

Publication and Dissemination of Research

A guide supporting the *Australian Code
for the Responsible Conduct of
Research*

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1. Introduction

This guide supports the implementation of the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (the Code), which articulates the broad principles and responsibilities that underpin the responsible conduct of Australian research.

In particular, this guide is intended to assist institutions and researchers to adhere to relevant principles of the Code, including:

- Principle 1, 'Honesty in the development, undertaking and reporting of research', which requires that researchers 'Present information truthfully and accurately in proposing, conducting and reporting research'
- Principle 2, 'Rigour in the development, undertaking and reporting of research', which requires that research be characterised by attention to detail and robust methodology and that researchers avoid or acknowledge biases
- Principle 3, 'Transparency in declaring interests and reporting research methodology, data and findings', which requires researchers to 'Share and communicate research methodology, data and findings openly, responsibly and accurately' and 'Disclose and manage conflicts of interest'
- Principle 4, 'Fairness in the treatment of others', which requires that the work of others is appropriately referenced and cited
- Principle 6, 'Recognition' of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which requires that researchers 'report to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the outcomes of research in which they have been involved'
- Principle 7, 'Accountability for the development, undertaking and reporting of research', which requires that the consequences and outcomes of research are considered prior to its communication.

This guide aims to assist institutions to develop and maintain policies that facilitate the responsible publication and dissemination of research in accordance with responsibility 7 of the Code, and to assist those involved in research to understand and apply best practice in the publication and dissemination of research in accordance with responsibilities 23 and 27 of the Code.

The Code and this guide apply to all research conducted under the auspices of Australian institutions. These institutions vary in size, maturity, experience and organisational structure. They range from large and complex universities to small privately funded institutes. Accordingly, it is acknowledged that different institutional policies and processes are capable of fulfilling the aim of this guide and attempts have been made to ensure that there are appropriate options for flexibility in its application.

2. Publication and dissemination of research

Publication and dissemination of research is an important part of the research process, passing on the benefits to a diverse range of potential beneficiaries of research, including other researchers, research sponsors, consumers and industry, policy-makers, and the wider community. In acknowledgment of the challenges of reaching such diverse audiences, methods of dissemination continue to evolve and expand.

This guide applies to dissemination of traditional and non-traditional research outputs and non-refereed publications (e.g. blogs and social media posts), as well as dissemination undertaken as part of applications for research grants and other assistance.

3. Responsibilities of institutions

This section provides guidance on the responsibilities that institutions have in relation to the publication and dissemination of research.

3.1 Promote responsible publication and dissemination of research

Institutions must maintain good governance and management practices for responsible research conduct, including policies and mechanisms that guide and foster the responsible publication and dissemination of research in a manner consistent with the Code.

Under the Code, institutions have the responsibility to:

R3 Develop and maintain the currency and ready availability of a suite of policies and procedures which ensure that institutional practices are consistent with the principles and responsibilities of the Code.

To maximise the benefits of research, institutions should encourage researchers to disseminate their research widely and to all appropriate audiences. Institutions should ensure researchers communicate research findings accurately and responsibly, regardless of the medium or method through which the research is published or the audience to whom it is communicated.

Institutional policies should support researchers to acknowledge the strengths and limitations of their research methods and findings and any risk of bias. The policies should also ensure that the reporting of research is not inappropriately or unduly influenced by the interests of any parties that are involved with, or the subject of, the research.

To support rigorous and transparent research, institutional policies should provide guidance on the development of research plans and any requirements to publish those plans or register research protocols.

Institutional policies should emphasise the importance of corrections and retractions to the scientific process and enable researchers to take action, where required, to correct or retract their research in a timely manner. Institutional policies and process must also provide a mechanism for the institution to take action, where necessary, to correct the public record in a timely manner.

Under the Code, institutions have the responsibility to:

R7 Support the responsible dissemination of research findings. Where necessary, take action to correct the record in a timely manner.

3.2 Support open communication of research to a wide audience

The open publication and dissemination of research improves researchers' capacity to build on previous results, increases innovation, encourages collaboration, improves community engagement, and ensures that the benefits of research are realised. It is an expectation of public funders that institutions should encourage the widest possible dissemination of research, through the most effective modes, and at the earliest opportunity. Consequently, institutional policies should be consistent with the policies of relevant funders, the Code and *Data Management: a Guide Supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*.

