



MACQUARIE
UNIVERSITY

SYDNEY ~ AUSTRALIA

Research Integrity Framework

September 2014

This document was developed by Macquarie University Research Ethics and Integrity in partnership with Australasian Human Research Ethics Consultancy Services (AHRECS)

Signed:

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Date:

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Research Integrity at Macquarie University

1. Introduction

The *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (The Australian Code)*¹ (2007) outlines principles and practices to encourage and underpin responsible research conduct. This NHMRC/ARC/UA document has two sections: *Part A* which describes the responsibilities and required policies to support responsible research and *Part B* which deals with breaches of the code and frameworks for resolving allegations. Compliance with *The Australian Code* is now a requirement of NHMRC/ARC funding.

The DVC(R) requested that the Director, Research Ethics and Integrity review Macquarie's compliance with *The Australian Code* in late 2013. The review found that Macquarie did not have all the requisite policies to be in compliance. After consultation with the Office of the General Counsel and the NHMRC, Macquarie University contracted Australasian Human Research Ethics Consultancy Services (AHRECS) to prepare a draft Research Integrity Framework, including policies and procedures to comply with both *Parts A & B* of *The Australian Code*. Concurrently, Macquarie University Research Ethics and Integrity benchmarked other Australian universities and international examples (e.g. U.S. Office of Research Integrity) to determine a best practice approach.

This document represents best practice in the sector and Professor Sakkie Pretorius, DVC(R), and the Research Integrity Framework Working Party² extend their gratitude to AHRECS for their exemplary work in framing and crafting the Research Integrity Framework.

The Macquarie University Research Integrity Framework includes the:

- Genesis and explanation of the Framework;
- Recommendations by AHRECS for implementing the Framework;
- The *Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*.

2. Macquarie University's Research Integrity Approach

The research integrity challenges that Macquarie University faces are not unusual and are encountered by many Australian universities. This project offers a good opportunity to address institutional risk in a timely and constructive manner.

An initial review of the University's existing arrangements suggests that in some important regards these arrangements do not comply with *The Australian Code*. Addressing this situation is best approached in terms of research culture – specifically:

- The approach to research integrity should be based upon resources and professional development rather than rules and forms
- Institutional goals should link research integrity with research development and system performance

The University's research integrity arrangements should offer a positive research experience, and therefore be:

¹ Available online at <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r39>

² Dr K White, Prof C Mackenzie, Prof N Mansfield, Ms AM Heinrich, Mr N Crowley, Dr B Pitcher

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- constructive in promoting good research
- effective and efficient in ensuring responsible conduct, in a way that is
- proportional to risks and sensitivities.

Disappointingly, many Australian universities have focused primarily upon risk management, bureaucratic systems and sanctions in order to compel researcher compliance with the national standards for research integrity.

AHRECS have argued such approaches can foster an adversarial culture – resistance, ill will and avoidance. Indeed, they are ultimately self-defeating because they tend to increase institutional risk by encouraging a research culture that regards research integrity with suspicion and the purview of central bureaucrats.

In light of the experience of other universities and the advice from AHRECS the proposed Research Integrity Framework aims to be facilitative of research, by providing researchers with resources and training, rather than focussing on rules and forms. This framework must be constructive, effective and importantly, proportional to risks. The framework should not be viewed as a box-ticking exercise of compliance, but rather underpinning and supporting a strong research culture. The Research Integrity Framework applies to all staff, students and visitors to the University who are involved in research. Parts of the framework will also be applicable to professional staff who support research, such as those who facilitate research funding with industry, government agencies and philanthropic sources.

3. Research Integrity Advisors

The Australian Code requires the University to appoint a network of Research Integrity Advisors (RIAs)

“to advise a staff member who is unsure about a research conduct issue and may be considering whether to make an allegation.”

Confining the role of RIAs to advising about potential research misconduct can appear to reflect a risk management focus. In AHRECs view, a wider role is more likely to express the facilitative approach that is recommended.

The University should appoint a network of RIAs with research experience, wisdom, analytical skills, empathy, knowledge of the institution’s policy and management structure, and familiarity with the accepted practices in research. They will be the primary contact point for people within their respective faculties, so that advice can be tailored to specific disciplines.

