UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

University of Plymouth

Code of Good Research Practice

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Code of Good Research Practice

1. Introduction

All researchers within the University of Plymouth have a duty to society, to their profession, to the University and to those funding their research, to conduct their research in the most conscientious and responsible manner possible. The University seeks to foster an environment where good research practice is encouraged and where there is adequate mentoring and supervision at all relevant levels. It is a responsibility of School Heads and Associate Deans of Research to convey clearly the standards for research in their departments and relevant areas, and to ensure that those standards are adhered to as a matter of course.

Many professional associations and research funding bodies have ethical codes and guidelines for the conduct of research[1]. The University expects that compliance with this Code of Good Research Practice will meet the generic requirements of such bodies, but where additional specialist requirements are incorporated, University personnel are expected to comply as appropriate.

The University is a signatory to the Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity[2] and has a set of fundamental principles to ensure good scientific practice (including publication ethics, general principles of data confidentiality and access) across all research activities.

All **members of the University are individually responsible** for ensuring that their work is conducted in accordance with the University values and with all policies that form part of the terms and conditions of employment or study. Disregard for this policy may lead to the failure of assessed work; the suspension of study/research projects, and/or funding from research sponsors; or to the inability to publish. Work conducted without the appropriate ethical approval (where required) or in deliberate contravention of the decisions of the FREIC (UREIC) would not be covered by the University's indemnity arrangements.

The following research is subject to additional regulations and requires review through the appropriate research ethics committee/process and to be formally approved before it is undertaken:

- research involving human participants;
- research involving NHS patients, staff or resources;
- research involving human tissue;
- research involving non-human live organisms.

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[1] The following policy is drawn i.e. from: ALLEA - All European Academies (2017) *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*. Available from: http://www.allea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ALLEA-European-Code-of-Conduct-for-Research-Integrity-2017-1.pdf (access 28th November 2017)
[2] The Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2012) is available from: http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2012/the-concordat-to-support-research-integrity.pdf (access 28th November 2017)

Research that may raise other significant ethical issues or pose a reputational risk to researchers or the institution should also be referred for advice and/or review from the appropriate Faculty Research Ethics and Integrity (FREIC) Chair or the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Committee (UREIC) Secretary.

The purpose of ethical review is not to discourage controversial or high-risk research, but rather, to recognise and manage potential harms and risks related to the pursuit area of research.

Additionally, the University **Research Data Policy**[3] provides guidelines for good practice in research data management and open access to research data as an integral part of high-quality research.

For the purpose of this guidelines, **research** is defined as original investigation undertaken in order to acquire knowledge and understanding. This would include:

- the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, leading to new or substantially improved insights;
- work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors;
- scholarship such as the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines (e.g., dictionaries, catalogues and research databases);
- the use of existing knowledge and experimentation to develop new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction.

Research would **not** normally include:

- routine audit and evaluation, such as the routine evaluation of teaching, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques;
- the development of teaching materials and activities that do not involve original research;
- purely documentary research on sources that are already in the public domain such as historical, literary, and theoretical research;
- routine testing and analysis of materials and processes.

The Code of Good Research Practice is reviewed and updated annually by the University Research Ethics and Integrity Committee (UREIC). Any substantive changes are subject to approval by the University Research and Innovation Committee.

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[3] University of Plymouth (2018). *Research Data Policy.* Available from:
https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/6/6913/Research_Data_Policy.pdf

2. Principles

The principles define the criteria for maintaining research integrity. The principles aim to encourage all involved in research to maintain the highest standard and maximise the quality and robustness of the research, and to respond adequately to possible threats or violations of research integrity. Researchers should be guided by these Principles at each stage of the work, from research idea to publication, in project management, mentoring and supervision of others' work.

Academic Excellence: The research must be of sound methodology, using suitable methods and agreed protocols where appropriate, to ensure the highest quality of work, its dissemination and replicability. Poor quality research is not ethical. The protocol or research methodology around ethical issues must be detailed and clearly set out to ensure appropriate assessment.

