

Code of Good Research Practice

Effective from November 2011

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This recommended Checklist for researchers lists the key points of good practice in research for a research project and is applicable to all subject areas. A PDF version is available from www.ukrio.org

Before conducting your research, and bearing in mind that, subject to legal and ethical requirements, roles and contributions may change during the time span of the research:

- 1 Does the proposed research address pertinent question(s) and is it designed either to add to existing knowledge about the subject in question or to develop methods for research into it?
- 2 Is your research design appropriate for the question(s) being asked?
- 3 Will you have access to all necessary skills and resources to conduct the research?
- 4 Have you conducted a risk assessment to determine:
 - a whether there are any ethical issues and whether ethics review is required;
 - b the potential for risks to the organisation, the research, or the health, safety and well-being of researchers and research participants; and
 - c what legal requirements govern the research?
- 5 Will your research comply with all legal and ethical requirements and other applicable guidelines, including those from other organisations and/or countries if relevant?
- 6 Will your research comply with all requirements of legislation and good practice relating to health and safety?
- 7 Has your research undergone any necessary ethics review (see 4(a) above), especially if it involves animals, human participants, humans material or personal data?
- 8 Will your research comply with any monitoring and audit requirements?
- 9 Are you in compliance with any contracts and financial guidelines relating to the project?
- 10 Have you reached an agreement relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?
- 11 Have you reached an agreement relating to collaborative working, if applicable?
- 12 Have you agreed the roles of researchers and responsibilities for management and supervision?
- 13 Have all conflicts of interest relating to your research been identified, declared and addressed?
- 14 Are you aware of the guidance from all applicable organisations on misconduct in research?

When conducting your research:

- 1 Are you following the agreed research design for the project?
- 2 Have any changes to the agreed research design been reviewed and approved if applicable?
- 3 Are you following best practice for the collection, storage and management of data?
- 4 Are agreed roles and responsibilities for management and supervision being fulfilled?
- 5 Is your research complying with any monitoring and audit requirements?

When finishing your research:

- 1 Will your research and its findings be reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame?
- 2 Will all contributions to the research be acknowledged?
- 3 Are agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship being complied with?
- 4 Will research data be retained in a secure and accessible form and for the required duration?
- 5 Will your research comply with all legal, ethical and contractual requirements?

1 Introduction

Buckinghamshire New University (the University) expects that all its employees and students observe the highest standards in the conduct of their research and that the following principles and standards should be observed and understood. This document draws heavily from the guidance provided by the UK Research Integrity Office, an independent body which provides expert advice and guidance about the conduct of research.

This is a live document which continues to be developed and as such will be reviewed and monitored for equality implications.

2 Principles

The University is guided by the following principles when implementing and complying with the core standards described below and the Recommended Checklist for Researchers (see above).

- 2.1 **Excellence** –striving for excellence when conducting research and aiming to produce and disseminate work of the highest quality.
- 2.2 **Honesty** – creating and maintaining a culture of research that fosters and supports honesty in research. Researchers should be honest in relation to their own research and that of others. They should do their utmost to ensure the accuracy of data and results, acknowledge the contribution of others, and neither engage in misconduct nor conceal it.
- 2.3 **Integrity** – compliance with all legal and ethical requirements relevant to a researcher's field of study. Any potential or actual conflicts of interest relating to research should be declared and where necessary, steps taken to resolve them.
- 2.4 **Co-operation** – promote open exchange of ideas, research methods, data and results and their discussion, scrutiny and debate, subject to any considerations of confidentiality.
- 2.5 **Accountability** – recognition that the University is ultimately accountable to the general public and should act accordingly. Any research undertaken should comply with any agreements, terms and conditions relating to the project, and allow for proper governance and transparency. Researchers should follow the requirements and guidance of any professional bodies in their field of research. Researchers who are members of a regulated profession should follow the requirements and guidance of the body regulating their profession.
- 2.6 **Training and Skills** – provision of training and opportunities for the development of researchers, and the necessary resources to enable them to conduct research to the required standards.
- 2.7 **Safety** – ensuring the dignity, rights, safety and wellbeing of all involved in research and avoiding unreasonable risk or harm to research subjects, patients, participants, researchers and others.

