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# 1. Introduction

This guide supports the implementation of the [\*Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research\*](#) (the Code), which articulates the broad principles and responsibilities that underpin the responsible conduct of Australian research.

In particular, this guide is intended to assist institutions and researchers to adhere to relevant principles of the Code, including:

- Principle 1, 'Honesty in the development, undertaking and reporting of research', which requires that researchers 'Present information truthfully and accurately in proposing, conducting and reporting research'
- Principle 2, 'Rigour in the development, undertaking and reporting of research', which requires that research be characterised by attention to detail and robust methodology and that researchers avoid or acknowledge biases
- Principle 3, 'Transparency in declaring interests and reporting research methodology, data and findings', which requires researchers to 'Share and communicate research methodology, data and findings openly, responsibly and accurately' and 'Disclose and manage conflicts of interest'
- Principle 4, 'Fairness in the treatment of others', which requires that the work of others is appropriately referenced and cited
- Principle 6, 'Recognition of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people', which requires that researchers 'report to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the outcomes of research in which they have engaged'
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Consistent with international expectations that research outputs are openly available, institutions should support researchers to ensure their research outputs are openly accessible in an institutional or other online repository, or on a publisher's website.

Institutions should consider making media relations or communications officers available to researchers for the purpose of communicating research findings through all appropriate channels, including through the media. Institutions should ensure that these officers are aware of the principles and responsibilities in the Code relating to publication and dissemination, as well as those described in this guide.

When communicating about collaborative research, institutions should acknowledge partner institutions and sponsors.

### 3.3 Protect confidential and sensitive information and manage intellectual property

While research outputs should be made openly accessible, there are instances when publication may be restricted, delayed or limited by ethical or legal obligations, such as intellectual property arrangements, confidentiality obligations made to participants or restrictions on the publication of sensitive information. Further guidance on managing confidential and sensitive information is provided in [Management of data and information in research: a guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#).

Institutions should develop and maintain policies, consistent with the *National Principles of Intellectual Property Management for Publicly Funded Research* that protect the intellectual property rights of the institution, the researcher, research trainees, and research sponsors.<sup>1</sup>

Institutions should provide mechanisms to facilitate researchers' understanding, agreement and adherence to relevant contractual obligations and confidentiality agreements, including those that may restrict, delay or limit publication. Any agreement to restrict, delay or limit publication should not exceed the period needed to protect intellectual property and/or other relevant interests. Institutions should ensure that sponsors or other collaborators, including funders of research, do not delay or unreasonably withhold consent to publication.

### 3.4 Consider the potential application and consequences of publication and dissemination of research

The publication and dissemination of research can sometimes have unintended consequences for individuals and communities. Research, especially where reported in a preliminary, incomplete or summary form, may be liable to misinterpretation. Research may also be misused to cause harm to human, animal or plant health, the environment or national security.

Institutions should have policies and procedures that inform researchers of the need to consider the potential unintended consequences of research.

Institutions must have processes and guidance that assist researchers to identify and manage any potential misuse of the findings or outcomes of research, including processes to comply with legislation.<sup>2</sup>

***Under the Code, a principle of responsible research conduct is 'Accountability', which requires researchers and institutions to:***

***P7 Consider the consequences and outcomes of research prior to its communication.***

1 <https://www.arc.gov.au/policies-strategies/policy/national-principles-intellectual-property-management-publicly-funded-research>

2 Examples include the *Defence Trade Controls Act 2012* and the *Privacy Act 1988*.

### 3.5 Provide training for researchers

Institutions must provide ongoing training and education that promotes and supports responsible research conduct and assists all researchers, and those in other relevant roles, to follow institutional policies related to the publication and dissemination of research.

Training should include guidance and responsibilities on:

- disclosure of interests and management of conflicts of interest
- management of data and information, including secondary use of the data and information and general requirements related to privacy and confidentiality
- authorship, copyright and licensing standards
- publication ethics and standards, including how to recognise and avoid publication bias
- disclosure and sharing of findings and outcomes, including identification and management of their potential misuse
- compliance with export controls.

***Under the Code, institutions have responsibilities to:***

*R4 Provide ongoing training and education that promotes and supports responsible research conduct for all researchers and those in other relevant roles.*

*R5 Ensure supervisors of research trainees have the appropriate skills, qualifications and resources.*

## 4. Responsibilities of researchers

This section provides guidance on relevant obligations of researchers.

