

London Metropolitan University Code of Good Research Practice

Introduction

1. London Metropolitan University has a responsibility as a recipient of public funding to ensure that the research it supports is carried out in conformity with the law and with best current practice.
2. This document provides guidelines on the issues involved in the proper conduct of research, and on the standards expected.
3. In addition to following this code, 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.

Scope

4. The Code applies to all employees, research students and visiting researchers of the University, including persons holding honorary University appointments, conducting research within, or on behalf of, the University.

Professional Standards

5. The University expects those engaged in research to act with the highest standards of integrity whether they are employees of the University, research students or researchers, and irrespective of the source from which their posts or research is funded.

Honesty

6. Researchers should be honest in respect of their own actions in research and in their responses to the actions of other researchers. This applies to the whole range of research work, including experimental design, generating and analysing data, applying for funding, publishing results, and acknowledging the direct and indirect contribution of colleagues, collaborators and others.
7. Plagiarism, deception or the fabrication or falsification of results will be regarded as a serious disciplinary offence.
8. Researchers are encouraged to report cases of suspected misconduct and to do so in a responsible and appropriate manner.
9. Researchers should declare and manage any real or potential conflicts of interest.

Openness

10. While recognising the need for researchers to protect their own and the University's research interests, the University encourages researchers to be as open as possible in discussing their work with other scientists and with the public.
11. Once results have been published, the University expects researchers to make available relevant data and materials to other researchers, on request, provided that this is consistent with any ethics approvals and consents which cover the data and materials and any intellectual property rights in them.

Accountability

11. Researchers, and in particular those named as principal investigators or grantholders, must ensure that the research that they are undertaking is consistent with the terms and conditions as defined by the sponsoring body and / or covered by agreements between the University and the Sponsor. This includes, but is not restricted to, ensuring that the research programme carried out is as defined in the original proposal to the Sponsor, unless amendments have been agreed in writing; that finance is used solely for the purpose for which it was intended; that reports are both accurate and produced on time and that conditions relating to publication and ownership of Intellectual Property are adhered to.

Leadership and co-operation

12. Within the University, it is the responsibility of the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Heads of Departments, Directors of Research Institutes and senior staff to ensure that a climate is created which allows research to be conducted in accordance with good research practice.
13. Within a research group, responsibility lies with the group leader. Group leaders should create a research environment of mutual co-operation, in which all members of a research team are encouraged to develop their skills and in which the open exchange of ideas is fostered. They must also ensure that appropriate direction of research and supervision of researchers and, in conjunction with Research Degrees Committee, research students is provided. Responsibilities should be clearly allocated and understood.
14. Research misconduct is least likely to occur in an environment where good research practice (e.g. documentation of results, peer review of research, regular discussion and seminars) is encouraged and where there is adequate supervision at all levels.

Documenting results and storing primary data

15. Throughout their work, researchers are required to keep accurate records of the research procedures followed, the approvals granted and the results obtained, including interim results as well as the final research outcomes. This is necessary not only as a means of demonstrating proper research practice, but also in case questions are subsequently asked about either the conduct of the research or the results obtained. For similar reasons, data generated in the course of research must be kept securely in paper, electronic or other form, as appropriate.
16. After the completion of a research project the University expects such data to be securely held for an appropriate period of time, usually ten years. The keeping and maintenance of laboratory notebooks and other data sources can also help to ensure that intellectual property can be protected. Back-up records should always be kept for data stored on a computer.

Publishing results

17. It is usually a condition of research funding that the results are published in an appropriate form. This has long been widely accepted as the best system for research results to be reviewed and made available to the research community for verification or replication.
18. The issue of authorship is important in the context of good research practice. The University expects anyone listed as an author on a paper 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.
19. The position of the University is that research be published when appropriate and wherever possible. Delays in publication should be avoided although these may be acceptable to allow patents to be filed. Researchers should follow the University's guidelines on Intellectual Property.

Acknowledging the role of collaborators and other participants

20. In all aspects of research, the contributions of formal collaborators and all others who directly assist or indirectly support the research, including the University as "host" to 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. Where appropriate, the sponsors of the research should be acknowledged.