3 Standards

The following core standards have been adopted for use at the University which should be interpreted in light of the above principles.

3.1 General Guidance on Good Practice in Research

- 3.1.1 The University has a responsibility to ensure that research undertaken in its name complies with all legal and ethical requirements and other applicable guidelines. This includes submitting research proposals for ethics review where appropriate and abiding by the outcome of that review. When conducting, or collaborating in, research in other countries, researchers will comply with the legal and ethical requirements existing in the UK and in the countries where the

research is conducted. Similarly, organisations and researchers based abroad who participate in UK-hosted research projects should comply with the legal and ethical requirements existing in the UK as well as those of their own country.

3.1.2 The University will continue to establish clear policies and procedures that cover the Principles of good practice (as above) and offer detailed guidance on the Standards set out in this Code. These will complement and are in accordance with existing University policies, such as those for health and safety, raising concerns at work, management of finances or of intellectual property, and equality and diversity. Awareness of these policies and procedures is raised through provision of training and support with an overall aim of ensuring that researchers consider good practice as integral to their research.

3.1.3 Researchers should:

- a) ensure that all research projects have sufficient arrangements for insurance and indemnity prior to the research being conducted;
- b) recognise their responsibility to conduct research of high ethical standards;
- c) be aware of their organisation's policies and procedures on good practice in research;
- d) make sure that their research complies with these policies and procedures, and seek guidance when necessary;
- e) work with the University to ensure that they have the necessary training, resources and support to carry out their research; and
- f) suggest to the University how guidance on good practice might be developed or revised.

3.2 Leadership and Supervision

3.2.1 The University will provide direction and supervision of research and researchers, setting out clear lines of accountability of the University and management of research. Supervisors and researchers will be supported in meeting the legal and ethical requirements of conducting research.

3.2.2 Researchers should promote and maintain an environment which fosters and supports research of high ethical standards, mutual co-operation, professionalism and the open and honest exchange of ideas. Researchers should foster a culture where good conduct in research is promoted and inappropriate conduct is identified and addressed.

3.3 Training

3.3.1 Researchers will undergo training as necessary in order to carry out their duties and to develop their knowledge and skills throughout their career, repeating training where necessary to ensure that their skills are kept up-to-date. They should identify needs for training when they arise and report them to their manager or other appropriate person.

3.3.2 Particular support will be provided for research students to ensure that they understand which standards and university policies and procedures they are expected to comply with.

3.4 Research Design

3.4.1 When designing research projects, researchers should ensure that:

- a) the proposed research addresses pertinent question(s) and is designed either to add to existing knowledge about the subject in question or to develop methods for research into it;
- b) the design of the study is appropriate for the question(s) being asked and addresses the most important potential sources of bias;
- c) the design and conduct of the study, including how data will be gathered, analysed and managed, are set out in detail in a pre-specified research plan or protocol;
- d) all necessary skills and experience will be available to carry out the proposed research, in the proposed research team or through collaboration with specialist in relevant fields;

- e) sufficient resources will be available to carry out the proposed research and that these resources meet all relevant standards;
- f) any issues relating to the above are resolved as far as possible prior to the start of the research; and
- g) that an assessment of harm of the planned study is carried out using the Research Ethics Framework at the University to assess if there are any ethical issues and whether ethics review is required.

3.4.2 Where the design of a study has been approved by ethics, regulatory or peer review, researchers should ensure that any subsequent alterations to the design are subject to appropriate review to determine that they will not compromise the integrity of the research or any terms of consent previously given.

3.4.3 Researchers should try to anticipate any risks that the proposed research might produce results that could be misused for purposes that are illegal or harmful. Researchers should report any risks to, and seek guidance from, the appropriate person(s) in the University and take action to minimise those risks.

3.5 Collaborative Working

3.5.1 Researchers should pay particular attention to projects which include participants from different countries or where work will be carried out in another country due to the additional legal, cultural and ethical requirements and other guidelines that may apply.

3.5.2 In collaborative research, the University should work with partner organisations to ensure the agreement of, and compliance with, common standards and procedures for the conduct of that research, including the resolution of any issues or problems that might arise. A working agreement of roles and responsibilities should be established.