Honesty: At the heart of all scientific endeavour is the need for researchers to be honest in respect of their own actions and in their responses to the actions of other scientists, regardless of discipline or institution. This applies to all stages of research, including experimental design, generation and analysis of data, and dissemination of results. Researchers must acknowledge the direct and indirect contributions of colleagues, collaborators and others.

Accountability: Researchers should recognise their responsibility to the general public, and should take all reasonable measures to ensure that their research complies with any agreement, related policies and professional bodies' guidance; and allows for proper governance and transparency.

Care and Respect: Researchers should ensure the dignity, rights, safety and wellbeing of all involved in research: colleagues, research participants, society, animals, ecosystems, cultural heritage and environment. That includes avoidance of unreasonable risk or harm to research subjects and researchers themselves.

This set of principles is generic and not exhaustive of considerations which apply in all disciplines. The University expects researchers to observe any appropriate standards of practice set out in guidelines published by funding bodies, scientific societies, and other relevant professional bodies. **Where relevant professional bodies have published their own guidelines and principles, these must be followed and the current principles interpreted and extended as necessary in this context.**

The University takes seriously any allegation of research misconduct and has established a procedure for dealing with such allegations (see Section 4).

3. Guidance for researchers

3.2   Leadership and Collaboration

The culture of any organisation is driven by individuals in authority. Within the University, it is the responsibility of established and senior staff to encourage good practice in research.

Research group leaders are expected to create a research environment of **mutual co-operation**, in which all members of a research team are encouraged to develop their skills and which fosters the open exchange of ideas. The group leader must also ensure that appropriate direction of research and supervision of researchers and research students is provided.

Principal Investigators (PIs) have a responsibility to ensure the **safety and well-being** of staff working on their projects. They should assess potential risks or harm and should not require any researcher to undertake research that is likely to expose them to physical or psychological harm. All researchers also have a responsibility to consider their own safety and well-being and should raise any concerns with their Principal Investigator or other research manager.

Acknowledging the role of collaborators and other participants: In all aspects of research, substantive contributions of formal collaborators and all others who directly assist or indirectly support the research must be properly acknowledged. This applies to any circumstances in which statements about the research are made, including provision of information about the nature and process of the research, and in publishing the outcome. Failure to acknowledge the contributions of others is regarded as unethical conduct. Conversely, collaborators and other contributors share the responsibility for the research and its outcome.

Training and support: Junior researchers may need careful briefing on the University's expectations of good research practice. All members of the research community carry responsibility for ensuring that new researchers understand good research practice, and particularly so departmental heads, group leaders and the supervisors of research students.

3.3   Project Management

Researchers take into account the **state-of-art** in developing research ideas, design, conduct, analysis and documentation of research.

Scientific review of research proposals is usually carried out **independently by funders** but where this is not the case (for example post graduate research, internally funded, pedagogic or unfunded research) there should be **appropriate internal scientific review** and sign off of the protocol prior to it being submitted for ethical review when required.

Integrity in submitting research proposals: Principal Investigators and other named investigators should take all reasonable measures to ensure the accuracy and completeness of information within funding applications.

Integrity in managing research projects: Principal Investigators and other named investigators should take all reasonable measures to ensure compliance with sponsor, institutional, legal, financial, ethical and moral obligations in managing projects.

Funding: Researchers must state the funding source clearly on their proposal. They must consider any ethical implications of the funding source, including any risks to the reputation of the University.

Conflict of Interest: Anyone involved in any way in the conduct or management of research must identify and declare any conflicts of interest, whether legal, ethical, moral, financial, personal, or of another kind.

Research Misconduct: All University personnel must refrain from plagiarism, piracy or the fabrication of results, and any instances of such acts will be taken most seriously and will invoke the appropriate University disciplinary procedures.

