



**University of Limerick**

**Research Integrity Policy**

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

The University is committed to ensuring that all research carried out under its auspices meets the highest standards of integrity, and that an environment of research integrity prevails through the promotion of good research practices, together with the use of fair, confidential, effective, and transparent procedures to address suspected, potential alleged and/or actual research misconduct.

Research integrity relates to the performance of research to the highest standards of professionalism and rigour, and to the accuracy and integrity of the research record in publications and elsewhere.

## 1.2 Scope

This policy upholds both the 'University of Limerick Code of Conduct for Employees', which applies to all employees of the University and the Code of Conduct as per Section 6 of the 'University of Limerick Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures', which applies to all persons studying at the University that are in place at the time.

This policy is aligned with the revised National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland (hereafter 'National Policy Statement'), which has been adopted by the Irish Universities Association and other stakeholders including the University of Limerick. This policy is aligned also with the revised European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.

### 1.2.1 To whom does the policy apply?

This policy applies to all current and former employees and students of the University, and to all current and former Adjunct, Emeritus, and visiting personnel officially engaged in research work at the University and/or undertaking any research activity in the University's name.

Events may occur where there is possible infringement of this policy by a person who is not an employee of the University and therefore not subject to the 'University of Limerick Code of Conduct'; such cases should be addressed by the respective employer. The University reserves the right to commence legal proceedings in such cases.

### 1.2.2 In what situations does the policy apply?

As stated in 1.2.1 above, this policy applies to all current and former employees and students of the University, and to all current and former Adjunct, Emeritus, and visiting personnel officially engaged in research work at the University and/or undertaking any research activity in the University's name.

### 1.2.3 Who is responsible for ensuring that the policy (and any associated procedure) is implemented and monitored?

The Research Integrity Officer (RIO) has overall responsibility for the management and oversight of the research integrity policy and procedures in the University, and also is responsible for the oversight of established investigation committees as cases of potential research misconduct are considered. Further details as to the RIO's responsibilities are described below.

## 1.3 Definitions

- 1.3.1 Principal Investigator. A Principal Investigator is an employee of the University who has primary responsibility for the design, implementation, completion and/or management of a research project. They are the budget holder on funded projects. Such employees may be working under the auspices of externally-funded research projects.
- 1.3.2. Supervisor. A Supervisor is an employee of the University who is assigned to a postgraduate research candidate at the time of their commencement of a postgraduate research project or during the course of the said research project. The supervisor has responsibilities relating to the postgraduate's academic and research activities as described in Section 5 of the 'University of Limerick's Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures' (Research Postgraduate Academic Regulations). Such supervisory responsibilities also apply to University personnel overseeing undergraduate final year projects (FYPs).
- 1.3.3 Researcher: The term researcher is used throughout this policy to refer to any or all of the above categories as appropriate.
- 1.3.4 Research Misconduct: Research misconduct is harmful for knowledge. The University will take action, in accordance with the University Procedure for Managing Misconduct in Research, to address instances of alleged research misconduct in order to protect the integrity of both research and the University. Research misconduct does not include honest error or honest differences in the design, execution, interpretation or judgement in evaluating research methods or results, or misconduct unrelated to the research process. Similarly, it does not include poor research per se unless this encompasses an intention to deceive.

## 2 Context

### 2.1 Legal and Regulatory Context

As stated in 1.2 above, this policy is aligned with the revised National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland (hereafter 'National Policy Statement'), which has been adopted by the Irish Universities Association and other stakeholders including the University of Limerick. This policy is aligned also with the revised European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.

## 3 Policy Statements

### 3.1 Principles of Research Integrity

The 'European Code' and the National Policy Statement specify four fundamental principles of research integrity which the University endorses. These principles guide researchers in performing their individual research, in dealings with research partners, and in dealings with the audience who receives their research reports. The principles are:

- **Honesty** in presenting research goals and intentions, in precise and nuanced reporting on research methods and procedures, and in conveying valid interpretations and justifiable claims with respect to possible applications of research results.

