

**Policy Title: Responsible Research Conduct**

**Policy Owner: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)**

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**1. INTENT**

- 1.1 The joint NHMRC/ARC/Universities Australia *Australian code for the responsible conduct of research* (Australian Government, 2007) (“the Code”) is used by universities as the standard for the responsible conduct of research in Australia. It requires all institutions receiving funding from the ARC or the NHMRC to support the maintenance of high standards of research conduct consistent with the Code.
- 1.2 The conduct of research at Edith Cowan University (ECU) will be characterised by high ethical standards and a commitment to quality, integrity and originality of research practice, underpinned by a respect for the truth and for those involved in the research process.
- 1.3 Good governance and administration of research practice at ECU will enhance the reputation of the institution and its researchers, minimise the risk of harm for all involved, and ensure high standards and quality in research are maintained throughout the organisation.

**2. ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE**

This policy applies to all staff, affiliated researchers and students involved in research and research-related activities at ECU.

**3. DEFINITIONS**

TERM	DEFINITION
“ARC” means	the Australian Research Council.
“NHMRC” means	the National Health and Medical Research Council.
“Research” means	the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so

as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it leads to new and creative outcomes.

#### **4. POLICY CONTENT**

- 4.1 It is a basic assumption of the University that staff and students are committed to the University's values of integrity, respect, rational inquiry and personal excellence. Researchers have a duty to ensure high standards of professional conduct and the integrity of their work, and that their research enhances the good name of the University and the profession to which they belong.
- 4.2 Researchers should only participate in work that conforms to accepted ethical standards and which they are competent to perform. When in doubt they should seek assistance with their research and research supervision from their colleagues or peers. Debate on, peer review of, discussion about, and criticism of research work in a collegial manner are essential parts of the research process.
- 4.3 Researchers have an obligation to achieve and maintain the highest standards of intellectual honesty in the conduct of their research. They must be aware of and demonstrate: adherence to ethical principles of justice and veracity; respect for people, their privacy and avoidance of harm to them; and respect for non-human participants in research.
- 4.4 Research must comply with established legislation, codes of conduct and guidelines that apply to their activities.
- 4.5 The University and its researchers have a responsibility to conduct appropriate planning to ensure the safety of all those associated with the research by adopting and conforming to the following principles of good research practice:
  - i. proactive implementation of a research ethos among the ECU community;
  - ii. processes, methods and results which are open to scrutiny and debate;
  - iii. quality and originality;
  - iv. peer review of publications;
  - v. acceptance of ethical guidelines;
  - vi. observance of confidentiality;
  - vii. safe work practices and environment; and
  - viii. secure storage of research data.
- 4.6 Where research procedures are of a kind requiring approval by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee or Animal Ethics Committee, or by another safety or validly-constituted regulatory committee, research must not proceed without such approval. The University's Office of Research and Innovation will not release research funds until such approval has been obtained. Similarly, Schools will not release funding to support research conducted by postgraduate students before formal approval of a research proposal and ethics clearance has been granted by a responsible committee.

- 4.7 The University's system of research governance assigns roles, responsibilities and accountabilities to all those who play a part in research activity. These include (but are not limited to) the following:
- (a) University Committees
    - i. The *Research and Higher Degrees Committee (RHDC)* is responsible for providing recommendations to Academic Board on policies and procedures relating to research within the University; developing and reviewing the University's Research and Research Training Functional Plan; and promoting and monitoring the quality of research and research training within the University.
    - ii. The *Research Students and Scholarships Committee (RSSC)*, a subcommittee of the Research and Higher Degrees Committee, is responsible for the awarding of scholarships and grants to higher degree by research students, and the implementation of procedures that foster high quality research training.
    - iii. The role of the *Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)* is to ensure the ethical conduct of research involving humans by staff and students within the University and to provide assistance to staff and students in the consideration of ethical issues involved in research. The HREC has responsibility for ethics clearance of research proposals submitted by staff and research students and other student projects deemed to be high risk research, and ensuring compliance with the NHMRC *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*.
    - iv. The role of the *Animal Ethics Committee (AEC)* is to ensure the humane care of animals used for scientific purposes, including teaching, by staff and students within the University and to provide assistance to staff and students in the consideration of ethical issues involved in research. The AEC ensures compliance with the NHMRC *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (2004)*, and the *Animal Welfare Act (2002)*.
  - (b) University administrative offices and centres
    - i. The *Office of Research and Innovation (ORI)* provides assistance to staff on research matters, particularly in preparing applications for grants and scholarships, funding opportunities for researchers, contractual matters, intellectual property and the commercialisation of research. The Office is responsible for gathering and managing research data, administering key research funding schemes and the benchmarking of research outputs.
    - ii. The *Graduate Research School* is responsible for administrative and procedural matters relating to higher degree by research candidature, including enrolment, progress and examination and the allocation of postgraduate research scholarships.
    - iii. The *Research Ethics Office* within ORI is involved in a number of activities including providing information, support and guidance to staff and students regarding research ethics; providing administrative support for the Animal Ethics

Committee and the Human Research Ethics Committee; conducting a preliminary review of applications and providing feedback to applicants prior to submission of the application for ethics approval; ensuring that all approved research projects are effectively monitored; developing, implementing, reviewing and updating policies and procedures relating to research ethics; ensuring that the Committees and the University are compliant with relevant State and Federal legislation relating to the ethical conduct of research; and reporting to the University Academic Board, the National Health and Medical Research Council, and other relevant organisations.

- iv. A variety of *research groups, centres and institutes* provide a focus for research activity within Schools, and play an important role in fostering collaborative research and promoting a research culture within the University.
- 4.8 The University's research policy framework establishes a system of governance that promotes high standards of research and the responsible conduct of research practice that is consistent with the Code, covering the following areas of research activity:
- i. the conduct of research;
  - ii. research supervision;
  - iii. governance, finance and administration;
  - iv. induction and professional development; and
  - v. misconduct
- 4.9 All staff and students of the University are required to be aware of the provisions of the Code, relevant University policies, and the responsibilities that have been assigned to them, to act accordingly and to seek advice from senior researchers when clarification is required.

## **5. ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

In relation to this policy, the following positions are responsible for the following

### *Policy Owner*

The Policy Owner, being the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), has overall responsibility for the content of this policy and its operation in ECU.

### *Staff and students involved in research and research-related activities*

Staff and students involved in research and research-related activities are required to comply with the content of this policy and to seek guidance in the event of uncertainty as to its application.

## **6. RELATED DOCUMENTS:**

- 6.1 Other documents which are relevant to the operation of this policy are as follows:

- [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (jointly issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Australian Research Council and Universities Australia), Australian Government, 2007.

## 7. CONTACT INFORMATION

For queries relating to this document please contact:

Policy Owner	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
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## 8. APPROVAL HISTORY

Policy approved by:	Vice-Chancellor
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