Researcher code of practice

# 1 INTRODUCTION

While the University expects its employees and staff to comply with this Code, it does not confer contractual rights or form part of any contract of employment and may be amended by the University or replaced at any time following appropriate consultation and negotiation with recognised trade unions. Any breach of this code will be addressed in accordance with the [Research Misconduct Policy](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/research-misconduct-policy.pdf) and the University’s [Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](https://mynorthamptonac.sharepoint.com/sites/staff/Downloads/disciplinary-policy-and-procedure.docx).

This Code will be reviewed by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee on an annual basis or amended in response to changes in the scholarly landscape, future legislation and/or case law.

# 2 OWNERSHIP

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee owns and manages this Code on behalf of The University of Northampton.

# ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE

* 1. The aim of this Code is to ensure the University of Northampton recognises and supports research to the highest standards of academic rigour, to increase the quality of, and trust in, research outputs while adhering to the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/field/downloads/2021-08/Updated%20FINAL-the-concordat-to-support-research-integrity.pdf). The Concordat sets out a framework for good research conduct and its governance in the UK; it is pertinent to all research disciplines and places emphasis on the responsibilities and accountabilities of all research stakeholders.
	2. The Concordat to Support Research Integrity defines research as ‘a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared... It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction’. (Universities UK, 2019, p.18).
	3. This Code of Practice applies to all members of the University including staff and students and those who are not members of the University but who are conducting research on university premises or using University facilities or funding for their research. This includes staff, students, independent contractors, consultants, visiting or emeritus staff, staff on joint clinical or honorary contracts and those conducting research on behalf of the University overseas. This is irrespective of the source/s of their funding, their area of research, their experience as researchers, whether they are lone scholars or members of a research team or where the research is conducted.
	4. The Code sets clear standards for researchers and outlines the responsibilities of those involved. The aim is to set standards that enhance research quality, integrity, compliance and safeguard the public in line with the requirements of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.
	5. This University promotes the use of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) [UKRIO Recommended Checklist for Researchers](https://ukrio.org/wp-content/uploads/UKRIO-Recommended-Checklist-for-Researchers.pdf) for providing practical guidance for researchers and research organisations.

**4**  **PRINCIPLES**

4.1 In accordance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, the University is committed to six high-level principles for good research practice:

* upholding the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research;
* ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards;
* supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice, and support for the development of researchers.
* using transparent, timely, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.
* working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to review progress regularly and openly.
* committing to ensuring our research is as open as possible and as closed as necessary in line with the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reproduceable).

4.2 Researchers are expected to strive for excellence when conducting their research and should aim to design, conduct, produce and disseminate work of the highest quality and ethical standards. This includes:

