University Policy on Research Misconduct

The current University Code of Practice for Research states that:

10 Misconduct

10.1 Misconduct in research is a failure to comply with the provisions of this Code and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing provisions, is taken to include:

10.1.1 Fabrication, including the creation of false data or other aspects of research including research documentation such as regulatory or internal approvals or participant consents.

10.1.2 Falsification, including

(i) falsification and/or inappropriate manipulation and/or selection of consents

(ii) falsification and/or inappropriate manipulation and/or selection of data/imagery with the intention to deceive.

10.1.3 Plagiarism, including

(i) the wrongful appropriation or purloining and publication as one’s own, of the thoughts, ideas or the expression of ideas (literary, artistic, musical, mechanical, etc) of another;

(ii) the deliberate exploitation of the ideas, work or research data of others without proper acknowledgement.

10.1.4 Misrepresentation, including

(i) falsely or unfairly presenting the ideas or the work of others as one’s own, whether or not for personal gain or enhancement, including both by deliberate mis-statement or as a result of negligent or inadequate reference;

(ii) misrepresentation of data for example suppression of relevant findings with intention to deceive and/or data or knowingly, recklessly or by gross negligence presenting a flawed interpretation of data;
(iii) misleading ascription of authorship to a publication;

(iv) undisclosed duplication of publication, including undisclosed simultaneous duplicate submission of manuscripts for publication

(v) deliberately attempting to deceive when making a research proposal;

(vi) misrepresentation of skills, qualifications and/or experience, including claiming or implying skills, qualifications or experience which are not held;

(vii) misrepresentation of interests, including failure to declare material interests either of the researcher or of the funders of the research.

10.1.5 Mismanagement of Data and/or Primary materials, including failure by those identified under 2.2 as having relevant roles and responsibilities to

(i) keep clear and accurate records of the research procedures followed and the results obtained, including interim reports;

(ii) hold records securely in paper or electronic form;

(iii) make relevant primary data and research evidence accessible to others for a reasonable period after the completion of research;

(iv) manage data according to any data policy of a research funder and all relevant legislation.

10.1.6 Breach of any relevant Duty of Care, which may involve recklessly or through gross negligence;

(i) failing to follow procedures and health and safety protocols which are designed to prevent unreasonable risk or harm to humans, animals or the environment;

(ii) breaching the confidentiality of individuals or groups involved in research whether research workers or research subjects without their consent, including, for example, improper disclosure of the identity of individuals or groups;

(iii) placing any of those involved in research in physical danger, whether as researchers, research subjects, participants, or associated individuals, without their prior consent, and without appropriate safeguards where informed consent is given;

(iv) not taking all reasonable care to ensure that the risks and dangers, the broad objectives, and the sponsors and funders of research are made known to participants or their legal representatives in order to ensure that appropriate informed consent is obtained properly, explicitly and transparently;

(v) failing to obtain appropriate informed consent, unless there are valid reasons for not doing so, and that permission to conduct research without appropriate informed consent has been obtained from the relevant University or external research ethics committee;

(vi) failing to obtain appropriate ethical approval to conduct research;
(vii) unethical behaviour in the conduct of research including failing to comply with any requirements or stipulations contained in ethical or regulatory consent;

(viii) failing to meet relevant legal or ethical requirements and to follow any protocols set out in the guidelines of appropriate, recognised professional, academic, scientific and governmental bodies;

(ix) unauthorised use of information acquired confidentially.

10.1.7 General Misconduct, including

(i) the misuse of research findings;

(ii) failure to declare an actual or potential conflict of interest which may significantly compromise, or appear to significantly compromise, the research integrity of the individual concerned and the accuracy of any research findings or bring the University into disrepute;

(iii) inciting others to commit research misconduct;

(iv) failure to declare (where known) that an collaborative partner has been found to have committed research misconduct in the past or is currently being investigated following an allegation of research misconduct. Such declarations should be made to the Head of School and to the University Research Ethics Officer, who shall inform the Chair of the relevant Ethical Review Committee;

(v) facilitating misconduct in research by collusion in, or concealment of, such action;

(vi) submitting an accusation of research misconduct based on vexatious or malicious motives;

(vii) breach of University or externally contracted confidentiality, except where part of genuine whistle-blowing actions in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998;

(viii) fraud, including financial fraud;

(viii) any misconduct which would normally be regarded as a disciplinary matter if conducted on University premises, which is committed whilst working on a collaborating institution’s premises or other off-campus facility or research site, whilst conducting a university or collaborative research project, secondment, or industrial placement.

