

Code of Research Good Practice 2011/12

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Code of Research Good Practice

1 Introduction

1.1 The University of Westminster is committed to conducting its business in accordance with the seven principles identified by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership) and is responsible for ensuring that its research is carried out in conformity with current legislation. The University expects all those engaged in research, including its employees, its students and its visiting researchers, to observe these principles, irrespective of the sources of their funding, or their area of research.

1.2 This document provides guidelines on good practice in research and is intended for all staff, including visiting researchers, and students carrying out research at or on behalf of the University. The document is only one element in the University's overall framework governing good practice in research which is also informed by the following essential documents:

- Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research (Ethics Code)
- Public Interest Disclosure policy
- Staff Handbook (disciplinary, grievance, staff contracts, conflict of interest policies etc.)
- Regulations and Guidelines for Research Degrees
- Procedure for Managing Allegations of Research Misconduct
- Policy on Dissemination of Research and Scholarly Output (Open Access Policy)

2 General Principles

2.1 The University expects that, whether research is being funded by a sponsor for public advancement or a user for private or commercial gain, good practice as defined by this document and by relevant, external good practice frameworks, should be applied throughout.

2.2 Sponsors and stakeholders can reasonably expect the University to ensure that an adequate policy framework exists that promotes and promulgates good research practice, that emphasises integrity and rigour in research and, that creates a culture in which the following general principles can be understood and observed. It is the purpose of this document, in association with other University policy documents referred to herein, to create such a policy framework.

2.3 The University obtains funding from various bodies, including government departments, Research Councils and charities. Such bodies have defined expectations as to the standards of research good practice in funded projects. In drawing up its own standards of good practice in this Code, the University

has drawn extensively on the codes of practice and standards articulated by relevant external bodies and stakeholders. The University wishes to acknowledge the guidance and assistance provided by these sources, which are listed at Annexe A. Foremost amongst these are the Joint Research Councils' statement entitled "Safeguarding good scientific practice" and The Wellcome Trust's "Guidelines on Research Practice".

- 2.4 United Kingdom Charities can only fund research that falls within their charitable objectives. Additionally, charity law imposes certain obligations and restrictions on the use of charitable funds for research, for example a requirement to disseminate research findings, and a proscription on funding research for the purpose of commercial or private gain. In addition to adhering to the University framework governing good practice in research, University of Westminster researchers are also expected to be familiar with their obligations in relation to the relevant external bodies and to ensure that their work complies with their guidelines and expectations, regardless of the source of funding.
- 2.5 Researchers should also be aware that these research good practice obligations associated with research for charities apply to the University itself, which has charitable status.
- 2.6 The University recognises that an essential element of a good research practice framework is a procedure for addressing instances of suspected research misconduct, and that the existence of institutional procedures for dealing with such cases is a condition of funding for many sponsors. The University's approach to managing instances of alleged or suspected misconduct in research is set out in the Procedure for Managing Allegations of Research Misconduct. This Procedure applies in the case of allegations against staff and research students, but not in the case of students on taught courses.
- 2.7 This document should also be read in conjunction with the University's Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research (University Ethics Code), which is one of the essential elements of the University's framework governing good practice in research.
- 2.8 The University Executive Board will be kept informed of developments in relation to this Code and of the procedures for dealing with research misconduct. It will also be provided with an annual report on any issues which have arisen.

3 Integrity

- 3.1 The University expects that 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 designing experiments, generating and analysing data, applying for funding, publishing results, and when peer reviewing the work of other researchers.
- 3.2 All the direct and indirect contributions of all colleagues, collaborators and others should be acknowledged (see Section 12, Dissemination and Publication of Results).

3.3 Researchers are accountable to society, their professions, the institutes where the research is taking place, the staff and students involved and, in particular, to the sponsor of the research.

3.4 The University views plagiarism, deception, or the fabrication or falsification of results as serious disciplinary offences. Researchers are encouraged to report cases of suspected misconduct in accordance with the procedures (see 2.6 above).

3.5 Researchers should also declare and manage any real or potential conflicts of interest, both financial and professional. Conflict of interest might potentially occur in cases:

- where researchers have an existing or potential financial interest in the outcome of the research.
- where there is a private or private practice benefit significantly dependent upon the outcome of the research.
- where the researcher's professional or personal gain arising from the research may be more than might be usual for research.

Further guidance on conflicts of interest and declaration of personal interest is contained in the University Staff Handbook (Section 3), the Financial Regulations and the Ethics Code.

4 Openness

4.1 The University recognises that, in the case of research undertaken for agencies/bodies other than the University itself, issues relating to disclosure and dissemination are matters for the research sponsor. In the case of University research, the normal expectation shall be that research results be disclosed openly and at the earliest opportunity consistent with the protection of any intellectual property or with the resolution of any confidentiality issues which may arise.

4.2 Whilst recognising the need for the protection of intellectual property rights (IPR), the University encourages researchers to be as open as possible in discussing their work with other researchers and with the public.

