Research Code of Conduct

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Research integrity refers to the observance of ethical and professional standards which are essential to the responsible conduct of research.

Australian Catholic University (ACU) is committed to maintaining the highest standards in research integrity. The Research Code of Conduct (the "RCoC") provides a behavioural framework to support this commitment, promote a positive research culture, and allow ACU to meet its obligations to stakeholders, regulators and society at large.

(2) The RCoC imposes requirements on researchers which are in addition to those outlined in the Code of Conduct for Staff and Student Conduct Policy. Like the Code of Conduct for Staff, it is founded in, and reflects, ACU Mission, Identity and Values:

a. Mission
    i. Within the Catholic intellectual tradition and acting in Truth and Love, ACU is committed to the pursuit of knowledge, the dignity of the human person and the common good.
b. Values
    i. ACU is founded on a long history of commitment to truth, academic excellence and service, all within the Catholic intellectual tradition. These values are the principles behind all our actions, and guide us in living out our Mission and realising our vision.
c. Truth
    i. We are committed to the lifelong pursuit of knowledge, freely seeking truth through research, critical inquiry and active discovery. We share this pursuit through teaching, scholarship and engagement, contributing to the growth and betterment of society.
d. Academic Excellence
    i. Through our pursuit of excellence in teaching and research, we strive to produce the highest quality intellectual, educational and learning experiences through innovation and creativity.
e. Service
    i. We are a University of service. We seek to serve the wider community through research, education and engagement, especially by providing opportunities for those in need and by educating our students to be socially and morally responsible people.
    ii. We pursue all our core values within the Catholic intellectual tradition. We are committed to serving the common good and upholding the sacredness in life. We respect and welcome all faith traditions and uphold the dignity of all people.
    iii. Furthermore, the RCoC complements, and should be read in parallel with, the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018 (the "Code") and its associated guidelines, developed jointly by the National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the Australian Research Council (ARC) and Universities Australia (UA). It is also supported by a number of ACU policies and guidelines, providing further detail on the principles, responsibilities and requirements outlined below.

Section 2 - Definitions

(3) For the purposes of RCoC, the following terms carry the meanings set out below:

Term	Definition
Fabrication	The creation of unsubstantiated source material, data or results, to suit a research purpose or aim, or to facilitate an agenda.
Falsification	Manipulation, misrepresentation or omission of source material, data or results, to suit a research purpose or aim, or to facilitate an agenda.
Plagiarism	The act of appropriating pre-existing research data, results or ideas and presenting them as one's own, without appropriate acknowledgement. For the purposes of the RCoC, plagiarism includes: • Self-Plagiarism: the act of appropriating one's own research publications or words and presenting them as new research, and; • Duplicate Publication: the act of publishing the same research (i.e. by the same author/s) in multiple forums.
Research	Creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humankind, culture and society, and to devise new applications of available knowledge.
Researcher	All groups or individuals engaged in research activity under the auspices of, on behalf of, or in collaboration with, ACU, as outlined under clause (4) of this Policy.
Research Misconduct	Research misconduct is a serious breach of the Code which is also intentional or reckless or negligent. Repeated or persistent breaches, even those that individually are deemed to be minor, may also constitute research misconduct.

Section 3 - Application of Policy

Scope

(4) The RCoC applies to all research activity, and all groups or individuals engaged in research activity (henceforth referred to collectively as "researchers") under the auspices of, on behalf of, or in collaboration with, ACU. This includes but is not limited to:

a. academic and professional staff (regardless of employment type);
b. honorary, adjunct, emeritus and visiting academics;
c. undergraduate and postgraduate students;
d. staff of other organisations collaborating on ACU research;
e. external members of ACU committees;
f. consultants, independent contractors and external entities; and
g. volunteers.