10.2 Researchers and other members of Staff have a duty to report any breach of this Code where they have good reason to believe it is occurring, to the Head of College or some other person in authority. The procedures and protections set out in the University’s Code of Corporate Governance in relation to Public Interest Disclosure ('Whistle blowing') shall apply as appropriate in the area of the conduct of research.

10.3 The University considers an accusation of research misconduct to be within its remit and suitable for consideration according to its relevant disciplinary procedures if it:

(i) concerns a member of Staff, Honorary Staff, Emeritus Staff or Registered Student; or a Visiting Researcher under the supervision of a member of Staff
(ii) involves a current member of Staff or Honorary Staff, whether or not it is alleged to have occurred at a location external to the University.

10.1.4 Where possible, the University will follow an investigation through to completion even in the event that the individual(s) concerned has left or leaves its jurisdiction, either before the accusation was made or before an investigation is concluded.

10.5 An allegation of research misconduct is a serious and potentially defamatory action and could lead to a threat (or even the instigation) of legal proceedings. Consequently Code of Practice for Research for the protection of the complainant and of the party against whom the allegations are made, all enquiries (including the formal investigation, if any) should be conducted on a basis of confidentiality within the process (wherever possible) as well as of integrity and non-detriment so that neither party should suffer solely as a consequence of the allegation being made in good faith.

10.6 Following the completion of an investigation and should research misconduct be found, the University may consider additional measures. Such additional measures might include (but are not limited to):

(i) retraction/correction of articles in journals or other published material;

(ii) withdrawal/repayment of funding;

(iii) notification of misconduct to regulatory bodies;

(iv) notification of other employing institutions/organisations;

(v) notification of other organisations involved in the research including the funders of the research;

(vi) review of internal management and/or training and/or supervisory arrangements;

(vii) make any public statement necessary to protect the good name and reputation of the University;

10.7 The Research Councils UK (RCUK) Policy and Code of Conduct on the Governance of Good Research Conduct requires that RCUK be notified at the commencement of an allegation of unacceptable research conduct arising from one of their funded projects. Where serious misconduct is found to have occurred, especially where this would appear to have been premeditated a report to relevant statutory or regulatory bodies may be required.

(http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/cmsweb/downloads/rcuk/reviews/grc/goodresearchconductcode.pdf)

10.8 The University retains the right to report proven allegations of serious research misconduct against its Staff, Honorary Staff, former Staff and Registered Students, to potential new and subsequent employers. Where employees or students of another institution involved in a collaborative project with the University are implicated in a University finding of serious research misconduct, then the University shall notify the home institution of those individuals involved.
10.9 The identity of any individual reporting research misconduct where it is genuinely suspected, will be kept confidential wherever practicable. However, it may be necessary to reveal the identity of the individual reporting misconduct if this is deemed legally necessary to allow the person accused of misconduct to conduct their defence.

10.10 There should always be an opportunity for response by a complainant if the allegation is not accepted and if they believe that they have been misunderstood or key evidence overlooked.

10.11 Where there is prima facie evidence that an allegation of research misconduct is founded on vexatious or malicious intent, that allegation may be considered as a disciplinary matter.

10.12 All new members of Staff (including Honorary Staff) will be required to sign a declaration stating that they have not been found to have committed serious research misconduct (i.e. warranting at least a formal written warning) prior to their appointment and are not currently under investigation by another institution following an accusation of research misconduct.
Research Integrity on national level

The UK Panel for Research Integrity in Health and Biomedical Sciences has been set up. Further information can be found here.

The aim of the Panel for Research Integrity is to ensure that the most appropriate advice is available to those leading or managing investigations, as well as those who have concerns about the conduct of research. The service is confidential and is available to those working in the NHS as well as universities.

The Panel launched the Research Integrity helpline to provide advice and guidance to those involved in issues relating to conduct in research.

The helpline - 0844 77 00 6 44 - is available 8am and 8pm, Monday to Friday, with voicemail available at other times, or email.