3.4   Data Management

Documenting results and storing research data: Throughout their work, researchers must keep clear and accurate records of the research procedures and the results, including interim results. This is necessary not only to demonstrate proper research practice, but also to answer questions that may subsequently arise either about the conduct of the research or its results. Therefore, research data must be kept securely in paper or electronic form, as appropriate.

Researchers must decide what constitutes 'research data' within the context of each research project. Research data may include experimental measurements, laboratory notebooks, completed questionnaires, video and audio files, and interview transcripts. Researchers' notes do not normally constitute research data for the purposes of this Code.

The University expects that research data is held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project, or for a longer period if required by a research funder. The University has an obligation to ensure that appropriate storage facilities are available. Non-current research data from funded research at the University must remain in storage at the University when a post-graduate student or member of staff leaves.

Research Council requirements for the central archiving of data in electronic form must be observed.

Research activity must comply with any requirements of the **Data Protection Act**[4], the **General Data Protection Regulation**[5] and the **Freedom of Information Act**[6]. Due consideration must be given to any implications of **Intellectual Property**[7] legislation**.**

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[4] The Data Protection Act (1998) is a UK Act of Parliament designed to protect personal data stored on computers or in an organised paper filing system. Available from: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29 (accessed 28th November 2017)

[5] The General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) is a regulation on data protection for all individuals within the European Union (EU). Available from: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016R0679 (accessed 28th November 2017)

[6] The Freedom of Information Act (2000) specifies public "right of access" to information held by public authorities in the UK. Available from: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents (accessed 28th November 2017)

[7] See also University of Plymouth (2017). *Intellectual Property.* Available from: www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/support/intellectual-property (accessed 28th November 2017)

Open data policy: All researchers are required to follow the University **Research Data Policy**[8] and implement good practice in research data management and open access to data in their research activities.

3.5   Publication and Dissemination

Publishing results: It is usually a condition of research funding that the results are published in an appropriate form, usually as papers in refereed journals. This has traditionally been accepted as the best system for research findings to be disseminated to the research community for verification and/or replication.

Authorship: The issue of authorship is important in the context of good research practice. The University expects anyone listed as an author on a publication to accept personal responsibility for ensuring that they are familiar with the contents of the paper, and that they can identify their contributions to it. The practice of honorary authorship is unacceptable.

Openness: While the University recognises the need for researchers to protect their own interests in the process of planning and conducting their work, the University encourages researchers to be as open as possible in discussing their work with other researchers and with the public. Once results have been published, where appropriate, the University expects researchers to make available relevant data and materials to others, on request.

Open access policy: Publications (all journal articles and conference papers) and other relevant research outputs arising from publicly funded research should be available through a system of open access wherever possible. All researchers are required to follow the University **Research Publications and Open Access Policy**[9] that describes the research information management systems, the process of deposition of research outcomes, and possible exemptions (embargos periods) from open access provisions.

4. Procedures in case of research misconduct

The University has a responsibility to investigate allegations of research misconduct fully and expeditiously. It also has a responsibility to protect researchers from malicious, mischievous, or frivolous allegations. All investigations on allegations **must** be reported to the Secretary of the University Research Ethics and Integrity Committee.

Research misconduct may include any of the following, whether deliberate, reckless, or negligent:

- failure to obtain appropriate permission to conduct research

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[8] University of Plymouth (2017). *Research Data Policy.* Available from: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/6/6913/Research_Data_Policy.pdf

[9] Plymouth University (2015) *Research Publications and Open Access Policy.* Available from: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/8/8665/PU_Open_Access_Policy_Final_v0.1.pdf (accessed 28 February 18)

[10] For contact information, please, refer to https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/governance/research-ethics-policy (accessed 19th March 2018).