4.3 Sponsors recognise that publication of the results of research may need to be delayed for a reasonable period pending protection of any intellectual property arising from the research, or for other reasons. Any such periods of delay in publication should be kept to a minimum and should be in accordance with agreements with industrial sponsors. Where dissemination of the research is a requirement of the sponsors of the research, it is the responsibility of the researchers/s to satisfy this requirement.

4.4 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 ethical approvals and consents which cover the data and materials, and any intellectual property rights in them.

4.5 Researchers are expected to exercise utmost care when discussing work that is not complete or has not been published, particularly if it has not undergone peer review, and should ensure confidential material of all types is adequately protected.

4.6 It is emphasised that the ultimate aim of both charity-funded and University research is to increase knowledge and understanding: its primary purpose is not publicity for the researcher, the University or for the sponsor, and the arrangements for disseminating the research should fully recognise this.

5 Professional Guidance and Legislation

5.1 The University expects researchers to observe the standards of research practice set out in guidelines published by the relevant scientific and learned societies, and other professional bodies, key examples of which are listed at Annexe A.

5.2 Researchers are responsible for making themselves aware of any legal requirements which regulate their work, and in particular Health and Safety, Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

6 Leadership and Co-operation

6.1 Heads of institutions and their senior colleagues, including Deans of Schools, Heads of Departments, School Research Directors and Research Group Leaders are responsible for ensuring that the research environment and climate is conducive to the application of the principles laid out in this good practice framework, and to create a climate of mutual co-operation in which the open exchange of ideas is encouraged and where all staff and research students are encouraged to develop their skills. Leaders are also required to ensure that appropriate direction of research and supervision of researchers is provided, in accordance with the nature of the individual academic discipline and associated mode of research.

7 Supervision

7.1 It is the University's expectation that appropriate training and direction for research and supervision of researchers is available through the Schools or other units with delegated responsibility for the management and quality assurance of research.

7.2 The University is committed to the continuous enhancement of its training programme for research degree supervisors through staff development sessions and through mentoring and leadership within Schools and to its integration within the University's overall staff development and the institutional research training programme for research degree students. Guidance for supervisors is defined as covering the supervision of all stages of the research process, including outlining or drawing up a hypothesis, preparing applications for funding, the design of experimental or research protocols, data recording

and data analysis, thesis writing and assessment/progression stages (registration, transfer, examination).

8 Training

8.1 Research degree students will receive induction and training in accordance with the institutionally specified programme of research training. The academic Schools will ensure that research and academic staff are adequately trained and that they understand and adopt best practice as quickly as possible. Appropriate training for new staff will be provided during the probationary period.

8.2 All research students and research staff should undertake appropriate training and/or attend courses on, as appropriate: research methods, regulatory and ethics approvals and consents, equipment use, confidentiality, data management, record keeping, publication, research team leadership, health and safety, budget management and other topics as appropriate.

9 Primary Data/Samples/Equipment

9.1 Researchers should ensure that there is clarity from the outset of the research programme as to the ownership and use of, (where relevant):

- Data and samples used or created in the course of the research
- The results of the research
- Equipment paid for by sponsors

9.2 The responsibilities and procedures for the storage and disposal of data and samples (including compliance with the requirements of the University or other Ethics Committee) should be made clear at the commencement of any project, including, in the case of collaborative research, the necessary clauses in the collaboration agreement to address the respective responsibilities for the disposal of these.

9.3 The University requires that researchers keep comprehensive, clear and accurate records in relation to research projects including records of primary observations, both in order to demonstrate proper research practice, and in the event of future questions relating to the conduct of the research. These should include records of procedures followed, approvals granted during the research process, interim results and final research outcomes. Properly maintained notebooks must also be retained.

9.4 Data generated in the course of research should be kept securely in paper or electronic format, as appropriate. Back-up data should always be kept for data stored on a computer. The minimum periods for which data should be retained vary by discipline and are defined by the regulations or guidance of the relevant professional or learned bodies.

9.5 Researchers should report any changes in the direction of sponsored research to the sponsor or any other relevant body. Any change in the direction of the research must be discussed with the sponsor prior to its implementation.

10 Intellectual Property (IP)

- 10.1 Where researchers identify any IP that may arise from externally funded research they shall inform Research and Enterprise Services (RES) and the research sponsor, where required to do so by the terms of the sponsorship, and in accordance with current University IPR policy and procedures.
- 10.2 Research supported by the University, Research Councils or Charities is undertaken for public benefit and may not be undertaken solely for the purposes of commercial gain. However, commercial benefit from the exploitation of the results of the research may accrue to the researcher, the University and, by agreement, to any charitable sponsor of the research.
- 10.3 Currently research degree students from the School of Life Sciences and the School of Electronics and Computer Science are required to assign any potential IPR to the University at Registration.