The needs of new researchers

21. Researchers who are new to the academic community may need careful briefing on the University's expectations of good research practice. Responsibility for ensuring that new researchers understand good research practice lies with all members of the community, but particularly with Heads of Department, Directors of Research Institutes and leaders of research centres or groups. Good practice would include "mentoring" less experienced workers in their new environment. All researchers should undertake appropriate training as necessary.
22. Postgraduate research students should receive good supervision and should not be put under unwarranted or unsupervised pressure to produce results at any cost. Postgraduate research students and their supervisors should refer to the Postgraduate Research Student Code of Practice documents.

Ethical practice

23. Compliance with the University's research ethics policy and procedures and the guidelines of appropriate Research Ethics Committees is essential. Any special standards of work performance and ethical conduct imposed by law, research funders, professional or statutory bodies or by the University in relation to particular categories of research are deemed to be included in this code in its application to staff and research students engaged in that research in the University.
24. Researchers should ensure the confidentiality of personal information relating to the participation in research, and that the research fulfils any legal requirements such as those of the Data Protection Act 1998.
25. Experimentation on animals is strictly controlled by the Home Office and can only be conducted by licensees in accordance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act of 1986.

Integrity in submitting research proposals

26. Principal investigators and other named investigators should take all reasonable measures to ensure the accuracy and completeness of information which is contained in applications for funding.

Integrity in managing research projects

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

Conflict of Interest

28. Anyone involved in any way in the conduct or management of research must identify and declare any conflicts of interest, whether of legal, ethical, moral, financial, personal or other nature.
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Research misconduct and dealing with allegations of misconduct in research.

1. Definition of research misconduct
Research misconduct includes the following, whether deliberate, reckless or negligent:
 - 1.1. failure to obtain appropriate permission to conduct research
 - 1.2. deception in relation to research proposals
 - 1.3. unethical behaviour in the conduct of research, for example in relation to research subjects
 - 1.4. unauthorised use of information which was acquired confidentially
 - 1.5. deviation from good research practice, where this results in unreasonable risk of harm to humans, other animals or the environment
 - 1.6. fabrication, falsification or corruption of research data
 - 1.7. distortion of research outcomes, by distortion or omission of data that do not fit expected results
 - 1.8. dishonest misinterpretation of results
 - 1.9. publication of data known or believed to be false or misleading
 - 1.10. plagiarism, or dishonest use of unacknowledged sources
 - 1.11. misquotation or misrepresentation of other authors
 - 1.12. inappropriate attribution of authorship
 - 1.13. fraud or other misuse of research funds or research equipment
 - 1.14. attempting, planning or conspiring to be involved in research misconduct
 - 1.15. inciting others to be involved in research misconduct
 - 1.16. collusion in or concealment of research misconduct by others
 - 1.17. failure to comply with relevant legislation, including that relating to health and safety, data protection, intellectual property and animal experimentation.
2. 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.
3. Anyone who has good reason to suspect misconduct should report it in confidence to their Head of Department, Director of Research Institute or Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Development). Those who raise concerns in good faith will not be penalised in any way for doing so. Allegations shall normally be made in writing, accompanied by any available supporting evidence. Allegations raised anonymously will be considered at the discretion of the Vice-Chancellor. All allegations will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedure (staff or student).

4. In cases where an allegation implicates someone who is not subject to the University's disciplinary procedures, the Vice-Chancellor shall bring the matter to the attention of their employer or any other appropriate body.
 5. Where the research is funded in whole or part by an external grant, 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.
 6. 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.
 7. Where the person responsible has published research, especially to which the misconduct relates, the Vice-Chancellor shall consider whether it is appropriate to inform journal editors or others of any finding.
 8. If an application has been made publicly, the Vice-Chancellor shall consider whether it is appropriate to make public the outcome of its investigation into the matter.
 9. 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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Acknowledgements:

ARMED Active Risk Management in Education: Research Misconduct, 2002
BBSRC, Statement on Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice, 2000
EPSRC, Integrity and Self-Regulation in Science
ESRC, Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice
Medical Research Council, Good Research Practice, 2000
Medical Research Council, Policy and Procedure for Inquiring into Allegations of Scientific Misconduct, 1997
Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life
The University of Edinburgh, Code of Good Practice in Research, 2002
The University of Glasgow, Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice, 2002
The University of Plymouth, Code of Good Practice in Research, 2002
The University of Surrey, Code on Good Research Practice, 2001
The Wellcome Trust, Guidelines on Good Research Practice, 2002