

Responsible Conduct of Research Policy (MPF1318)

Explanatory Memo



Introduction

Following a major review of the **Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy (MPF1318)**, the University proposes the adoption of a revised policy titled **Responsible Conduct of Research Policy (MPF1318)**, and seeks University-wide consultation. This new policy reflects a comprehensive redraft informed by the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (the Code), its supporting guides, and the University's evolving research environment and obligations.

The policy review was conducted by a Working Group established and chaired by the Policy Steward, Professor Kate Smith-Miles, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability), comprising representatives from Chancellery Research and Enterprise (CRE), the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (OREI) and Faculties.

The Policy Steward has also sought pre-consultation input from individuals representing key stakeholder groups, including Academic Board, Legal and Risk, the Research Ethics and Integrity Strategy Committee (REISC) and the Committee of Associate Deans, Research (CADRe). The proposed revised policy reflects a comprehensive redraft to improve clarity, flexibility, and alignment with institutional, regulatory, and funder requirements. It also introduces new procedural documents relating to the management of potential breaches of the Code.

Purpose of the Policy

The revised policy aims to:

- Prescribe the standards and expectations for responsible research conduct at the University of Melbourne, in line with the University's obligations and commitments to integrity, quality and openness;
- Provide context as to the University's other policies, processes and standards related to the responsible conduct of research; and
- Enable and inform institutional processes for the management of potential breaches of those standards and expectations as they relate to research integrity, including allegations of research misconduct.

The revised policy also ensures compliance with various regulations and standards, including the Vice-Chancellor Regulation and TEQSA's Threshold Regulations.

Summary of Key Changes

1. Policy renaming and reframing

The policy has been renamed from **Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy** to **Responsible Conduct of Research Policy**, reflecting a proactive and positive framing of research integrity. This emphasises the promotion of responsible research practices, rather than focussing primarily on misconduct.

2. Scope of Policy

The policy applies to all **Research Personnel** (staff, students, honorary appointees and academic visitors) who conduct research, or support the conduct of research, in the scope of their employment, enrolment, appointment or relationship with the University. Third-party contractors must also comply with the policy.

3. Expanded Procedural Principles

The policy embeds the **eight principles of responsible research conduct** from the Code: honesty, rigour, transparency, fairness, respect, recognition, accountability, and promotion.

The procedural principles also clearly distinguish between responsibilities for Research Personnel and the University, mirroring the approach taken in the Code itself. The procedural principles are organised with reference to corresponding Code principles, and outline expectations for compliance with related University policies, including those on ethics, data management, authorship, conflicts of interest, and supervision.

Changes to the procedural principles include, but are not limited to:

1. Specific reference to revised policies on **Human Research Ethics** and Safeguards, **Animal Care and Use**, and **Biorisk Management**, and clearer guidance on conducting research with and about **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Collections**, including the use of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP);
2. The introduction of rules regarding the use of the **University affiliation** in research outputs;
3. Expanded requirements for engaging in **collaborative research activity with community members and organisations**;
4. The introduction of expectations regarding the use of **Digital Assistance Technologies**, including Artificial Intelligence;
5. A mechanism for the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (DVCR) to set **mandatory training requirements** for research personnel;
6. Mechanisms for DVCR approval and publication of **supporting processes and guidance**, including for research integrity advisors and for the management of potential breaches of the Code;
7. Updated institutional responsibilities regarding the University's **Research Integrity Advisor Network**.

4. Supporting processes

The policy will be supported by four new process documents (**Processes A–D**) that detail the management of potential breaches of the Code, procedural fairness reviews (appeal), student penalties, and monitoring of corrective actions.

These policies will be approved by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research). While not subject to formal consultation requirements per the University's Policy Framework (MPF1308), these processes are provided for information and context, and to inform any feedback on the policy itself.

These new processes will better support the policy regarding the management of potential breaches of the Code, and:

1. Define when the University has responsibility for research;
2. Introduce flexibility in decision making and investigation processes to better align with Code and funder requirements;
3. Empower assessment officers and investigators to obtain information;
4. Outline how corrective actions are to be monitored;
5. Ensure compatibility with clauses on misconduct in the University's Enterprise Agreement; and
6. Acknowledge that while research integrity processes are managed confidentially, information may be disclosed to third parties in certain circumstances.

Current 'supporting processes' linked from the Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy (MPF1318) will be removed, as they are either not relevant to the policy or are linked from other relevant policies (including those relating to the Research Data Management Policy (MPF1242), and the Intellectual Property Policy (MPF1320)).

Feedback

The consultation is open for **two weeks from 28 November to 12 December**.

Feedback is welcomed and should be provided by email to research-enterprise@unimelb.edu.au.