RIAs will advise and assist in the development of training materials and strategies tailored to each Faculty and School, and in the delivery of training in conjunction with Macquarie University Research Ethics and Integrity. RIAs will be asked to perform a small amount of record keeping, with the support of Research Ethics and Integrity, about the participation of staff and students in training and the details of any allegations. RIAs will receive training for their role from Macquarie University Research Ethics and Integrity.

RIAs can also advise about questionable research practices and the process of making an allegation of a potential breach of *The Macquarie Code* or research misconduct. However, the role of a RIA is separate to the any inquiry or review of potential research misconduct.

4. Training and Resources

A key element of a constructive implementation of the Australian Code is the centrally coordinated establishment of a suite of activities that build awareness and capacity building, that are discipline-relevant, can be tailored for specific audiences and are intended to present research integrity as a core component of quality research, not 'just' a central compliance issue. Possible different audience groups include:

- HDR candidates (at orientation and more detailed discussion later in their studies, e.g. at project confirmation)
- HDR supervisors (introductory sessions for new supervisors and 'master classes' for more experienced supervisors)
- Early career researchers
- Researchers new to the University
- More experienced researchers
- Postgraduate coursework and undergraduate students
- New research assistants and professional staff who will conduct research.

Professional development and training activities are most effective when focussed on the needs of a specific department or even methodological group (i.e. to a smaller audience using tailored material), a respected researcher is involved (e.g. the local Research Integrity Advisor introducing and closing the workshop and helping with the fielding of questions), and there is plenty of time for discussion and questions.

The University would be well served by investing in work in this area and by maintaining records about participation. Professional development and capacity building activities are not only a very valuable and sustainable way to resource reflective practice but can be a tangible demonstration of the practical adoption of *The Australian Code*.

Copies and links to all research integrity information and resources should be placed on a single and easily located web page. This page should also include contact details of Research Integrity Advisors and Research Integrity staff (e.g. The Director, Research Ethics and Integrity). Benchmarking against Group of Eight universities has shown that best practice is to have research integrity information accessible within two clicks from the university homepage. In addition to providing for the needs of the University's research community, such a web page allows external bodies (such as government bodies, research funding bodies and journalists) easy access to information about the University's implementation of *The Australian Code*.

5. About the Draft Code of Conduct

The draft *Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (The Macquarie Code)* is divided into two sections, Parts A & B, to reflect the distinction in *The Australian Code* between the principles and practices of responsible research conduct, and the process of resolving allegations of breaches or possible research misconduct.

On the advice of the NHMRC and AHRECS, the draft *Macquarie Code* has been benchmarked against the University of Melbourne, the University of New South Wales, University of Tasmania, The Australian National University and the University of Sydney, as well as best practice standards recommended by AHRECS. To ensure compatibility with existing University procedures the draft provisions and procedures outlined in Part B of *The Macquarie Code* have been developed in consultation with AHRECS, Macquarie University Human Resources, the Higher Degree Research

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Office and the Research Integrity Working Party. The Working Party has consulted widely within the University during the development of this framework and *The Macquarie Code*.

Once finalised, the Research Integrity Framework and the *Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* should be supported with procedures and resource documents developed in conjunction with the faculties which give practical guidance in each key area. These resources should be tailored to specific disciplines.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made by AHRECS and the Research Integrity Working Party. These recommendations represent practical strategies for the development and implementations of an effective and visible Research Integrity Framework. This list is an evolving document that will continue to be updated and added to as the project proceeds.