3.6 Conflicts of Interest

3.6.1 Researchers should recognise that conflicts of interest (i.e. personal or institutional considerations, including but not limited to financial matters) can inappropriately affect research. Conflicts of interest must be identified, declared and addressed in order to avoid poor practice in research or potential misconduct.

3.6.2 When addressing a conflict of interest, it must be decided whether it is of a type and severity that poses a risk of fatally compromising the validity or integrity of the research, in which case researchers should not proceed with the research, or whether it can be adequately addressed through declarations and/or special safeguards relating to the conduct and reporting of the research.

3.6.3 Researchers should agree to abide by any direction given by the University or any relevant ethics committee in relation to a conflict of interest.

3.7 Research Involving Human Participants, Human Material or Personal Data

3.7.1 Researchers should ensure that any research involving human participants, human material or personal data complies with all legal and ethical requirements and other applicable guidelines. Appropriate care should be taken when research projects involve: vulnerable groups, such as the very old, children, those who lack mental capacity, or those for whom English is not their first language; and covert studies or other forms of research which do not involve full disclosure to participants. The dignity, rights, safety and well-being of participants must be the primary consideration in any research study. Research should be initiated and continued only if the anticipated benefits justify the risks involved.

3.7.2 Researchers should ensure the confidentiality and security of: personal data relating to human participants in research; and human material involved in research projects.

- 3.7.3 Researchers should submit research projects involving human participants, human material or personal data for review by all relevant ethics and regulatory committees and abide by the outcome of those reviews.
- 3.7.4 Anyone working with, for, or under the auspices of, any of the UK Departments of Health and/or the National Health Service must adhere to all relevant guidelines, for example, the Department of Health's *Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care* and the National Research Ethics Service's *Guidance for Applicants*.
- 3.7.5 Researchers on projects involving human subjects must satisfy themselves that participants are enabled, by the provision of adequate information in an appropriate form through suitable procedures, to give informed consent, having particular regard to the needs and capacities of vulnerable groups, such as the very old, children and those who lack mental capacity.
- 3.7.6 Researchers should inform research participants that data gathered during the course of research may be disseminated not only in a report but also in different forms for academic or other subsequent publications and meetings, albeit not in an identifiable form, unless previously agreed to, and subject to limitations imposed by legislation or any applicable bodies, ethical, regulatory or otherwise.
- 3.7.7 Researchers who are members of a regulated profession must ensure that research involving human participants, human material or personal data complies with any standards set by the body regulating their profession.
- 3.7.8 Researchers have a duty to publish the findings of all clinical research involving human participants. In addition, it is government policy to promote public access to information about any research and research findings affecting health and social care, including the principle that trials should appear on public registers. In this context "trial" means all comparative studies of health interventions, not just ones conducted in a clinical setting.
- 3.7.9 If researchers consider that human participants in research are subject to unreasonable risk or harm, they must report their concerns to their supervisor or other appropriate person, and, where required, to the appropriate regulatory authority. Similarly, concerns relating to the improper and/or unlicensed use of human material, or the improper use or storage of personal data, should be reported to the Chair of the Ethics Committee that approved the study.

3.8 Health and Safety

- 3.8.1 All research should be conducted in an environment which is safe with respect to all researchers involved, the University and the environment. Risk assessments should be carried out for every new research procedure and should comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), the Safety Regulations approved under this act and the University's Health and Safety Policy. School safety procedures and handbooks will detail local safety rules which must be obeyed.
- 3.8.2 Advice on health and safety issues can be obtained from the University's Safety Manager or from the university safety web site:
http://extra.bucks.ac.uk/departments/estates_facilities-1/health_and_safety.aspx

3.9 Intellectual Property

- 3.9.1 Researchers should ensure that any contracts or agreements relating to research include provision for ownership and use of intellectual property. Intellectual property includes, but is not limited to: research data and other findings of research; ideas, processes, software, hardware, apparatus and equipment; substances and materials; and artistic and literary works, including academic and scientific publications.
- 3.9.2 Researchers should not give prior disclosure of research or the findings of research when this might invalidate any commercial property rights that could result. Researchers should recognise, however, that the presumption should be that any intellectual property discovered or

developed using public or charitable funds should be disseminated in order to have a beneficial effect on society at large. That presumption may be rebutted where there is an express restriction placed on any such dissemination. Any delay in publication and dissemination pending protection of intellectual property will be kept to a minimum.