- **Reliability** in performing research (meticulous, careful and attentive to detail), and in communication of the results (fair and full and unbiased reporting).
- **Respect** for colleagues, research participants and subjects, be they human or animal, society, ecosystems, cultural heritage and the environment
- **Accountability** for the research from idea to publication, for its management and organisation, for training, supervision and mentoring, and for its wider impacts.

## 3.2 Good Research Practice

In addition to the principles of Research Integrity, the University is committed to the following activities in promoting and safeguarding a culture of research integrity and promoting good research practice:

3.2.1 Training, Supervision and Mentoring: Education and training is a proactive way to embed a culture of research integrity. Offering research integrity modules as part of undergraduate and postgraduate education is a useful means of laying the foundations for promoting integrity in research practice. The University will make available appropriate training courses to embed the principles and practices of research integrity across the University for Staff.

In this regard, the needs of new researchers are of paramount importance. Continuing education on research integrity should be provided through mentorship by senior investigators responsible for the supervision/training of PhDs and postdoctoral researchers alike.

3.2.2 Research Data and Management Practices: All research data and records should be stored in a secure and accessible form and managed in accordance with good data/record management practice across all stages of the research process as set out in the 'University's Records Management & Retention Policy' and the National Research Data Principles for Ireland .

Where Data Protection requirements apply to research data/records (e.g. the holding/processing of personal information), researchers must at all times be aware of the provisions of, and operate in accordance with the Data Protection legislation and the 'University of Limerick Data Protection Policy'. The primary responsibility for observing good practice in the use, storage and retention of data, resides with the individual researcher and should follow the principles outlined below:

- Researchers, research institutions and organisations acknowledge data as legitimate and citable products of research
- Research data should be organised in a manner that allows ready verification either paper or electronic format.
- Research data should be recorded in a clear and accurate format. Particular attention should be paid to the completeness, integrity and security of these records.

The National Research Data Principles for Ireland underline the importance of making research data "as open as possible, as restricted as necessary". Open access to research data should facilitate re-use of data for further research, contribute to public knowledge and inform policy and practice.

3.2.3 Publication and Dissemination: The University requires where possible, that research results are published in an appropriate form, usually as papers in peer-reviewed journals, books or book chapters with impactful publishers. Publication should occur in a timely fashion. Researchers should familiarise themselves with the University of Limerick Research Office Authorship and Publications for Research Guidance document, The National Policy Statement and the norms of their discipline. Researchers must adhere to these criteria whether they publish in a subscription journal, an open access journal or in any other alternative publication form.

3.2.4 Reviewing, Evaluating and Editing. This aspect of good practice involves:

- Researchers take seriously their commitment to the research community by participating in refereeing, reviewing and evaluation.
- Researchers review and evaluate submissions for publication, funding, appointment, promotion or reward in a transparent and justifiable manner.
- Reviewers or editors with a conflict of interest withdraw from involvement in decisions on publication, funding, appointment, promotion or reward; in all regards, the provisions of the University Conflict of Interest policy should be adhered to.
- Reviewers maintain confidentiality unless there is prior approval for disclosure.
- Reviewers and editors respect the rights of authors and applicants, and seek permission to make use of the ideas, data or interpretations presented. University policy in the area of Intellectual Property management should be adhered to here.

3.2.5 Working Collaboratively. All partners in research collaborations must take responsibility for the integrity of the research as evidenced by the following actions:

- All partners in research collaborations agree at the outset on the goals of the research and on the process for communicating their research as transparently and openly as possible.
- All partners formally agree at the start of their collaboration on expectations and standards concerning research integrity, on the laws and regulations that will apply, on protection of the intellectual property of collaborators, and on procedures for handling conflicts and possible cases of misconduct.
- All partners in research collaborations are properly informed and consulted about submissions for publication of the research results.