- deceptive research proposals
- unethical behaviour in the conduct of research (the University's Research Ethics policy and Code of Good Research Practice apply, but other ethical issues may also be involved)
- unauthorised use of confidential information
- deviation from good research practice that cause unreasonable risk of harm to humans, other animals, or the environment
- fabrication, falsification, or corruption of research data
- distortion of research outcomes, through distortion or omission of data that do not fit expected results
- dishonest (i.e., deliberate) misinterpretation of results
- publication of data known or believed to be false or misleading
- plagiarism, or dishonest use of unacknowledged sources
- misquotation or misrepresentation of other authors' work
- inappropriate attribution of authorship
- fraud or other misuse of research funds or equipment
- attempting, planning, or conspiring to be involved in research misconduct
- inciting others to be involved in research misconduct
- collusion in or concealment of research misconduct by others
- failure to comply with relevant legislation, including that relating to health and safety, data protection, intellectual property and animal experimentation.

The above list is not exhaustive and other misconduct specifically related to research activity may be dealt with under this procedure.

Whistleblowing: Anyone suspecting misconduct by a researcher is obligated to report this in accordance with the procedures described in this section. Such 'whistleblowers' must not investigate or take action on their own account but follow appropriate procedures.

No one reporting suspicions of research misconduct shall suffer any disadvantage or action for doing so. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides protection for the whistleblower against subsequent victimization by an employer. This protection does not extend to malicious acts of whistleblowing. The University is wholly committed to the protection of all bona fide whistleblowers irrespective of their status and will regard any subsequent victimization as a disciplinary offence.

Where a whistleblower has a genuine concern about disclosing their own identity, a confidential approach may be made directly to the UREIC Secretary, who will then consider whether to refer the case on through the normal procedures. Where allegations concern or involve the UREIC Secretary, an approach may be made to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise. Allegations raised anonymously will be considered only at the discretion of the Vice-Chancellor.

Procedures for dealing with alleged misconduct by staff or post-graduate research students are referred below:

1. Anyone who has good reason to suspect misconduct should report it in confidence to their Head of Department/School/Doctoral College, Faculty Dean or UREIC Secretary[10], as appropriate. Those who raise concerns in good faith will not be penalised for doing so. The safeguards for individuals raising genuine concerns are detailed in the University's **Whistleblowing Policy[11]**. Allegations should normally be made in writing and be accompanied by any available supporting evidence. All allegations will be dealt with under the appropriate University procedure (staff[12] or student[13] route).

2. In cases where an allegation implicates someone who is not subject to the University's procedures, the Vice-Chancellor shall bring the matter to the attention of their employer or any other appropriate body.

3. Where the research is funded in whole or part by an outside body, the Vice-Chancellor shall have regard to the guidance issued by the relevant funding body. The Vice-Chancellor shall ensure that any such body is given appropriate and timely information as to the instigation and progress of an investigation and any referral under disciplinary regulations.

4. In the event of a finding of misconduct, where the person responsible is subject to the regulation of a professional body such as the General Medical Council, the Vice-Chancellor shall consider whether it is appropriate to inform the professional body of any finding.

5. Where the person responsible has published research, especially research to which the misconduct relates, the Vice-Chancellor shall consider whether it is appropriate to inform journal editors or others of any finding.

6. If an allegation has been made publicly, the Vice-Chancellor shall consider whether it is appropriate to make public the outcome of its investigation into the matter.

7. If at any stage an allegation is found to have been malicious or mischievous in nature, the matter may result in disciplinary action being taken against those making the allegation.

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[11] Plymouth University (2015) *Raising Concerns Policy and Procedure.* Available from: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/governance/policies-and-regulations/whistleblowing (accessed 19th March 2018)

[12] Plymouth University (2018) *Disciplinary policy and procedures*. Available from: (https://liveplymouthac.sharepoint.com/sites/u114/HR%20portal%20documents/Terms_and_Conditions/Disciplinary_Policy.pdf#search=disciplinary%20process accessed 19th March 2018)

[13] Plymouth University (2016) *Student Code Of Conduct And Disciplinary Procedure.* Available from: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/6/6464/Student_Code_of__Conduct_and_Disciplinary_Procedure_2015-16.pdf (accessed 19th March 2018)