or given confidentiality undertakings to third parties or where disclosure would involve the unreasonable disclosure of information relating to the personal affairs of any person, including a deceased person, or where confidentiality is required to protect intellectual property rights. Confidentiality provisions should be recorded in the archive.

(28) When data involving human participants has been collected for research, only the named researchers can have access to it without further permission from the Human Research Ethics Committee.

(29) In the event of legal action, research data and primary materials may be accessed by the University and its legal advisers to determine their relevance to any litigation and, if relevant, removed for use in the litigation.

(30) Research data is subject to subpoena including confidential research data and primary materials.

(31) Researchers should be aware that under Freedom of Information legislation the University is required to allow persons access to documents, under defined circumstances, which are in the University's possession.

## **Section 5 - Supervision of Research Trainees (Students)**

### **University Responsibilities**

(32) The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research), through the Dean, Graduate Studies, shall ensure that the supervision of each research student (Masters by thesis, professional doctorate and PhD candidates) is assigned to a specific, responsible and appropriately qualified supervisor.

(33) Responsibility for supervision of Honours students and other research trainees lies with the Head of School, and is not covered by this Policy. The Office of Research shall, on behalf of the Research Advisory Committee, ensure that each research student has been advised through written material on applicable government and University policies and guidelines for the best practice conduct of research.

### **Supervisor Responsibilities**

(34) The supervisor is obliged to provide each research student with guidance in the research practice specific to the academic profession, discipline or field-of-study within which the research is being conducted. The supervisor must ensure, as far as possible, the validity of research data and information obtained by a student under his or her supervision. Guidance in these regards is enhanced by the example of the supervisor's adoption of best practice in the conduct of research.

(35) Reciprocal responsibility exists between the principal supervisor and the student to ensure that appropriate ethical conduct and practical standards are maintained. This understanding should be formalised in a supervisor/candidate agreement.

### **Student Responsibilities**

(36) The research student must be considered as a researcher within the context of this Policy, and will be expected to adhere to the same research responsibilities, obligations, standards and practices as any other academic member of the University. Reciprocal responsibility exists between the student and the principal supervisor, to ensure that appropriate ethical conduct and practical standards are maintained.

# Section 6 - Authorship, Publication and Dissemination of Research Findings

## Appropriate Practice

(37) The authorship and publication of all research output should follow practice and guidelines appropriate to the academic profession, discipline or field of study within which the research is being conducted. Specifically, researchers should be fully aware of, and be able to demonstrate their adherence to, relevant codes of ethics and professional practice regarding authorship and publication.

## Definition of Authorship

(38) Attribution of authorship depends to some extent on the discipline, but in all cases, authorship must be based on substantial contributions in a combination of:

- a. the conception and design of the research;
- b. the analysis and interpretation of data; and
- c. the drafting of significant parts of the work or critically revising it so as to contribute to the interpretation.

(39) An author's role in a research output must be sufficient for that person to take public responsibility for at least that part of the output in that person's area of expertise.

(40) No person who is an author, consistent with this definition, must be excluded as an author without his or her permission in writing.

(41) When there is more than one co-author of a research output, one co-author, by agreement amongst the authors, should be nominated as executive author for the whole research output, and should take responsibility for record-keeping regarding the research output.

## Negotiation of Authorship

(42) Authorship of a research output is a matter that should be discussed between researchers at an early stage in a research project, and reviewed whenever there are changes in participation. If there are conflicts arising through disputes about authorship, the matter should first be raised with the relevant Director(s) of Research and/or Director(s) of Higher Degree Research Training, and if not resolved, then with the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) for determination.

## Certification of Authorship

(43) Where the research is published, including electronically, all co-authors of a publication must acknowledge their authorship in writing in terms of the definition as above. A signed statement of authorship must specify that the signatories are the only authors according to the above definition, and that the signatories have seen the version of the paper submitted for publication. The signed statement must be placed on file in the School or College of the executive author, at the time of submission of the research output for publication, and must remain in safe keeping in that School or College. If, for any reason, one or more co-authors are unavailable or otherwise unable to sign the statement, the Head of School or College may sign on their behalf, noting the reason for their unavailability (Code reference 5.3 to 5.8).

