

Conflict of Interest Standards (interim)

1. Introduction

The *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (Australian Code)* was substantially revised in 2018 and the *Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (Macquarie Research Code)* subsequently amended and issued in July 2019.

The *Macquarie Research Code* articulates broad principles and responsibilities which underpin the responsible conduct of research across varied research contexts and disciplines. It is in place to ensure that research being undertaken under the auspices of Macquarie University is conducted with the highest standards of ethics, responsibility and integrity.

The detail provided in the former *Australian Code* and *Macquarie Research Code* about how the principles and responsibilities should be applied to specific elements or stages of the research process (in this case, to Conflict of Interest) is being refined and clarified. This detail will be included in accompanying guides being written by the Australian Research Council (ARC), National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and Universities Australia. Until each guide is issued and the associated policies and guidance at Macquarie University are adjusted, researchers are expected to refer to the relevant chapter of the former *Macquarie Research Code* (reproduced in section 4).

The *Macquarie University Research Code Complaints, Breaches and Investigation Procedure* describes how deviations from the principles and responsibilities outlined in the *Macquarie Research Code* (including failing to meet these standards) must be reported, assessed, investigated and managed.

2. Purpose

These standards supplement the *Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (Macquarie Research Code)* and outline the expected conduct of researchers related to conflict of interest.

3. Scope

- a. These standards apply to anyone who conducts research or research support under the auspices of Macquarie University, as per the *Macquarie Research Code*.
- b. While these standards establish the regular expectations for all Macquarie researchers, additional requirements may be imposed on those involved with external/overseas institutions, external funding bodies or publishers, external collaborators, or where required by local legislation, for example in the case of HDR Candidates subject to cotutelle or joint PhD agreements or researchers with a conjoint appointment.
- c. Researchers may consult with a Research Integrity Advisor (RIA) at any time for advice in relation to the implementation of these standards.

3. Chapter 13. Conflict of Interest

Duplicated from the first edition of the *Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, Part A: Principles and Practices to Encourage Responsible Research Conduct*

1. A conflict of interest exists where there is a divergence between the individual interests of a person and their professional responsibilities such that an independent observer might reasonably conclude that the professional actions of that person are unduly influenced by their own interests. Research related conflicts of interest may apply to researchers and those who facilitate research funding with industry, philanthropic sources and government agencies.
2. Conflicts of interest in the research area are common and it is important that they are disclosed and dealt with properly. An individual researcher should therefore expect to be conflicted from time to time, and be ready to acknowledge the conflict and make disclosures as appropriate.
3. Examples of possible conflicts of interest in research include, but are not limited to, situations:
 - a. where the research is sponsored by a related body;
 - b. where the researcher or a related body may benefit, directly or indirectly, from any inappropriate dissemination of research results (including any delay in or restriction upon publication of such results);
 - c. where the researcher or a related body may benefit, directly or indirectly, from the use of University resources;
 - d. where the researcher conducts a clinical trial which is sponsored by any person or organisation with a significant interest in the results of the trial.
 - e. where private benefits or significant personal or professional advantage are dependent on research outcomes.

Note: A related body is any person or body with which the researcher has an affiliation or a financial involvement.

A financial involvement includes a direct or indirect financial interest, provision of benefits (such as travel and accommodation) and provision of materials or facilities.

An indirect financial interest is a financial interest or benefit derived by the researcher's relatives, personal or business associates, or students.

4. It is important to recognise that actual, perceived or potential opportunities to give preference to personal interests may routinely arise from competing obligations and can be other than financial.
5. The responsibility for managing a conflict of interest rests, in the first instance, with the individual. Researchers and those who facilitate research and research funding should assess their own situation to ascertain if a conflict of interest exists whether actual, perceived or potential.

6. All staff and students must make a full disclosure of a conflict of interest or of circumstances that might give rise to an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest as soon as reasonably practicable.
7. For the conduct of clinical trials, full disclosure must include the nature of the sponsorship and the relationships between the sponsor, trial participants and the clinical investigator.
8. Researchers have an obligation to disclose, at the point of proposing research (for example, in a grant application), any conflict of interest which has the potential to influence research and investigations, publication and media reports, grant applications, applications for appointment and promotion, or research commercialisation.
9. When a project requires ethical review, disclosure must also be made to the relevant ethics committee.
10. In the case of human research, disclosure may also need to be made to potential participants (and possibly any gatekeeper that controls access to that population). This should be determined by the relevant Human Research Ethics Committee.
11. In situations where a research project involves collaborating researchers, disclosure should be made to the other team members.
12. When publishing/reporting the results of a project, a disclosure should be included in the output and must at least be made to the relevant editor/publisher, and perhaps within the output itself.
13. Researchers must not make, or attempt to make, unlawful profits from their participation in, or knowledge of, research conducted at Macquarie University and must comply with Macquarie University's [Staff Code of Conduct](#) and/or [Student Code of Conduct](#), whichever is applicable to the researcher.
14. Staff must comply with all provisions in the relevant Enterprise Agreement in relation to outside work (see the [Academic Staff Agreement](#) and/or the [Professional Staff Agreement](#)).
15. When deciding whether to accept sponsored research or contract research funding on behalf of the University, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) may seek information regarding disclosure and management of any conflict of interest that may result.

4. Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
ARC	Australian Research Council
Australian Code	<i>Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018</i>
Australian Guide	<i>Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research</i>
Macquarie Research Code	<i>Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research</i>

Abbreviation	Definition
Macquarie Research Code Procedure	<i>Macquarie University Research Code Complaints, Breaches and Investigation Procedure</i>
RIA	Research Integrity Advisor: A member of Macquarie University staff who has been nominated by the DVC(R) to promote the responsible conduct of research and provide advice to those with concerns or complaints about potential breaches of the <i>Macquarie Research Code</i> . Research Integrity Advisors are people with research experience, wisdom, analytical skills, empathy, knowledge of the University's policy and management structure, and familiarity with the accepted practices in research.

5. Key related documents

5.1 Macquarie University policies and standards

- a. Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research
- b. Macquarie University Research Code Complaints, Breaches and Investigation Procedure
- c. Authorship Standards
- d. Collaborative Research Standards
- e. Conflict of Interest Policy (and Standards)
- f. Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy
- g. Peer Review Standards
- h. Publication and Dissemination Standards
- i. Research Data Management Standards
- j. Supervision of Students Undertaking Research

5.2 External documents

- a. Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018
- b. Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes
- c. Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research
- d. Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies
- e. National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research

6. Commencement and amendment history

6.1	Contact Officer	Research Integrity Office
6.2	Implementation Officer	Director, Research Ethics and Integrity
6.3	Approval Authority / Authorities	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
6.4	Date of Commencement	July 2019 – Interim standards under review
6.5	Documents Superseded by this document	This document presents chapter 14 of the former <i>Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2014</i> and will be updated following the release of the Guide on Conflict of Interest expected to be issued by NHMC, ARC and Universities Australia)