* **Honesty and accountability** – researchers must be honest in respect of their own actions and the actions of others. This applies to the whole range of research activities including but not limited to:
* Applying for funding;
* Presentation of research goals;
* Reporting on research methods and procedures;
* Experimental and protocol design;
* Gathering, generating, recording, analysing and interpreting data;
* Publishing and exploiting results;
* Acknowledging the direct and indirect contributions of colleagues, collaborators and others; and
* Reporting cases of suspected misconduct in a responsible and appropriate manner.
* **Openness and transparency** – researchers must be open when conducting and communicating their research, subject to the terms and conditions of any research contracts, the protection of intellectual property (IP) and commercial exploitation and the University’s IP policy. This includes but is not limited to:
* The disclosure of any conflicts of interest
* The reporting of research data collection methods
* The analysis and interpretation of data
* Research findings and the underlying dataset(s) to be made available if possible (free of licensing restrictions and confidentiality agreements): Disseminating research in a way that will have the widest impact and
* Promoting public engagement/involvement in research.
* **Rigour** – researchers should be thorough and meticulous in conducting their research in line with disciplinary norms and standards. Care must be taken:
* To use the appropriate methods
* To adhere to an agreed protocol (where appropriate)
* When drawing interpretations and conclusions from the research; and
* When communicating the results.
* **Safety** – all research should be conducted in a manner which is safe for researchers, participants and the environment. Researchers must comply with the University’s [UON Health and Safety Policy](https://askus.northampton.ac.uk/healthandsafety/faq/269541) and undertake any required risk assessment. All researchers and research activities should comply with the University’s Safeguarding policy.
* **Safeguarding -** Researchers who come into contact with children and vulnerable adults during their research have a safeguarding responsibility for these people and they must follow the University's [Safeguarding and Prevent Policy.](https://searchtundra.northampton.ac.uk/getfile.ashx?DocId=2232527586990403793&tag=d17ab4ab-5378-48aa-a43b-6dea74db4474) Research should also familiarise themselves with the local safeguarding policies and procedures associated with the research.
* **Ethical Responsibility** – all researchers should have respect for all participants in, and subjects of, research including humans, animals, the environment, and cultural objects. The University expects all researchers to consider the ethical implications of their research and to be aware of their responsibilities to society, the environment, their profession, the University, research participants, and the organisation(s) funding the research in accordance with the University of Northampton's [Research Ethics Codes and Procedures](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/uon-research-ethics-code-and-procedures-may-2022.pdf). Research must not begin until ethics approval, where required, has been received from the University Research Ethics Committee.
* **Responsible Research and Innovation** – Researchers should observe the guidelines for Responsible Research Innovation to ensure research is conducted to the highest quality. RRI is defined as “doing research in a way that anticipates how it might affect people and the environment in the future so that we can gain the most benefit and avoid harm” (RAi, 2024, para.1). Some of the primary areas to consider in terms of RRI are outlined by AERA (Anticipate, Reflect, Engage, Act) with further information available through the [RAi](https://rai.ac.uk/toolkits/rri-toolkit/) and [UKRI](https://www.ukri.org/manage-your-award/good-research-resource-hub/responsible-innovation/).
* **EDI –** Researchers should be designed to promote diverse and inclusive practice, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to participate and be. Furthermore, information on the University of Northampton commitment to EDI can be found in our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-policy-2020.pdf).
* **Responsible Management** – Established researchers are responsible for nurturing researchers of the future, fostering a constructive and supportive environment without undue pressure and ensuring that appropriate supervision, mentoring and training are provided.
* **Regulatory Compliance –** Researchers are expected to make themselves aware of, and comply with, any legislation or regulations that govern their research. This may include but is not limited to:
* [The Data Protection Act](https://www.gov.uk/data-protection#:~:text=The%20Data%20Protection%20Act%202018%20is%20the%20UK's%20implementation%20of,used%20fairly%2C%20lawfully%20and%20transparently) (2018)
* [UON Data Protection Policy](https://searchtundra.northampton.ac.uk/?tag=0c9972a4-c1b1-4624-be60-adee95211cca)
* [The Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations 2004](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1031/contents/made)
* [UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research](https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/policies-standards-legislation/uk-policy-framework-health-social-care-research/)
* [Human Tissue Act 2004](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/30/contents)
* [UON Health and Safety Policies](https://askus.northampton.ac.uk/healthandsafety/faq/269541)
* [UON IT Acceptable Use Policy](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/acceptable-use-policy.pdf)
* [The Bribery Act 2010](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bribery-act-2010-guidance)
* [The Equality Act 2010](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)
* The Modern Slavery Act 2015
* [The National Security and Investment (NSI) Act 2021](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-security-and-investment-act)
* [National Security Act 2023](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-national-security-bill)
* **Professional Standards** – Researchers should observe the standards of practice set out in guidelines published by the professional societies, funding agencies and other relevant bodies, where appropriate and available. They must ensure they have the necessary skills and training to conduct the research.
* **Research Misconduct** – Researchers should be aware of the seriousness of research misconduct. Staff and students at the University have an obligation to report suspected research misconduct in accordance with the [UON Research Misconduct Policy](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/research-misconduct-policy.pdf).
* **Trusted Research and safe partnerships** – Researchers should comply with all applicable laws and regulations in carrying out the partnership activities and take reasonable account of the principles of [Trusted Research and Innovation](https://www.ukri.org/manage-your-award/good-research-resource-hub/trusted-research-and-innovation/) and the guidance issued by the [Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI)](https://www.npsa.gov.uk/). Researchers should also be aware of the requirements stated in [The National Security and Investment (NSI) Act 2021](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-security-and-investment-act) and [UK Strategic Export Control Lists](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-strategic-export-controls).