## Acknowledgement of Contribution

(44) Researchers must ensure that others who have contributed to the work are recognised in the research output.

Courtesy demands that individuals and organisations providing facilities should also be acknowledged. Publications must also include information on the sources of financial support for the research, in a format or style agreed to by the financial sponsor of the research.

(45) Publications involving a student or a staff member of the University may acknowledge that the work was carried out at the University by using the University by-line.

### **Public Reporting of Research Output**

(46) As a general principle research findings should not be reported to the public media before they have been tested by peer review within the field of research. If research findings are reported prior to peer review, that fact should be disclosed to the media.

### **Accuracy of Reporting**

(47) All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that published reports, statistics and public statements about research activities and performance are complete, accurate and unambiguous.

## **Section 7 - Peer Review**

### **Encourage Participation in Peer Review**

(48) The peer review process is intended to provide expert scrutiny of a project, and to help to maintain high standards and accurate, thorough and credible research reporting. At Southern Cross University engagement in peer review is facilitated through such avenues as research seminars, membership of ethics committees, and involvement in the Internal research funding support processes which provides advice and feedback to researchers on grant writing.

## **Section 8 - Conflicts of Interest**

### **Conflict of Interest**

(49) Any potential conflict of interest that affects the practice of research must be fully disclosed to the appropriate Head of School or College, or the person with the perceived conflict should withdraw from the process that could be influenced by the conflict.

### **Disclosure of Conflict of Interest**

(50) Researchers have an obligation to disclose, normally at the time of proposing and planning the research, but also throughout the life of the research as situations arise, any conflict of interest which has the potential to influence the research and its examination or publication, grant applications, and applications for appointment and promotion. Researchers have an obligation to disclose any affiliation with, or financial involvement in, any organisation or entity with a direct interest in the subject matter or material of research. Disclosure of conflict of interest must be made, in line with existing University Policy on Conflict of Interest, to the appropriate Head of School or College.

## **Section 9 - Collaborative Research Across Institutions**

## **Establishment of Agreements**

(51) Where Southern Cross University is involved in a joint research project, it is a requirement that an agreement in writing be reached between the partners on the management of the research dealing with the following:

- a. intellectual property
- b. confidentiality and copyright issues
- c. sharing commercial returns
- d. responsibility for ethics and safety clearances
- e. reporting to appropriate agencies
- f. protocols to be followed when disseminating the research outcomes
- g. management of primary research materials and research data.

## **Managing Conflict of Interest**

(52) Any conflict of interest will be dealt with in line with existing University Policy on conflict of interest.

## **Managing Access to Research Materials**

(53) Each of the partners will need to identify a person to be involved in the management of the research data, primary materials and other items to be retained at the end of the project.

# **Section 10 - Breaches of The Code and Misconduct in Research**

## **Definition of Misconduct in Research**

(54) Misconduct in research includes misappropriation of information, interference in the practice of another researcher's work, and the misrepresentation of research practice and outputs. Misconduct does not include honest differences in judgment in management of the research project, and may not include honest errors that are minor or unintentional. Specific definitions of misconduct must be judged against the norms and conventions of the academic profession, discipline or field of study within which the research is being conducted. Misconduct in research may occur by one or more of the following:

- a. The fabrication of data: claiming results where none have been obtained.
- b. The falsification of data, including changing records.
- c. Plagiarism: the presentation of the documented words or ideas of another person as one's own, without attribution appropriate for the medium of presentation.
- d. Misrepresentation: the statement or presentation of a material or significant falsehood, and the omission of a fact so that what is stated or presented as a whole states or presents a material or significant falsehood.
- e. Interference: the intentional and unauthorised use of, or damage to, any research-related property of another researcher.
- f. Misleading ascription of authorship: the listing of authors without their permission, the attribution of work to others who have not contributed to the research, or the lack of appropriate acknowledgment of work produced by a research student/trainee or other research associate.
- g. Intentional infringements of University policy, such as ethics, occupational health and safety, or equity policies, which guides practice in research.
- h. Undisclosed conflict of interest, or uncontrolled practice of conflict of interest following disclosure.