### 4.1 Disseminate research findings

Researchers have a responsibility to disseminate a fulsome account of their research. The account should include relevant negative results as well as findings that may be contrary to any stated hypothesis. Decisions about how research will be published or disseminated should not be inappropriately influenced by the nature and direction of results.<sup>3</sup> Researchers should also take into account limitations necessitated by patent applications, legitimate publication package and fee requirements and the increased costs of presenting findings to one's peers for critical input. Patents can also be a legitimate way in which to publish research results.<sup>4</sup>

***Under the Code, researchers have the responsibility to:***

*R23 Disseminate research findings responsibly, accurately and broadly. Where necessary, take action to correct the record in a timely manner.*

In fulfilling responsibilities related to accuracy and timeliness (see section 4.2), completeness and transparency (see section 4.6), researchers should be aware of questionable or

Where negotiating an agreement between researchers and research sponsors that requires delivery of the research findings intended for publication to the sponsors before they undergo a peer review process, researchers may need to alert sponsors to the principles and



Where appropriate, researchers should cite primary sources and data to ensure that credit for research is attributed fairly and to facilitate the easy location of the origin of a work, a finding, an idea, or research data.

Researchers may seek to publish the same research in more than one publication, such as in an original journal article, followed by publication in book form and/or in anthologies, collections and translations. An author who submits substantially similar work to more than one publisher, or who submits work similar to work already published, must disclose this at the time of submission. Disclosure must also be included in the work itself to prevent any such re-use having the effect of portraying previously presented ideas or data as new.

## 4.7 Protect confidential and sensitive information

Publication and dissemination activities must take account of any ethical or legal restrictions relating to intellectual property and the appropriate handling of confidential or other sensitive information (for further guidance, see section 3.2 of *Management of data and information in research: a guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*).

Researchers are accountable for their research and must consider the consequences and outcomes of research prior to its communication. Where research or its outputs could cause harm to human, animal or plant health or the environment, could harm national security, or are otherwise confidential or sensitive, researchers should seek advice from their institution before the dissemination of research or technical data. This may include dissemination via pre-publication activities, such as submitting an article to a journal for peer review.

***Under the Code, a principle of responsible research conduct is 'Accountability', which requires researchers and institutions to:***

*P7 Consider the consequences and outcomes of research prior to its communication.*

## 4.8 Communicate research broadly

Researchers should communicate their findings to the widest appropriate audience in forms that are accessible to that audience. This may include research end-users, such as governments, industry, not-for-profit organisations, consumers and the general public.

Researchers should engage with relevant communities, using appropriate communication channels to inform genuine public debate. They should also seek appropriate communication support from their institutions (see section 3.2 of this guide for the corresponding responsibilities of institutions).

***Under the Code, a principle of responsible research conduct is 'Transparency', which requires researchers and institutions to:***

*P3 Share and communicate research methodology, data and findings openly, responsibly and accurately.*

Where the research affects, or is of particular significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, the outcomes of the research must be presented in a format that is culturally appropriate and acceptable.

A number of publications exist to assist researchers on how to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.<sup>9</sup>

***Under the Code, researchers have the responsibility to:***

*R19 Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and respect their legal rights and local laws, customs and protocols.*

<sup>9</sup> Further guidance on engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities is outlined in *Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders* (NHMRC, 2018), *Keeping Research on Track II* (NHMRC, 2018) and *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies*



- public dissemination of research (e.g. via social media) that is yet to be tested in peer review without providing an appropriate caution or caveat
- failure to honour a restriction on publication or dissemination imposed by a sponsor, ethics or biosafety review body or other approval body (including an export control authority).

## Additional resources

- ARC Open Access Policy: <https://www.arc.gov.au/policies-strategies/policy/arc-open-access-policy>
- Australian Open Access Strategy Group: <https://aoasg.org.au/>
- Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE): <https://publicationethics.org>, including COPE Text Recycling Guidelines: <https://publicationethics.org/text-recycling-guidelines> and COPE guidelines about predatory journals: <https://publicationethics.org/predatory-publishing-discussion-document>
- Creative Commons Australia: <https://creativecommons.org.au/>
- Equator Network: <http://equator-network.org>
- National Principles of Intellectual Property Management for Publicly Funded Research: <https://www.arc.gov.au/policies-strategies/policy/national-principles-intellectual-property-management-publicly-funded-research>
- NHMRC Open Access Policy: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/resources/open-access-policy>
- PLOS: <https://www.plos.org/why-preprint>
- Preprints: [https://www.preprints.org/how\\_it\\_works](https://www.preprints.org/how_it_works)
- Think.Check.Submit: <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>

## Export control and sanctions

- Defence Export Controls: <http://www.defence.gov.au/ExportControls/> including Defence Export – Sector Specific Information: <http://www.defence.gov.au/ExportControls/Sector.asp>
- Australia and sanctions [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade]: <https://dfat.gov.au/international-relations/security/sanctions/Pages/sanctions.aspx>

## Biosafety

- Security Sensitive Biological Agents [Department of Health]: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ssba.htm>
- Institutional Biosafety Committees [Office of the Gene Technology Regulator]: <http://www.ogtr.gov.au/internet/ogtr/publishing.nsf/Content/ibc-1>

## Research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities

- Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders: <https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/ethical-conduct-research-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-and-communities>
- Keeping research on track II: <https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/keeping-research-track-ii>
- Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/guidelines-ethical-research-australian-indigenous-studies>