3.2.6 Ethical Research. Ethical Practice Research which seeks to involve human participants (including data collected on an anonymous basis), biological samples etc. (a full list of the types of research which require research ethics approval are set out in the 'University of Limerick Procedures for Research Ethics Approval') must have prior approval from the relevant Research Ethics Committee. Once approved, the research must be conducted in line with the conditions, if any, of such approval. In addition, researchers should ensure that research involving the holding/processing of any personal data should align with the good data management practices described in 3.2.2 above.

3.2.7 Conflict of Interest. The University is committed to the principle that the activities of its researchers should not give rise to situations in which its researchers have, or appear to have, conflicts of interest. In accordance with the University Conflict of Interest policy the primary obligation rests with the researcher to recognise situations in which he or she has an existing and/or potential conflict of interest, and to disclose and discuss that conflict with his/her Dean/Head of Department/Line Manager (or head of the Institute/Centre/Group).

## 4 Related Procedures for Research Integrity

- 4.1 In accordance with the National Policy Statement, the President of the University will appoint a **Research Integrity Officer (RIO)**. He/she acts as the University's first point of contact for receiving allegations of research misconduct, fulfils the functions outlined in the Procedure for Managing Misconduct in Research as well as other functions in accordance with the National Policy Statement.
- 4.2 The term of appointment of a RIO will typically be between 3 and 5 years and will not normally be held on a full time basis. The University may appoint a staff member to provide support to the RIO function, which may include day to day delegated management of the responsibilities outlined in the Procedure for Managing Misconduct in Research.

### Roles and responsibilities

Whilst there are university and line management responsibilities for adhering to policy and best practice, it is first and foremost the responsibility of all researchers to conduct themselves according to policy and best practice. Where students are undertaking research on behalf of the University of Limerick, their Principal Investigator/Supervisor have responsibility for ensuring students undertake appropriate training in research integrity.

- 4.3 Leadership and Cooperation. It is the responsibility of Heads of Departments/Schools to convey the standards and protocols for research in their Departments and to ensure a culture of research integrity is integral to the life of the unit. Together with Institute Directors, and Principal Investigators/Supervisors they ensure research teams and PGR students have the opportunity to attend relevant courses and complete such training as appropriate.

Across the University, it is the responsibility of the President, Deans of Faculties, Faculty Research Integrity Champions, Principal Investigators, the Professoriate, and Supervisors to ensure a climate of mutual cooperation is created which allows research to be conducted in accordance with good research practice.

The responsibility for leadership and coordination on Research Integrity also lies with the Institute/Centre leadership. Institute/Centre leaders must ensure that appropriate direction of research, and supervision and research integrity training of researchers and research students, is provided.

- 4.4 Research Integrity Officer. The Research Integrity Officer (RIO) has overall responsibility for the management and oversight of the research integrity policy and procedures in the University, and also is responsible for the oversight of established investigation committees as cases of potential research misconduct are considered. Further details as to the RIO's responsibilities are described below.
- 4.5 Research Governance Officer. The Research Governance Officer is responsible for the support and management of research integrity training and relevant RI committees; serving as committee secretary to meetings of the investigation committee; in providing advice and guidance to the investigation committee as required; and managing the overall investigation process.
- 4.6 Vice President Research and Enterprise/Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement. The RIO will consult with the respective vice presidents in deciding on the appropriate composition of investigation committees once the RIO has established, following a preliminary inquiry on foot of a complaint received, that a sufficient basis exists for a full investigation in respect of research integrity under this policy.

4.7 Investigation Committee Chair. Once the RIO has established, following a preliminary inquiry, that sufficient basis exists for a full investigation to be initiated, the RIO and relevant University Vice President will appoint an investigation committee. The role and responsibilities of the Chair are described in the University Procedure for Managing Misconduct in Research.

## 5 Related Documents

- Authorship and Publications for Research Guidance Document
- Code of Conduct for Employees
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Freedom of Information procedures
- Guidelines on Insurance Cover for Research
- Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures
- Procedures for Research Ethics Approval
- Records Management and Retention Policy
- Risk Management Policy

## Relevant External Sources

- National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland
- European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity

## 6 Document Control

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