- 3.9.3 Researchers should comply with any additional conditions relating to intellectual property required by funding bodies.
- 3.9.4 Researchers should try to anticipate any issues that might arise relating to intellectual property at the earliest opportunity and agree jointly in advance how they might be addressed, communicating any decisions to all members of the research team.
- 3.9.5 For further information on intellectual property please refer to the University document Intellectual Property – policy and procedures (<http://bucks.ac.uk/en?t=/documentManager/sfdoc.file.supply&fileID=1309446064192>)

3.10 Finance

- 3.10.1 Researchers should ensure that the terms and conditions of any grant or contract related to the research are adhered to.
- 3.10.2 Researchers should comply with organisational guidelines regarding the use and management of finances relating to research projects. They should co-operate with any monitoring and audit of finances relating to research projects and report any concerns or irregularities to the appropriate person(s) as soon as they become aware of them.

3.11 Collection and Retention of Data

- 3.11.1 Researchers should comply with all legal, ethical, funding body and organisational requirements for the collection, use and storage of data, especially personal data, where particular attention should be paid to the requirements of data protection legislation. Confidentiality should be maintained where undertakings have been made to third parties or to protect intellectual property rights. Research data relating to publications should be available for discussion with other researchers, subject to any existing agreements on confidentiality.
- 3.11.2 Data should be kept intact for any legally specified period and otherwise for three years at least (subject to discipline requirements, see below) subject to any legal, ethical or other requirements, from the end of the project. It should be kept in a form that would enable retrieval by a third party, subject to limitations imposed by legislation and general principles of confidentiality.
- 3.11.3 Researchers should comply with all subject-specific requirements for the retention of data; for example, certain disciplines, such as health and biomedicine, may require research data to be retained for a considerably longer period.
- 3.11.4 If research data is to be deleted or destroyed, either because its agreed period of retention has expired or for legal or ethical reasons, it should be done so in accordance with all legal, ethical, research funder and organisational requirements and with particular concern for confidentiality and security.
- 3.11.5 Researchers should consider how data will be gathered, analysed and managed, and how and in what form relevant data will eventually be made available to others, at an early stage of the design of the project.
- 3.11.6 Researchers should collect data accurately, efficiently and according to the agreed design of the research project, and ensure that it is stored in a secure and accessible form.

3.12 Monitoring and Audit

- 3.12.1 Researchers should ensure that research projects comply with any monitoring and audit requirements.

3.12.2 Research projects will be monitored and audited according to the Terms of Reference of the Research Ethics and Governance Committee to ensure that they are being carried out in accordance with good practice, legal and ethical requirements, and any other guidelines, adopting a risk-based and proportional approach.

3.12.3 Researchers should co-operate with the monitoring and audit of their research projects by applicable bodies and undertake such when required. They should co-operate with any outcomes of the monitoring and audit of their research projects.

3.13 Peer Review

3.13.1 Researchers should be aware that peer review is an important part of good practice in: the publication and dissemination of research and research findings; the assessment of applications for research grants; and in the ethics review of research projects.

3.13.2 Researchers who carry out peer review should do so to the highest standards of thoroughness and objectivity. They should follow the guidelines for peer review of any organisation for which they carry out such work.

3.13.3 Researchers should maintain confidentiality and not retain or copy any material under review without the express written permission of the organisation which requested the review. They should not make use of research designs or research findings from a paper under review without the express permission of the author(s) and should not allow others to do so. Researchers acting as peer reviewers must declare any relevant conflicts of interest.

3.13.4 While carrying out peer review, researchers may become aware of possible misconduct, such as plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, or have ethical concerns about the design or conduct of the research. In such cases they should inform, in confidence, an appropriate representative of the organisation which requested the review, such as the editor of the relevant journal or chair of the relevant grants or ethics committee.

3.14 Publication and Authorship

3.14.1 Researchers should accept their duty to publish and disseminate research in a manner that reports the research and all the findings of the research accurately and without selection that could be misleading.

