

Policy on Good Research Practice & Procedure

1. Introduction

The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) expects the highest standards of integrity to be adhered to by all researchers employed within the UHI. These guidelines provide standards of good practice which are required to be adopted by staff throughout UHI and UHI's Academic Partners and Associate Institutions, and are intended to satisfy the requirements of all funding authorities.

Good research practice as described in these guidelines will be promoted and promulgated throughout UHI at executive and senior staff levels. The guidelines and their compliance throughout UHI will be reviewed annually by the UHI Research Committee. The aim of the guidelines is to emphasise good research practice, integrity and rigour in research, and to create a culture in which the following general points will be understood and observed:

- Integrity in research
- Openness in research
- Role of Professional Bodies
- Leadership and supervision in research
- Ownership of research
- Ethical Practice in research
- Publication practice

2. Integrity in Research

Researchers must be honest in respect to their own actions in research and in their responses to the actions of other researchers. This applies to all research work, including, for example, experimental design, generating and analysing data, applying for funding, publishing results and acknowledging the direct and indirect contributions of colleagues, collaborators and others. Plagiarism, deception or the fabrication or falsification of results will be regarded as research misconduct and will be treated as gross misconduct under the terms of UHI's or UHI's Academic Partners' disciplinary policies. Members of staff are encouraged to report cases of suspected misconduct to a senior member of staff as appropriate and to do so in a responsible and appropriate manner.

Researchers are required to declare any real or potential conflicts of interest in their research work and to seek assistance, if required, from their direct supervisor in the most effective way of managing any such conflict.

3. Openness in Research

While recognising the need for researchers to protect their own research interests, UHI encourages all researchers to be as open as possible in discussing their work with others and with the public. Once results have been published, UHI expects researchers to make available relevant data and materials to other researchers on

request, provided that this is consistent with any ethical approvals and consents which cover the data and materials and any intellectual property rights.

UHI recognises that publication of the results of research may need to be delayed for a reasonable period pending protection of intellectual property arising from the research. However, any such period of delay in publication should be kept to a minimum.

These guidelines are based on the Wellcome Trust's Guidelines for Good Research Practice¹.

4. Role of Professional Bodies

Where available, UHI expects researchers to observe the standards of research practice set out in guidelines published by scientific and learned societies, and other professional bodies.

With specific regard to medical research, researchers shall take steps to observe NHS research practice guidelines as outlined in the Scottish Executive Health Department's Research Governance Framework (2006)². All researchers should take the necessary steps to ensure they familiarise themselves with the professional requirements that regulate their work.

5. Leadership and Supervision in Research

Senior colleagues will ensure that a research climate of mutual co-operation exists in which all members of a research team or an individual are encouraged to develop their skills and in which the open exchange of ideas is fostered. UHI and UHI's Academic Partners will ensure that appropriate direction of research and supervision of researchers is provided through Heads of School/Heads of Department/Research Group Leaders. Training in supervisory skills will be provided where appropriate.

Postgraduate students undertaking research will receive training in UHI's guidelines at their induction and throughout their programme of study.

6. Ownership of Research

At the outset of a research programme all researchers should be clear on ownership of, where relevant:

- data and samples used or created in the course of the research
- the results of the research

Research staff are required to seek guidance from their immediate supervisor if clarity is needed on any aspect of such ownership.

All researchers must keep clear and accurate records of the procedures followed and approvals granted during the research process, including records of the interim results obtained as well as of the final research outcomes. This is necessary not only as a means of demonstrating proper research practices, but also in case questions are subsequently asked about either the conduct of the research or the results obtained.

¹ available at http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/doc_wtd002757.html

² available at <http://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/cso/Publications/ResGov/Framework/RGFEdTwo.pdf>

Data generated in the course of research must be kept securely in paper or electronic format as appropriate, and in accordance with good practice in the storage of primary data, record-keeping and ethical issues. Back-up records should always be kept for data stored on a computer.

7. Ethical Practice in Research

Research involving human participants

Approval from the Research Ethics Committee is required for all research involving human participants or biological samples.

Approval from other regulatory bodies such as the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority or the Gene Therapy Advisory Committee in the UK should also be sought where necessary.

Research involving animals

Research involving animals must have the appropriate approval through the Committee on Biological Services Units and may require Home Office licences for the institution, the investigator and the project. Researchers must consider, at an early stage in the design of any research involving animals, the opportunities for reduction, replacement and refinement of animal involvement.

Research involving oral data collection

Research involving the collection, preservation and use of sound and video oral material must conform to UHI's Code of Research Practice.

8. Publication practice

Results of research should be published in an appropriate form consistent with the academic discipline. Anyone listed as an author on a paper should accept responsibility for ensuring that s/he is familiar with the contents of the paper and can identify his/her contribution to it.

The practice of honorary authorship is unacceptable.

The contribution of formal collaborators and all others who directly assist or indirectly support the research must be properly acknowledged.