# 5 COMPLIANCE AND POLICIES

All staff and students should be familiar with the University’s policies and procedures that govern the research process.

In addition, the University expects researchers to observe the standards of practice set out in any relevant legislation and the guidelines published by funders and relevant professional bodies. The receipt of funding from external agencies requires the University to confirm compliance with their terms and conditions; it is therefore essential that all researchers are aware of their responsibility to observe these standards during their work.

Researchers should ensure that collaborators are also made aware of their obligations where relevant to the project.

# 6 KEY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR GOOD RESEARCH PRACTICE

**Responsibilities of Researchers**: All individuals involved in research are expected to be aware of an adhere to UON’s research policies, including [UON Publications Policy](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/publications-policy-2023.pdf) and [Research Data Management Policy.](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/research-data-management-policy.pdf)

All individuals also have a responsibility to ensure they are familiar and compliant with funders’ policies, and they meet the expected standards of rigour and integrity relevant to their research. Postgraduate researchers must comply with the [PGR Code of Practice](https://searchtundra.northampton.ac.uk/?tag=b48a59ed-07f6-4e56-ae93-6506c404405b) which details the roles and responsibilities of postgraduate researchers, their supervisors, and the Institution.

6.2 The [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](https://researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk/)

emphasises that researchers should take a proactive role in their own personal development. Researchers must ensure that they undertake appropriate training to enable them to meet these requirements, taking advantage of the range of training and development opportunities provided across the University. Postgraduate researchers are required to attend workshops in core skills, including research integrity training and data management training as directed by the Graduate School and outlined in the [Framework for Postgraduate Researcher Professional Development.](https://searchtundra.northampton.ac.uk/getfile.ashx?DocId=2232527586860506781&tag=b48a59ed-07f6-4e56-ae93-6506c404405b)

6.3 **Responsibilities of a Principal Investigator/Supervisors:** Overall accountability for good research practice within a research area lies with the lead academic or Principal Investigator (PI) or research student’s supervisor. These individuals should create a research environment of mutual co-operation, in which all members of a research area are encouraged to develop their skills and supported to reflect best practice in relation to ethical, legal and professional requirements.

Researchers/Supervisors/Directors of Studies should ensure that every member of their research group is aware of all relevant University and their funder policies and provide people in their charge with opportunities to undertake relevant training. The [PGR Code of Practice](https://searchtundra.northampton.ac.uk/?tag=b48a59ed-07f6-4e56-ae93-6506c404405b) details the roles and responsibilities of students and supervisors as well as those of the graduate school. New supervisors must complete the course before supervising students.

6.4 **Responsibilities of Senior Staff:**  The Dean of Research and Knowledge Exchange is responsible for the overall management of research and enabling an environment which allows research to be conducted in accordance with good research practice. It is the responsibility of senior management in their respective areas to ensure that this environment is maintained.

**Research Integrity Group** are responsible for the Research Integrity Action Plan, promotion and monitoring of research integrity (including research culture) and co-ordinating with other areas of the University governance structure.

**7** **MANAGEMENT OF DATASETS**

7.1Research data management (RDM) refers to the organisation, storage and preservation of data created throughout a research project.

Research data processed by staff and students at UON will be managed to a high standard throughout the research data lifecycle as part of the University’s commitment to research excellence. The University of Northampton, in line with [United Kingdom Research & Innovation](https://www.ukri.org/) (UKRI) expects research data to be made as open as possible and as restricted as necessary. Good research data management practices should be followed throughout the research process.

7.2. Research data is any digital or analogue information that is collected, observed, created or reused to produce, validate and enrich research findings and conclusions. For different disciplines this may include raw data captured from instruments or collection systems, derived data, documents, spreadsheets and databases, research notebooks, visualisations, models, software, images, measurements, and numbers.