Consistent with international expectations that research outputs are openly available, institutions should support researchers to ensure their research outputs are openly accessible in an institutional or other online repository, or on a publisher's website.

Institutions should make assistance available to researchers for the purpose of communicating research findings through all appropriate channels, including through the media. This assistance could take the form of media relations or communications officers. Institutions should ensure that these officers are aware of the principles and responsibilities in the Code relating to publication and dissemination, as well as those described in this Guide.

When communicating about collaborative research, institutions must make every effort to acknowledge partner institutions and sponsors.

3.3 *Protect confidential and sensitive information and manage intellectual property*

While research outputs should be made openly accessible, there are instances when publication may be restricted, delayed or limited by ethical or legal obligations, such as intellectual property arrangements, confidentiality obligations made to participants or restrictions on the publication of sensitive information. Further guidance on managing confidential and sensitive information is provided in *Data Management: A Guide Supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*.

Institutions should develop and maintain policies, consistent with the *National Principles of Intellectual Property Management for Publicly Funded Research* that protect the intellectual property rights of the institution, the researcher, research trainees, and research sponsors.¹

Institutions must ensure that researchers understand and adhere to relevant contractual arrangements and confidentiality agreements, including those that may restrict, delay or limit publication. Institutions must ensure that the sponsors of research do not delay publication beyond the time needed to protect intellectual property and other relevant interests.

3.4 *Consider the potential application and consequences of publication and dissemination of research*

The publication and dissemination of research can sometimes have unintended consequences on individuals and communities. Research, especially where reported in a preliminary or incomplete form or to a lay audience, may be liable to misinterpretation. Research may also be misused to cause harm to human, animal or plant health, the environment or national security.

Institutions should adopt policies and procedures to ensure foreseeable but unintended consequences of research are identified and mitigated, such as through the use of ethics and biosafety review bodies. Where publication or dissemination includes the return of results to human participants, institutional policies should be consistent with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*.²

Under the Code, a principle of responsible research conduct is 'Accountability', which requires researchers and institutions to:

P7 Consider the consequences and outcomes of research prior to its communication.

¹ <https://www.arc.gov.au/policies-strategies/policy/national-principles-intellectual-property-management-publicly-funded-research>

² For further guidance see Chapter 3.1, Elements 5 and 6 and Chapter 3.3, Element 5.

Institutions must have processes and training to assist researchers identify and manage any potential misuse of the findings or outcomes of research, including processes to comply with the *Defence Trade Controls Act* and Australia's export control and sanctions regime.³

3.5 Provide training for researchers

Institutions must provide ongoing training and education that promotes and supports responsible research conduct and assist all researchers and those in other relevant roles to follow institutional policies related to the publication and dissemination of research.

Under the Code, institutions have responsibilities to:

R4 Provide ongoing training and education that promotes and supports responsible research conduct for all researchers and those in other relevant roles.

R5 Ensure supervisors of research trainees have the appropriate skills, qualifications and resources.

4. Responsibilities of researchers

This section provides guidance on relevant obligations of researchers.

4.1 Disseminate complete research findings

Researchers have a responsibility to disseminate a complete account of their research. The account should include negative results as well as findings that may be contrary to any stated hypothesis. Decisions about how research will be published or disseminated should not be inappropriately influenced by the nature and direction of results.⁴

Under the Code, researchers have the responsibility to:

R23 Disseminate research findings responsibly, accurately and broadly. Where necessary, take action to correct the record in a timely manner.

4.2 Ensure accuracy and timeliness

Researchers must take all reasonable steps to ensure that methodology, data and findings are reported accurately and consistently with conventions appropriate to the relevant discipline or disciplines. Researchers must ensure that conclusions are justified by the results and any limitations are appropriately acknowledged.

Under the Code, researchers have the responsibility to:

R21 Adopt methods appropriate to the aims of the research and ensure that conclusions are justified by the results.