- i. Deviations from The Code that occur through gross or persistent negligence.
- j. Wilful concealment or facilitation of research misconduct by others.
- k. Other practices that seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted for the proposing, conducting, or reporting of research within the academic profession, discipline or field-of-study norms of behaviour of the relevant research community.

## **Advisers in Research Integrity**

(55) Directors of Research and Directors of Higher Degree Research Training and the Chairs of the University ethics committees will act as advisers on research integrity. They will advise staff and students unsure about a research conduct issue and who may be considering whether to make an allegation. They will explain the options which include:

- a. referring the matter directly to the person against whom the allegation may be made
- b. not proceeding or withdrawing the allegation if discussion resolves the concerns
- c. referring the allegation to a person in a supervisory capacity for resolution by the School or work unit
- d. making an allegation of research misconduct in writing to the designated person.

## **Designated Person to Receive Formal Complaints**

(56) Allegations of misconduct in research are to be made to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research). It is important that the Vice Chancellor be informed by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) immediately a complaint is received and be kept informed as the case progresses.

(57) The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) should consider the material provided by the complainant and should advise the Vice Chancellor, or delegated officer, whether the allegations should be:

- a. dismissed, or
- b. referred back to the School or work unit with instructions as to how they are to be handled, or
- c. investigated further.

(58) If the Vice Chancellor, or delegated officer, determines that further action is required, the procedures for dealing with misconduct in the current SCU Enterprise Agreement, in the case of staff, and the University Rules on Student Misconduct, in the case of students, shall normally apply.

## **Protection of Interested Parties**

(59) The protection of interested parties demands that allegations of research misconduct require careful handling. (The requirements of the Privacy Act should be adhered to at all times.) When an allegation is made, fair dealing must be exercised to protect the interests of all interested parties, including persons making allegations in good faith and persons accused of misconduct. Adequate protection of the complainant and the accused demands absolute confidentiality and reasonable speed in the early stages of dealing with an allegation. On the other hand, the protection of other parties may involve some disclosure. Assessment of the degree of acceptable disclosure should be made by the Vice Chancellor, or delegated officer.

(60) Interested parties may include:

- a. the person bringing the allegation
- b. the person against whom the allegation is made
- c. staff and students working with persons making an allegation or with persons against whom an allegation is made
- d. publishers, journals and other media reporting research subject to suspected, alleged, or demonstrated

research misconduct

- e. funding bodies supporting persons or research involved
- f. the University
- g. the public.

## **Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct in Research**

(61) Procedures for dealing with misconduct by University staff are covered in the SCU Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. Procedures for dealing with misconduct by University students are covered in the University Rules for Student Misconduct.

(62) Where a student was also a staff member at the time the alleged misconduct occurred, the Vice Chancellor, or delegated officer, will determine which misconduct procedures are more appropriate, those covered in the SCU Enterprise Agreement or those covered in the University Rules for Student Misconduct.

(63) Wherever possible, any investigation into research misconduct will continue even if the person accused of the misconduct resigns from the University. Distortions of the research record must be rectified, whether or not the persons involved remain at the University. This is rectified by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

## **Appeal**

(64) Although the Vice Chancellor's decision is final in terms of the University's disciplinary procedures under the SCU Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, it does not exclude the jurisdiction of any external court or tribunal which would be competent to deal with the matter.

(65) The University Rules for Student Misconduct provide for appeal to a formal Appeals Committee.

## **Subsequent Actions**

(66) The Vice Chancellor, or delegated officer, will inform all relevant parties of the University's findings and the actions taken by the University. Relevant parties may include affected staff, research collaborators, including those at other institutions, all funding organisations, journal editors, and professional registration bodies. The public record, including publications, may need to be corrected if research misconduct has affected the research findings and their dissemination.

(67) If the allegations are shown to be unfounded, the University will make every effort to reinstate the good reputation of the accused researcher and their associates. Those persons making mischievous complaints may face disciplinary action.

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Historic
<b>Effective Date</b>	20th June 2014
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<b>Approval Authority</b>	Academic Board
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<b>Head of Work Unit</b>	Joanne Edney Executive Officer +61 2 66203809
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