3.14.2 Researchers should address issues relating to publication and authorship, especially the roles of all collaborators and contributors, at an early stage of the design of a project, recognising that, subject to legal and ethical requirements, roles and contributions may change during the time span of the research. Decisions on publication and authorship should be agreed jointly and communicated to all members of the research team.

3.14.3 Authorship should be restricted to those contributors and collaborators who have made a significant intellectual or practical contribution to the work. No person who fulfils the criteria for authorship should be excluded from the submitted work. Authorship should not be allocated to honorary or "guest" authors (i.e. those that do not fulfil criteria of authorship). Researchers should be aware that anyone listed as an author of any work should be prepared to take public responsibility for that work and ensure its accuracy, and be able to identify their contribution to it.

3.14.4 Researchers should list the work of all contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship in an acknowledgements section. All funders and sponsors of research should be clearly acknowledged and any competing interests listed.

3.14.5 Researchers must clearly acknowledge all sources used in their research and seek permission from any individuals if a significant amount of their work has been used in the publication.

3.14.6 Researchers must adhere to any conditions set by funding or other bodies regarding the publication of their research and its findings in open access repositories within a set period.

3.14.7 Researchers should declare any potential or actual conflicts of interest in relation to their research when reporting their findings at meetings or in publications.

3.14.8 Researchers should be aware that submitting research reports to more than one potential publisher at any given time (i.e. duplicate submission) or publishing findings in more than one publication without disclosure and appropriate acknowledgement of any previous publications (i.e. duplicate publication) is unacceptable.

3.15 Misconduct in Research

3.15.1 The University considers that misconduct in research is a serious matter. Equally, all investigations of misconduct in research should maintain the highest standards of integrity, accuracy and fairness. All proceedings should be conducted under the presumption of innocence and carried out with sensitivity and confidentiality. The University procedure for dealing with allegations of research misconduct is outlined in Appendix 1.

Prepared by:	Senior Registrar (Research)	Date:	11 Nov 2011
Final Approval by:	Research Ethics & Governance Committee		
Review Date:			
Updated on:			
Analysis of the effects on equality completed:	Ongoing		

Appendix 1: Procedure for handling allegations of research misconduct

Scope

This procedure applies to all members of the institution involved in research, including staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students. It also applies to those who are not members of the institution, but who are conducting research on the institution's premises or using the institution's research facilities.

Definition of Research Misconduct

Research misconduct includes the following, whether deliberate, reckless or negligent:

- a) failure to obtain appropriate permission to conduct research
- b) deception in relation to research proposals
- c) unethical behaviour in the conduct of research, for example in relation to research subjects
- d) unauthorised use of information which was acquired confidentially
- e) deviation from good research practice, where this results in unreasonable risk of harm to humans, other animals or the environment
- f) fabrication, falsification or corruption of research data
- g) distortion of research outcomes, by distortion or omission of data that do not fit expected results
- h) dishonest misinterpretation of results
- i) publication of data known or believed to be false or misleading
- j) plagiarism, or dishonest use of unacknowledged sources
- k) misquotation or misrepresentation of other authors
- l) inappropriate attribution of authorship
- m) fraud or other misuse of research funds or research equipment
- n) attempting, planning or conspiring to be involved in research misconduct
- o) inciting others to be involved in research misconduct
- p) collusion in or concealment of research misconduct by others

Fraud and other financial irregularities are dealt with under the University's 'Financial Regulations'. The University will investigate all allegations of research misconduct fully and expeditiously. It will also protect researchers from malicious, mischievous, or frivolous allegations.

Preliminary Action

All those to whom this code applies should report any incident of misconduct, whether witnessed or suspected. Members of staff and students are encouraged to raise concerns about suspected research misconduct in confidence with their Pro Vice Chancellor of Faculty or nominee. Those who raise concerns in good faith will not be penalised in any way for doing so - see the University's Policy on Public Interest Disclosure. Allegations should normally be made in writing, accompanied by any available supporting evidence.

Action may be taken in respect of staff suspected of research misconduct under the University's Disciplinary Procedure.

Action may be taken in respect of students suspected of research misconduct under 'Academic Offences' for allegations of academic cheating and plagiarism or the 'Code of Conduct' for other types of misconduct.