Exemptions

(5) Certain activities and / or groups or individuals are not covered by, or may be exempt from, the RCoC. This includes, but is not limited to:

a. activities that do not meet the definition of research, as outlined under clause (3)a. of the Policy;

b. groups or individuals bound by another organisation's corresponding code or policies; and
c. activities and / or groups or individuals covered by a contract or agreement that exempts them from, or otherwise nullifies, application of the RCoC.

(6) In cases where groups or individuals are bound by another organisation's corresponding code or policies, or by multiple codes or policies, ACU will recognise and aim to work with all relevant jurisdictions. In cases where it is unclear if the RCoC applies, advice should be sought from the Research Ethics and Integrity Unit (REIU) within the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) (ODVCRE).

(7) Any student misconduct unrelated to research, i.e. relating to teaching or coursework, or otherwise not meeting the definition of research as outlined under clause (3)a. of this Policy, does not fall under the purview of the RCoC, and is instead covered by the Student Conduct Policy and the Student Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy.

Section 4 - General Principles

(8) The RCoC adopts the Principles of Responsible Research Conduct, as outlined in the Code, as its own General Principles.

(9) The University recognises the open and honest exchange of diverse views as central to its Mission within the Catholic intellectual tradition. In accordance with Statute 13 - Freedom of Speech, Intellectual Freedom and Academic Freedom, the University will uphold the rights of University members to enjoy freedom of speech and intellectual freedom inside and outside the University, without fear of penalty or adverse action by the University. The exercise of freedom of speech or intellectual freedom by a member of staff in accordance with Statute 13 - Freedom of Speech, Intellectual Freedom and Academic Freedom will not constitute poor performance or misconduct and will not attract penalty or other adverse action.

Section 5 - Roles and Responsibilities

Institutional Responsibilities

(10) ACU recognises its obligation to support the responsible conduct of research and promote a positive research culture. It is bound by, and strives to uphold, the Responsibilities of Institutions, as outlined in the Code.

(11) Specifically, the REIU has a responsibility for providing guidance and oversight with respect to research ethics and integrity at ACU. This includes but is not limited to:

a. delivery of education and training on the responsible conduct of research;
b. coordination, and training of, research integrity advisors;
c. provision of guidance and advice to researchers, research integrity advisors, governance committees and the University Executive on matters relating to the responsible conduct of research;
d. management of, and provision of support to, the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC);
e. oversight of the University's ethics application process;
f. receipt and management of complaints pertaining to the responsible conduct of research; and
g. defined roles within the University's investigations process, as outlined in the Process for Managing Potential Breaches of the ACU Research Code of Conduct.

Researcher Responsibilities

(12) It is the responsibility of researchers to maintain the highest standards in research integrity and promote the responsible conduct of research. In addition to the Responsibilities of Researchers outlined in the Code(see R14-29 of the Code for further detail), ACU researchers must:

a. comply with all ACU policies, processes, guidelines and requirements pertaining to the conduct of research; and
b. seek to conduct research in such a way that does not bring the University into disrepute, or place it in legal,

compliance or financial risk.

Section 6 - Research Ethics and Compliance

(13) Research involving humans, animals and the environment raises complex ethical, social and legal concerns. Research ethics is specifically interested in addressing these concerns, in such a way that considers the welfare of all parties, and adds rigour to research.

Human Research Ethics

(14) Human research ethics refers to a governance framework which is fundamentally concerned with the protection of research participants. For ACU, this means compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007 (the "National Statement") (updated 2018, developed jointly by the NHMRC, the ARC and Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee), and a commitment to promote the values outlined therein, including:

a. Research Merit and Integrity;
b. Justice;
c. Beneficence, and;
d. Respect.

(15) In accordance with the National Statement, ACU's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) provides guidance and oversight for all research involving participants, personal data, and human tissue that is conducted at ACU or by ACU researchers. Prior to commencing research involving any of the aforementioned, researchers must secure HREC approval. In addition, the research that follows must be conducted in accordance with the conditions of said approval and the National Statement.

(16) For more information on the Australian research ethics framework, see the National Statement.

(17) For more information on the ACU HREC application process, see the Research Ethics webpage.