7.3. Researchers must ensure that they are compliant with the Universities [Research Data Management Policy](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/research-data-management-policy.pdf) in addition to any requirements by funders. All published research outputs must contain a data availability statement. Research data should be as “open as possible” and as closed as necessary. This should be considered at the initial research project stage and included as part of the research data management plan that is required for ethical approval to undertake research. Datasets should always have an adequate description detailing what the data is, and how it was collected.

7.4. Costs associated with research data management (e.g., long term storage, data cleansing) can be included in grant application costings. Researchers should ensure that sufficient time and funding is in place to meet data requirements prior to publication of outputs.

7.5. Researchers are required to keep clear and accurate records of the procedures/methods followed and of the results obtained, including interim results. This enriches the dataset and is necessary in case questions are subsequently asked about the conduct of the research or the results obtained and ensures compliance with most funders.

7.6. At the beginning of any collaborative research project, it is important to identify data ownership and the person/s responsible for the management of all research data.

**8** **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

It is the responsibility of researchers to identify and declare any conflicts of interest, whether of a legal, ethical, moral, financial, personal, or other nature. UON’s [Conflict of Interest Policy](https://mynorthamptonac.sharepoint.com/sites/staff/Downloads/conflicts-of-interest-policy-and-procedure.pdf) provides detailed guidance on this matter.

**9**  **SUSTAINABILITY**

All staff and students involved in research should consider the wider environmental impact of their activities and recognise the need for responsible resource consumption that supports a circular economy, the protection of the natural environment and the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. UON’s [Environment and Sustainability Policy](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/environment-and-sustainability-policy.pdf) should be referred to for guidance.

# 10 PROCEDURE

10.1 The University Research Integrity Action Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure all policies and systems are appropriate and comply with the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/field/downloads/2021-08/Updated%20FINAL-the-concordat-to-support-research-integrity.pdf) and any future requirements/best practice for research.

10.2 The University will produce a short Annual Statement on Research Integrity which is approved by the University governors and made publicly available through the University website. This Annual Statement will give:

* a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and the application of research integrity issues (for example postgraduate and researcher training, or process reviews)
* a statement to provide assurance that the processes the institution has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, timely, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation.
* a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, which will include data on the number of investigations. If no formal investigation has been undertaken, this should also be noted.
* a statement on what the institution has learned from any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, including what lessons have been learned to prevent the same type of incident re-occurring.
* a statement on how the institution creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct.

# 11 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

11.1 UoN Policies:

* [Research Ethics Codes and Procedures](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/uon-research-ethics-code-and-procedures.docx)
* [Research Misconduct Policy](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/research-misconduct-policy.pdf)
* [Research Data Management Policy](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/research-data-management-policy.pdf)
* [Publications Policy](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/publications-policy-2023.pdf)
* [Responsible Metrics Policy](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/university-of-northampton-responsible-metrics-policy.pdf)
* [Intellectual Property Policy](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/intellectual-property-policy-2021.pdf)
* [Whistleblowing Policy](https://mynorthamptonac.sharepoint.com/sites/staff/Downloads/whistleblowing-policy-and-procedure.pdf)
* [Data Protection Policy](https://searchtundra.northampton.ac.uk/?tag=0c9972a4-c1b1-4624-be60-adee95211cca)
* [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](https://searchtundra.northampton.ac.uk/getfile.ashx?DocId=17596992317919&tag=ef82666e-9b06-45c6-a2bd-87ca17c0f5fd)
* [Environment Policy](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/environment-and-sustainability-policy.pdf)
* [Guidance on trusted research](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/research/research-support/research-integrity-ethics-and-governance/trusted-research/)
* Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy
* Responsible Metrics Policy
* Environment & Sustainability Policy
* Intellectual Property Policy
* Academic Integrity Policy
* Data Protection and GDPR Policy
* Code of Practice
* Records Management Policy and Procedures.
* IT Acceptable Use Policy
* Responsible Metrics Policy
* Conflicts of interest Policy
* Working Off Premises Policy and Procedure

# 10 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

 An Equality Impact Assessment accompanies this document.

# 11 VERSION CONTROL

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