If they become aware of any errors or misleading information in their published research outputs, researchers should take action to correct the record in a timely manner.

Researchers should apply rigour and care in undertaking and reporting research and avoid publishing prematurely.

³ Note: the *Defence Trade Controls Act 2012* may apply to the conduct of research and conference presentations, as well as pre-publication activities such as the submission of a draft article to a journal or peer-reviewer.

⁴ Further guidance on avoiding reporting bias can be found in Chapter 10 of the Cochrane Handbook, <https://methods.cochrane.org/bias/reporting-biases>.

4.3 Accurately disclose research support and relevant interests

All communications about research and its findings must contain information about the host institution as well as about all sources of support for the research.

Researchers must disclose relevant interests and manage conflicts of interests consistent with the Code and the *Disclosure of Interests and*

Management of Conflicts of Interest: a Guide Supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. This includes fully disclosing relevant interests upon submission of publications, and researchers should give consideration to whether other actions are required to manage conflicts of interest.

Under the Code, researchers have the responsibility to:

R24 Disclose and manage actual, potential and perceived conflicts of interest

4.4 Cite and acknowledge other relevant work

Researchers must ensure that they cite and acknowledge their own work and the work of others (whether published or unpublished) accurately and in accordance with the Code, *Authorship: a Guide Supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* and the conventions accepted within the relevant institution and discipline or disciplines.

Under the Code, researchers have the responsibility to:

R27 Cite and acknowledge other relevant work appropriately and accurately.

Where appropriate, researchers should cite primary literature to ensure that credit for research is attributed fairly and to facilitate the easy location of the origin of a work, a finding, an idea, or research data.

Except in such appropriate instances as reviews, anthologies, collections, and translations, researchers should not publish research in more than one publication.

An author who submits substantially similar work to more than one publisher, or who submits work similar to work already published, must disclose this at the time of submission, and any such re-use must not have the effect of representing previously presented ideas or data as new.

4.5 Obtain permission for republishing

Researchers must take all reasonable steps to obtain permission from the original publisher before republishing research findings.

4.6 Foster transparency in research and publications

Researchers and institutions are responsible for fostering transparency in research. Researchers should, where appropriate, consider registering their research plans or protocols prior to the commencement of research.

For any research project that prospectively assigns human participants or groups of humans to one or more health-related interventions to evaluate the effects on health outcomes, researchers must register the project as a clinical trial on a publicly

Under the Code, a principle of responsible research conduct is 'Transparency', which requires researchers and institutions to:

P3 Share and communicate research methodology, data and findings openly, responsibly and accurately.

accessible register complying with international standards before the recruitment of the first participant.⁵

At the conclusion of a project, and where possible and appropriate, researchers should publish or allow interested parties to access and refer to survey instruments, coding manuals and the tools and resources that supported analysis of research data.

4.7 *Protect confidential and sensitive information*

Publication and dissemination activities must take account of any ethical or legal restrictions relating to intellectual property and the appropriate handling of confidential or other sensitive information (for further guidance, see section 3.2 of *Management of Data and Information in Research: a Guide Supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*).

Where an agreement between researchers and research sponsors requires delivery of the research findings to the sponsors before they undergo a peer review process, researchers may need to alert sponsors to the importance of peer review and the principles and responsibilities of the Code.

Researchers are accountable for their research and must consider the consequences and outcomes of research prior to its communication. Where research or its outputs could be misused to cause harm to human, animal or plant health, the environment or national security, researchers should seek advice from their institution before the dissemination of research or technical data, including any pre-publication activities such as submitting an article to a journal for peer review.

4.8 *Communicate research broadly*

Researchers should communicate their findings to the widest appropriate audience. This may include research end-users, such as governments, industry, not-for-profit organisations, consumers, and the general public.

Researchers must accept responsibility for translating their research into forms that are understandable for society at large – especially in the case of publicly funded research. Researchers should engage with the community, using appropriate communication channels to inform genuine public debate, and provide sound policy advice, noting that they should also expect research institutions to provide appropriate support for their communication activities (see section 3.2 of

Under the Code, researchers have the responsibility to:

R22 Retain clear, accurate, secure and complete records of all research including research data and primary materials. Where possible and appropriate, allow access and reference to these by interested parties.