Research Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

(18) In accordance with the Code, the National Statement, and the ACU Reconciliation Action Plan, research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples must be undertaken in the spirit of Reconciliation, in a manner that is culturally sensitive and appropriate, and with respect for legal rights, local laws and customs. In support of this stance, ACU maintains an Indigenous Research Ethics Advisory Panel (IREAP) , to provide guidance to researchers and the HREC on the cultural sensitivities and appropriateness of research proposing the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Researchers wishing to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples must complete the relevant IREAP documentation for submission alongside their HREC application.

(19) For more information on the IREAP application process, see the Research Ethics webpage.

Research Compliance

(20) Certain types of research, or research into certain fields, may be subject to approvals, permits, licences and / or other compliance requirements from internal or external bodies. This includes but is not limited to:

a. Access to Restricted Datasets;
b. Animal Ethics;
c. Autonomous Sanctions;
d. Clinical Trials Governance;

e. Drone Safety and Operation;
f. Export Permits;
g. Institutional Biosafety;
h. International Travel;
i. Gene Technology;
j. Radiation Safety;
k. Research Data Management Plans;
l. School or Department of Education Review; and
m. Working with Children and Vulnerable People Checks.

(21) It is the responsibility of all researchers to make themselves aware of any legal or other requirements pertaining to their research, and ensure all approvals, permits, licences and compliances are secured prior to commencement of that research. In cases where it is unclear whether a compliance requirement applies, advice should be sought from REIU.

(22) For more information on compliance requirements, see the Research Ethics webpage.

Section 7 - Collection and Management of Research Data

Collection

(23) Researchers are responsible for ensuring that data and other research materials are collected in accordance with the accepted practices of the discipline, legislative requirements, funding body requirements and, where relevant, approved ethics protocols.

Research Data Management

(24) In accordance with the Code and the ACU Research Data Management and Governance Policy, researchers are responsible for maintaining accurate, complete, safe, secure and retrievable records of research approach, sources, data and primary materials. In addition to the ACU Research Data Management and Governance Policy and any approved research data management plans and ethics protocols, researchers must comply with any data management and records legislation applicable to the jurisdiction in which the research is conducted.

Privacy and Confidentiality

(25) Researchers are responsible for ensuring restricted access to, and secure storage of, any personal, confidential or otherwise sensitive (e.g. commercial or security sensitive) information collected for research purposes. In addition, in accessing, analysing and reporting on these data, researchers must adhere to confidentiality agreements and any other applicable restrictions.

(26) For more information on privacy requirements, see the Privacy Policy.

Open Access

(27) In accordance with the ARC Research Data Management Strategy and NHMRC Open Access Policy, ACU recognises the importance of making research data publicly accessible. Some funding bodies and / or scholarly journals require, as a condition of funding or publication, that researchers deposit datasets in open access repositories. It is the responsibility of all researchers to make themselves aware of any such conditions applying to their research and comply in full. In addition, and even where these conditions do not apply, researchers are

encouraged to deposit datasets in open access repositories. In all cases, personal, confidential or otherwise sensitive information should be protected through the collection of informed consent, de-identification, aggregation or obfuscation prior to datasets being made publicly available.

(28) For more information on open access, see the Library webpage.

Retention

(29) Researchers are responsible for ensuring that data and primary materials are retained for the appropriate minimum or maximum periods, and disposed of in an appropriate manner, as outlined in the Records Retention and Disposal Schedule. In addition, researchers are responsible for ensuring compliance with any applicable requirements not captured by the Records Retention and Disposal Schedule, including funding body requirements and, where relevant, approved ethics protocols.

(30) The above section is a summary only. The Research Data Management and Governance Policy and Records Retention and Disposal Schedule provide detailed guidance on collection and management of research data.

Section 8 - Peer Review

(31) In accordance with the Code and Human Research Ethics Committee Peer Review Policy, the University recognises the importance of independent and impartial peer review as a means of validating research merit, enhancing research rigour and quality, and identifying deviations from the Code, including duplicate publication, fabrication, falsification, misrepresentation and plagiarism.

