

Peer Review Procedure

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Purpose

This Procedure describes the requirements for peer review of research and how staff conduct peer review at the University consistent with the principles and responsibilities of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018* (the Code).

Applicable governance instruments

Instrument	Section	Principles
<i>Research Policy</i>	2 Responsible conduct of research	2.1 – 2.2
	4 Research data and outputs	4.1-4.3
<i>Compliance Policy</i>	2 Conflict of Interest	2.1 – 2.2
<i>Behaviour Policy</i>	1 Behaviour	1.5
<i>Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018</i>		
<i>Peer Review: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of the Responsible Conduct of Research</i>		

Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The University recognises the importance of peer review and is committed to encouraging and supporting researchers to participate in the process to provide accurate, thorough and credible reporting of research.
- 1.2. The University is responsible for ensuring that its researchers are maintaining high standards of peer review practices in assessment of research and that their engagement in the process complies with the Code. The relevant principles of the Code are:
 - a) Principle 3: Transparency in declaring interests and reporting research methodology, data and findings.
 - b) Principle 4: Fairness in the treatment of others.
- 1.3. The University has defined [peer review standards](#) for different research output types. Only research outputs that meet these standards will be considered reportable for the purpose of institutional performance reporting.
- 1.4. This procedure applies to all university employees, students, adjuncts, clinical title holders, associate title holders, visiting fellows and scholars and the University's controlled entities and partnerships involved in the conduct of research under the auspices of the University (**University Researchers**). This procedure does not apply to undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students.

2. Peer review

- 2.1. Peer review in research is the impartial and independent assessment of research by others working in the same or a related field, and includes:
 - a) the assessment of research proposals and grant applications
 - b) the assessment of research ethics applications
 - c) the assessment and selection of material for publication and dissemination
 - d) the assessment of the research of Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidates
 - e) the assessment of research quality, engagement, and impact by government bodies
 - f) other reviews or assessments of research conducted by individual researchers, teams, academic units, and institutions.

3. Participate in peer review

- 3.1. University Researchers will:
 - a) undertake a peer review process prior to submission of:
 - i. research outputs, where required by the University, Academic Unit or agreements with third parties, or
 - ii. applications for research ethics approval, and funding, in accordance with the *Management of Research Funding Procedure* and *Research Ethics Procedure*.
 - b) be aware of their obligations under various grant funding agreements to undertake peer review when requested by the funding agency (for example, NHMRC, ARC).
- 3.2. University Researchers whose work is undergoing peer review will not seek to influence the process or outcomes.

- 3.3. University Researchers will not agree to be a peer reviewer in circumstances where they cannot provide a fair and impartial review. For further guidance see the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) [Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers](#).

4. Conduct of peer review

4.1. Peer reviewers will:

- a) be fair, rigorous, and timely in their review
- b) know the criteria to be applied in the peer review process
- c) review research objectively, impartially, and in accordance with the relevant review criteria
- d) apply peer review standards equally to all research under review
- e) give proper consideration to research that challenges or changes accepted ways of thinking, which may include innovative, interdisciplinary, or collaborative research
- f) maintain professionalism in the tone of their comments, ensuring that peer reviews are constructive and not of a personal nature
- g) engage in peer review appropriately and respectfully, in accordance with the University *Behaviour Policy*
- h) disclose interests and manage conflicts of interest in accordance with University requirements and the requirements of external bodies such as publishers and funding agencies, and
- i) adhere to any peer review policies, guidelines, and expectations of funding agencies and publishers.

4.2. Peer reviewers will not:

- a) contact the author/s or other reviewers unless authorised to do so
- b) seek to unduly influence the review process
- c) delegate their responsibilities or ask others to assist with a review, unless authorised to do so
- d) take into account factors irrelevant to the review criteria
- e) permit personal or other forms of prejudice to influence the process (peer reviewers should be aware of how their own conscious or unconscious biases could affect the peer review process, including in relation to gender, ethnicity, nationality, institutional employer, and research discipline)
- f) take advantage of knowledge obtained during the peer review process, or use information from research projects under review without permission
- g) conduct a review for which they lack appropriate expertise
- h) intentionally delay the review process
- i) use the peer review process to disparage other researchers, or
- j) suggest the inclusion of a citation to their own or others research, where this is not particularly necessary or appropriate.

5. Confidentiality

- 5.1. Peer reviewers must adhere to the confidentiality requirements of all bodies using peer review including publishers, funding agencies, and other universities. In most circumstances, peer reviewers are required to maintain the confidentiality of the peer review process and must not disclose the content of any material under review or the outcome of any review process. Peer reviewers may be

required to sign non-disclosure agreements, for example where the content contains sensitive material.

6. Mentoring research trainees

6.1. Research mentors and supervisors have a responsibility to assist research trainees under their supervision to:

- a) develop the necessary skills to conduct peer review responsibly,
- b) support them to engage in peer review opportunities as and when they arise, and
- c) understand their obligation to participate in peer review in accordance with the Code and this Procedure.

7. Engage in relevant training

7.1. University Researchers should engage in relevant training about peer review processes and should seek out other relevant training opportunities when they perceive a knowledge gap.

8. Peer review and breaches of the Code

8.1. Breaches of the Code that are related to peer review include, but are not limited to:

- a) failing to conduct peer review responsibly and fairly
- b) taking advantage of knowledge obtained through peer review processes
- c) disclosing the content or outcome of peer review processes
- d) failing to disclose relevant interests.

8.2. Peer review may also identify departures from the principles in the Code in the research under review, including plagiarism, duplicative publication, errors and misleading statements. Peer reviewers have a duty to promptly report such concerns to the relevant organisation (for example, the journal or publisher).

8.3. Peer reviewers should familiarise themselves with the processes involved in reporting potential breaches of the Code identified during the peer review process to external bodies such as publishers and funding agencies.

8.4. Where the potential breach relates to University researchers, peer reviewers will follow the University's *Research Integrity Complaints Procedure*.

Related procedures

Conflicts of Interest and Gifts and Benefits Declarations Procedure

HDR Examinations Procedure

Research Integrity Complaints Procedure

Research Ethics Procedure

Management of Research Funding Procedure

Versions

Version	Action	Approved by	Business Owner/s	Approval Date
Version 1	Approved	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	Executive Director Research	22 June 2021
Version 2	Approved	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	Executive Director, Research Operations	20 June 2022
Version 3	Approved	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	Executive Director, Research Operations	30 June 2023
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Definitions

N/A