	Recommendation	Status	Draft Timeline	Responsibility
Development of the Research Integrity Framework				
1	That Macquarie University engages with Australasian Human Research Ethics Consultancy Services (AHRECS) to develop a best practice approach to research integrity.	<i>Done</i>	<i>Early 2014</i>	<i>Research Office</i>
2	That the University reviews existing policies to determine areas of need, and benchmarks against Australian universities and international examples to establish a best practice standard.	<i>Done</i>	<i>Early 2014</i>	<i>Research Office</i>
3	That the University establish a small Working Party to advise on the development and implementation of the Research Integrity Framework.	<i>Done</i>	<i>Early 2014</i>	<i>Research Office</i>
4	That the drafting of the Part B of <i>The Macquarie Code</i> be a collective task of the Research Office, Human Resources, Higher Degree Research Office and any other University organisational unit with relevant expertise, with every effort made to ensure the resulting policies interface seamlessly with existing arrangements, provide flexibility for the reviewing parties, are clear for complainants and respondents and are consistent with <i>The Australian Code</i> .	<i>Done</i>	<i>Mid 2014</i>	<i>Research Office</i>
5	That the University adopt a timely and transparent process for dealing with allegations of research misconduct, including clear guidelines for dealing with the media in an open manner.	<i>Done</i>	<i>Mid 2014</i>	<i>Research Office</i>
6	That the University develop procedures to accompany <i>The Macquarie Code</i> .	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Early 2015</i>	<i>Research Office</i>
7	That the University develops standardised recommendations for remedial actions that can	<i>Still to do</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>Research Office / Faculties</i>

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	be used by faculties when dealing with alleged breaches, in consultation with the faculties.			
Implementation				
8	That Macquarie University appoints a network of Research Integrity Advisors to support good research practice. The role of Research Integrity Advisor should be factored into workload models.	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Late 2014</i>	<i>Research Office / Faculties</i>
9	That Macquarie University develops a central database to maintain records of all allegations of breaches or research misconduct, and that appropriate statistics are reported to the DVC(R) from this database.	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Late 2014</i>	<i>Research Office</i>
10	That the University develops and maintains a register of conflicts of interest and associated procedures for making declarations, and make information from the register available when requested.	<i>In progress</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>Research Office / Risk and Compliance</i>
11	That the University produces and maintains a web page that contains research integrity information, resources and links. The web page should be easily visible on the University site and be of a best practice standard.	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Late 2014</i>	<i>Research Office / Web developers</i>
12	That the University maintains records of the professional development of staff and HDR candidates.	<i>Still to do</i>	<i>Late 2014</i>	<i>Research Office / HR / HDRO</i>
13	That Macquarie University consider appointing a professional staff member in the Ethics and Integrity team with a designated role in the coordination of the University's research integrity professional development and training, supporting Research Integrity Advisors, and record keeping.	<i>Still to do</i>	<i>By late 2014</i>	<i>Research Office / HDRO</i>
14	That the University complete the development and implementation of the Research Data and Materials Management Policy.	<i>Still to do</i>	<i>ASAP</i>	<i>TBD</i>
15	That any new policies or resources produced by the University (e.g. student handbooks), or revisions of existing material, cross-reference the Research Integrity Framework.	<i>Still to do</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>University wide</i>
Training and Professional Development				

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16	That Macquarie University develops clear and practical institutional resource material (e.g. information booklets) providing guidance on each of the areas of <i>The Macquarie Code</i> .	<i>In progress</i>	<i>2014-2015</i>	<i>Research Office</i>
17	That online research integrity material and training (e.g. Epigeum's Research Integrity Training module) is made available to HDR candidates and supervisors.	<i>Done</i>	<i>Mid 2014</i>	<i>Research Office / LTC</i>
18	That the University considers some form of accreditation in research integrity for HDR candidates and supervisors.	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Late 2014</i>	<i>Research Office / HDRO</i>
19	That the University engages AHRECS to provide initial training to Research Integrity Advisors and key staff.	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Mid 2014</i>	<i>Research Office / Faculties</i>
20	That research integrity is included in the induction activities for new research staff, including adjuncts and visiting researchers.	<i>Still to do</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>Research Office / HR</i>
21	That the University regularly holds research integrity workshops tailored to specific disciplines.	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>Research Office / Faculties</i>
22	That research integrity should be included as a component of research methodology focused units at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.	<i>Still to do</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>Research Office / Faculties</i>
23	That any research integrity professional development opportunities or requirements be incorporated into a wider University professional learning framework if or when one is established.	<i>Still to do</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>TBD</i>