11 Publication Practice and Authorship

- 11.1 In accordance with the principle of openness referred to in Section 4 above, the University encourages the publication and dissemination of results of high quality research. However, it expects that researchers will engage in the process of publishing and disseminating their work responsibly and with an awareness of the consequences of any such dissemination in the wider media.
- 11.2 The University supports the principle of academic freedom and therefore seeks to encourage sponsors to allow the publication and the dissemination of research or research findings.
- 11.3 Results should be published in a form appropriate to the academic discipline. The University requires that all individuals listed as authors accept responsibility for ensuring that they are familiar with the contents of the paper/output and can identify their contribution to it. Authorship on papers should include those individuals who have made a major contribution to the work and who are familiar with the entire contents of the paper. Authors should have participated sufficiently in the research to take public responsibility for the content'.
- 11.4 The University does not permit the practice of honorary authorship.

12. Dissemination and publication of results

- 12.1 The University recognises the potential importance of publicity about research to industrial sponsors, to fund-raising charities and to the University itself. Advice on press releases and publicity can be obtained from the University's Press Office.
- 12.2 In publishing or disseminating their research or research findings including any plans they may have to publish or publicise research at conferences or on web sites, researchers are required to take into account the following:

- The University of Westminster affiliation should be explicitly used by researchers in all outputs.
- The sponsor should be notified in advance when the research is to be published, publicised or disseminated.
- The University would normally expect that research is peer reviewed prior to it being published, publicised or disseminated. Where research is placed in the public domain before peer review has been undertaken, the researcher is required to make this clear in any publicity.
- All funding sources must be acknowledged in any publication or publicity.
- Results of research should be published in an appropriate form, usually as papers in refereed journals.
- Anyone listed as an author on a paper should accept responsibility for ensuring that he or she is familiar with the contents of the paper and can identify his or her contribution to it.
- The practice of honorary authorship is not permitted.
- The contributions of formal collaborators and all others who directly assist or indirectly support the research should be both specified and properly acknowledged.

12.3 Examples of the ethical aspects of publication practice can be found in the Committee on Publication Ethics guidelines.

12.4 In line with the University Open Access Policy, research when published should be made available to the University online repository, WestminsterResearch.

13. Ethical Practice in Research involving Humans and other Animals

This section should be read in conjunction with the University's Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research.

Research involving human participants

- 13.1 Potential (and current) research participants have the right to choose whether or not to participate, (or to continue to participate) in research, and obtaining informed consent is central to the ethical conduct of research involving human participants.
- 13.2 Researchers are required to comply with the University's Ethics Code including obtaining the necessary University or other Ethics Committee approvals where necessary, prior to the commencement of the research.
- 13.3 Approval from other regulatory bodies for aspects such as irradiation, genetic manipulation and embryo research should also be sought where necessary, for example for secondary analysis of research data.
- 13.4 Researchers should ensure the confidentiality of personal information relating to the participants in research, and that the research fulfils any legal requirements such as those of the Data Protection Act.

Research involving animals

- 13.5 Where required, research involving animals should have the approval of the appropriate Ethics Committee, as well as Home Office licences for the institution, the investigator and the project. Reduction, replacement and refinement should be used wherever possible.
- 13.6 The University expects researchers to observe where applicable, the standards of practice set out in guidelines published by relevant professional and other organisations.

Annexe A

Key Guidance

External References and Sources of Guidance

Nolan: <http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/parlment/nolan/nolan.htm>

OST: Safeguarding good scientific practice

Wellcome Trust: Guidelines on Research Practice

BBSRC Statement on Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice

EPSRC Guide to Good Practice in Scientific and Engineering Research

ESRC Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice

MRC Guidelines on Good Research Practice

NERC Research Grants Handbook

PPARC Research Grants Handbook

Social Research Association Ethical Guidelines

Guidelines on Good Publication Practice, Committee on Publication Ethics:
<http://publicationethics.org/>

University Research in Scotland: Developing a Policy Framework. The Scottish Universities Research Policy Consortium

Social Services Research Group: Code of good practice for research, evaluation, monitoring and review studies in social, housing and health studies

Arts and Humanities Data Service, Guides to Good Practice in the Creation and Use of Digital Resources

The Danish Committee on Scientific Dishonesty: Guidelines for good scientific practice, Copenhagen, March 1998

The Office of Research Integrity (ORI), USA.

Freedom of Information Legislation

Data Protection Legislation

Annexe B

Key Guidance

Relevant University Policies, Procedures and Sources of Guidance

Staff Handbook

Staff Disciplinary Procedure

Staff Grievance Procedure

Public Interest Disclosure Policy

Health and Safety Policy

All available via: <http://www.wmin.ac.uk/page-126>

Procedure for Managing Allegations of Research Misconduct

Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research

Policy on Dissemination of Research and Scholarly Output

All available via: <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/rs/key-documents/>

Intellectual Property Policy

<http://www.wmin.ac.uk/pdf/UoW%20intellectual%20property%20policy%20October%202007%20v3a.pdf>

University Financial Regulations

<http://www.wmin.ac.uk/page-2885>

University Press Office

<http://www.wmin.ac.uk/page-15923>

Freedom of Information Publication Schedule

<http://www.wmin.ac.uk/dataprotection>