(32) Researchers are strongly encouraged to take advantage of, and participate in, the peer review process in an independent and impartial manner. This process may be applied in assessing research merit for a variety of purposes. This includes but is not limited to:

a. confirmation of candidature;
b. grant applications;
c. ethics applications; and
d. publications;

(33) The above section is a summary only. The Human Research Ethics Committee Peer Review Policy provides detailed guidance on peer review.

Section 9 - Publication

(34) In accordance with the Code and the Research Publication Policy, the University recognises the importance of sharing and promoting its research endeavours as a means of fulfilling its obligations to the academic community and society at large. To this end, researchers are responsible for ensuring that research findings are disseminated broadly, accurately and responsibly.

(35) The above section is a summary only. The Research Publication Policy provides detailed guidance on research publication.

Section 10 - Authorship

(36) In accordance with the Code and the Research Authorship Policy, the University recognises the importance of ensuring appropriate credit and accountability for research. To this end, researchers are responsible for ensuring that

contributions to research are recognised fairly and accurately, through attribution of authorship and / or acknowledgement, as appropriate.

(37) The above section is a summary only. The Research Authorship Policy provides detailed guidance on research authorship.

Section 11 - Research Funding

(38) In accordance with the Code and the Research and Enterprise Funding Policy, the University is committed to ensuring the responsible and effective use of public, commercial and philanthropic funds. To this end, researchers are responsible for ensuring that research funding is expended in keeping with internal approvals, funding body requirements, applicable contracts or agreements and the Research and Enterprise Funding Policy.

(39) The above section is a summary only. The Research and Enterprise Funding Policy provides detailed guidance on research funding.

Section 12 - Collaborative Research

(40) In accordance with the Code, the University recognises the importance of collaborative research as a means of sharing knowledge, expertise and resources, as well as strengthening relationships within ACU, domestically and abroad.

(41) Researchers are strongly encouraged to build relationships and participate in collaborative research as appropriate and where beneficial. Where collaboration exists, collaborative research (or other) agreements should be put in place to ensure mutual understanding and protect interests. Agreement provisions would include but not be limited to:

a. roles and responsibilities;
b. funding arrangements;
c. ethics approval;
d. compliance requirements;
e. applicable legislation and / or regulations;
f. data management;
g. privacy and confidentiality;
h. research outputs;
i. authorship;
j. commercialisation;
k. copyright and intellectual property (background and project);
l. disclosure and management of conflicts of interest (CoI); and
m. dispute resolution.

(42) For more information on collaborative research agreements, see the Research Contracts webpage.

(43) The above section is a summary only. The Intellectual Property Policy provides detailed guidance on intellectual property.

Section 13 - Research Supervision

(44) In accordance with the Code and Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy, the University recognises the role of quality supervision in promoting the responsible conduct of research amongst higher degree research (HDR) students, early career researchers and research trainees. To this end, research supervisors and researchers under supervision are responsible for ensuring that they fulfil their obligations to one another, as well as to ACU, as outlined in the Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy. Fundamentally, this requires that researchers provide guidance and mentorship on responsible research conduct to other researchers under their supervision.

(45) The above section is a summary only. The Higher Degree Research Policy, Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy and Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy provide detailed guidance on research supervision.

(46) Note, while the Code and aforementioned ACU policies and regulation focus on the formal supervisor / HDR student relationship, the broader principles outlined in these documents may be applied to research supervision or mentorship at any level.

Section 14 - Conflicts of Interest

(47) It is recognised that in conducting research, CoI may arise. In accordance with the Code, the Declaration of Interest Policy - Staff and Affiliates, information on Conflict of Interest – Research on the Research Integrity at ACU website, the University recognises the role of appropriately managing CoIs in ensuring and promoting honest, transparent and fair research. To this end, researchers are responsible for ensuring that they anticipate and avoid CoI where possible or fully disclose and manage CoI where not.

