An introduction to the responsible conduct of research

The University provides information and resources about different aspects of the responsible conduct of research. Some of these are specific to certain research disciplines, others are generic to all research.

Specific topics:
- Clinical Trials and Research Governance: researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/ctrg
- Collaborative Research: researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/integrity/collaboration
- Conflict of interest: researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/integrity/conflict
- Human participants in research: researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics
- Intellectual property: researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/innovation/ip
- Plagiarism: www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic-guidance/skills/plagiarism
- Publication and authorship: researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/integrity/publication
- Research data and records management: researchdata.ox.ac.uk
- Research involving animals: www.ox.ac.uk/news-and-events/animal-research/animal-welfare

External resources
- UK Research Integrity Office: www.ukri.org
- The UK Research Integrity Office is an independent body which provides expert advice and guidance about the conduct of research. Covering all subject areas, it offers support in research integrity to the research community, including to individual researchers.
- US Office of Research Integrity: ori.hhs.gov/education/products
- The US Office of Research Integrity’s Educational Resources webpage provides free access to a range of materials and online training.

“...The scientific enterprise is built on a foundation of trust. Society trusts that scientific research results are an honest and accurate reflection of a researcher’s work. Researchers equally trust that their colleagues have gathered data carefully, have used appropriate analytic and statistical techniques, have reported their results accurately, and have treated the work of other researchers with respect.”

On Being a Scientist: A Guide to Responsible Conduct in Research (2009), Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy
The terms ‘research integrity’ or the responsible conduct of research are used by institutions to refer to a wide range of areas of research compliance, professional conduct and personal responsibility.

For the University as an institution, research integrity is a commitment to creating an environment that promotes responsible conduct by embracing standards of excellence, trustworthiness and lawfulness.

Creating a climate that promotes research integrity requires awareness, openness and communication with regard to competing concerns and interests of various members of the research team, the research community and society as a whole. This takes time and effort, but everyone benefits in the long run.\(^1\)


For individual researchers, research integrity entails a commitment to a range of practices including but not limited to:

- intellectual honesty in proposing, performing, and reporting research;
- accuracy in representing contributions to research proposals and reports;
- fairness in peer review;
- collegiality in scientific interactions, including communications and sharing of resources;
- transparency in conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest;
- protection of human participants in the conduct of research;
- humane care of animals in the conduct of research;
- adherence to the mutual responsibilities between investigators and their research teams\(^1\)

\(^1\) Description of research integrity is adapted from the US National Academies report Integrity in Scientific Research: Creating an Environment That Promotes Responsible Conduct/Grant

Concerns about the Conduct of Research

There are no universally correct ways to do research. There are, however, standards of practice which apply generally.

Researchers should:
- be aware of the legislation, codes of practice and University policies relevant to their field;
- have the necessary skills and training for their field;
- be aware of the publication rules for the journals they want to publish in;
- ask if they feel something isn’t quite right;
- not ignore problems;
- be accountable to the University and their peers for the conduct of their research.

All researchers are expected to be committed to ethical principles and professional standards. Not upholding such standards, either intentionally or through lack of knowledge, damages the scientific process and may harm research participants, colleagues, the University and society as a whole. Misconduct or poor practice in research should therefore be challenged.

Sources of advice and support include:
- Fellows and students;
- Supervisors;
- Mentors;
- Senior Tutors;
- Directors of Graduate Studies;
- Heads of Department;
- Research Services;
- UK Research Integrity Office

For further information on the University’s Academic Integrity in Research policies see:\n
- www.ox.ac.uk/academic-integrity-to-research

University Resources for Researchers

Research integrity website
researchsupport@admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/integrity

This provides information about University policy and guidance in the core areas of the responsible conduct of research, with links to other useful information and resources.

Research integrity online training
researchsupport@admin.ox.ac.uk/support/training/ethics

This provides an introduction to good practice in research, including advice on how to meet the key responsibilities of being a researcher.

Further information about skills training for researchers is available from www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/personal-and-professional-development

Research integrity checklist
researchsupport@admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/integrity/checklist

A resource designed to assist research students and supervisors to discuss and reflect on what research integrity and good practice in research means to them, the University and the wider community.

Research Services
researchsupport@admin.ox.ac.uk

Research Services promotes the responsible conduct of research and compliance with regulatory and sponsor requirements through specialist information and advice on aspects of research integrity, including policy development, guidance on clinical trials and governance and advice on intellectual property.

Email: research.services@admin.ox.ac.uk