Under the Code, a principle of responsible research conduct is 'Accountability', which requires researchers and institutions to:

P7 Consider the consequences and outcomes of research prior to its communication.

Under the Code, researchers have the responsibility to:

R19 Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and respect their legal rights and local laws, customs and protocols.

⁵ National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research [3.1.7]. See information on the [International Clinical Trials Registry Platform](http://www.who.int/ictrp/en/) (ICTRP) on the World Health Organisation website: <http://www.who.int/ictrp/en/>

this guide for the corresponding responsibilities of institutions).

Researchers must engage with, and report on the outcomes of research to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples and communities where the research affects or is of particular significance to them.⁶

The following points should be considered when communicating research findings publicly in any forum:

- as a general rule, research findings should not be discussed in the public arena until they have been tested through peer review. In discussing the findings of a research project, special care should be taken to explain the status of the project – for example, whether it is still in progress or has been finalised.
- to minimise misunderstanding of research findings, researchers should undertake to promptly inform those directly affected by the research, including interested parties, before informing the popular media. This may include providing research participants with an appropriate summary of the research results.
- the findings of research with a strong commercial element may have to be presented to a stock exchange or financial body before any public release.
- any restrictions on communications that have been agreed with the research sponsor should be respected.

4.9 Engage in relevant training

Researchers should engage in relevant training about their institution's policies for the responsible publication and dissemination of research, and should seek out other relevant training opportunities when they perceive a knowledge gap.

Under the Code, researchers have the responsibility to:
R16 Undertake and promote education and training in responsible research conduct.

Researchers working with sensitive information, technology or biological agents, should attend training on Australia's export controls and sanctions regimes and must actively seek advice from their institution as soon as they suspect that their research or a publication arising from their research may be subject to control under those regimes.

5. Breaches of the Code

Institutions should manage and investigate concerns or complaints about potential breaches of the Code in accordance with the *Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (the Investigation Guide).

⁶ Further guidance on engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities is outlined in Ethical conduct in research with *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders* (NHMRC, 2018), *Keeping Research on Track II* (NHMRC, 2018) and *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies* (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2012).

Examples of breaches of the Code that are related to the dissemination of research (see also Section 2.1 of the Investigation Guide) include, but are not limited to:

- Fabrication, falsification or misrepresentation of research data or source material in a research output
- Plagiarism of someone else's work, including theories, concepts, research data and source material
- Duplicate publication (also known as redundant or multiple publication, or self-plagiarism) without acknowledgement of the source or original publication
- Failure to maintain records required by an export control body as a condition of publication and dissemination
- Failure to take active, reasonable and timely steps to correct the public record upon becoming aware of errors or misleading information in their published research outputs
- Public dissemination of research that is yet to be tested in peer review without providing an appropriate caution or caveat
- Failure to honour a restriction on publication or dissemination imposed by a sponsor, ethics or biosafety review body or other approval body (including an export control authority).

Additional resources

- COPE Text Recycling Guidelines
- ARC OA policy (weblink)
- NHMRC OA policy (weblink)
- Creative Commons Australia (weblink)
- National Principles of Intellectual Property Management for Publicly Funded Researchers (weblink)
- Think.Check.Submit: <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>

Export Control and Sanctions

- Defence Export Controls: <http://www.defence.gov.au/ExportControls/>
- Defence Export – Sector Specific Information: <http://www.defence.gov.au/ExportControls/Sector.asp>
- Australia and sanctions [DFAT]: <https://dfat.gov.au/international-relations/security/sanctions/Pages/sanctions.aspx>

Biosafety

- Security Sensitive Biological Agents [Department of Health]: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ssba.htm>
- Institutional Biosafety Committees [Office of the Gene Technology Regulator]: <http://www.ogtr.gov.au/internet/ogtr/publishing.nsf/Content/ibc-1>

Research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or communities

- Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders: <https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/ethical-conduct-research-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-and-communities>

- Keeping research on track II: <https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/keeping-research-track-ii>
- Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/guidelines-ethical-research-australian-indigenous-studies>

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