(48) The above section is a summary only. The Declaration of Interest Procedure - Staff and Affiliates provides detailed guidance on the identification and management of CoI.

Section 15 - Research Integrity Advisors

(49) Research Integrity Advisors (RIA) are staff whose role it is to promote the responsible conduct of research within ACU, and to provide advice to researchers on matters of research integrity. Through training and support provided by ACU, RIAs have a heightened knowledge of the Code as well as ACU's research integrity framework.

(50) RIAs are selected from amongst the University's existing or retired staff and appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) (DVCRE). They should be senior members of the University's research community, with a strong record of research conduct. The University seeks to maintain a roster of RIAs, ensuring sufficient coverage across campuses and discipline areas.

(51) While RIAs are generally the first point of contact for integrity matters, they do not have an investigative or determinative role. As such, RIAs are required to exercise judgement in escalating matters requiring the involvement of REIU.

(52) For more information on RIAs, including a list and contact details of current RIAs, see the Research Integrity at ACU webpage.

Section 16 - Non-Compliance

(53) In accordance with the Code, the University recognises the importance of upholding the integrity and quality of its research. To this end, all forms of non-compliance are deemed contrary to the spirit of the Code and this Policy, and

will be addressed as appropriate.

(54) It is noted that non-compliance can occur at any stage of the research lifecycle. This includes but is not limited to:

a. peer review;
b. confirmation of candidature;
c. grant applications;
d. ethics applications;
e. research contracts / agreements;
f. mandatory reporting;
g. data collection; and
h. publication.

Breaches

(55) Failure to comply with, or deviation from, the above-outlined requirements, and any associated legislation, policies or guidelines, constitutes a breach of the RCoC. Examples of breaches include but are not limited to:

a. conducting research prior to securing necessary approvals, permits, licenses or other compliances;
b. non-compliance with, or avoidable failures to adhere to, conditions of approvals, permits, licenses, compliances, laws or regulations applying to research;
c. risking the safety of human participants or researchers, and the well-being of animals or the environment, in conducting research;
d. failure to appropriately manage research data;
e. breaches of privacy and / or confidentiality;
f. failure to conduct peer review responsibly;
g. failure to appropriately ascribe authorship or give acknowledgement;
h. fabrication, falsification, misrepresentation and plagiarism;
i. misappropriation of research funding;
j. misappropriation of intellectual property;
k. failure to provide appropriate supervision of researchers
l. failure to manage CoI;
m. wilful concealment or facilitating non-compliance; and;
n. interference with, or obstruction of, an investigation into non-compliance.

Research Misconduct

(56) Breaches of the Code occur on a spectrum, from minor (less serious) to major (more serious). Serious breaches may meet the definition of research misconduct, as outlined under clause (3)e. of this Policy. Labelling a breach or breaches in this way can assist to determine the appropriate course of action, and trigger associated processes, such as disciplinary action.

Management of Non-Compliance

(57) A complaint occurs when a complainant identifies a potential breach of the RCoC. Complaints should be referred to the REIU, either directly or through an RIA, for its assessment and management.

(58) Complaints will be reviewed to determine the most appropriate course of action. This includes but is not limited to:

a. dismissal of the complaint;
b. local resolution;
c. immediate action, where it is necessary to manage damage, injury, risk, etc;
d. referral to other institutional processes; and
e. referral to a preliminary investigation, as outlined under the Process for Managing Potential Breaches of the RCoC.

(59) The above section is a summary only. The Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018 and the Process for Managing Potential Breaches of the RCoC provide detailed guidance on the management of potential breaches.

Section 17 - Review

(60) Unless otherwise indicated, this Policy will still apply beyond the review date.

Section 18 - Associated Information

(61) For related legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines and any supporting resources please refer to the Associated Information tab.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	4th October 2024
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Responsible Executive	Abid Khan Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)
Responsible Manager	Paul Zappia Associate Director, Research Operations
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