



Macquarie University Peer Review Standard

1. General

1.1 Preamble

- a. This standard supplements the *Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (Macquarie Research Code)* and outlines the expected standards of peer review of research. It closely follows “Peer Review – A guide supporting the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*” (National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and Universities Australia, 2019).
- b. Peer review is the impartial and independent assessment of research by others with appropriate expertise. It has several important roles in research and research management, including:
 - i. assessment of research proposals, research outputs and grant applications
 - ii. review and selection of material for publication and dissemination
 - iii. evaluation of the research conducted by researchers, research teams, academic units and institutions.
- c. Peer review provides expert scrutiny of research and helps to maintain high standards in research, including ensuring that accepted disciplinary standards are met. It encourages accurate, thorough and credible research reporting.
- d. Peer review may also draw attention to potential deviations (Breaches) from the principles in the *Macquarie Research Code*, for example by identifying plagiarism, duplicative publications, errors and misleading statements. Peer review has been important in the detection of fabrication and fraud in research.

2. Purpose of the procedure

This standard assists researchers to understand and apply the principles of the *Macquarie Research Code* to their conduct, management or participation in peer review, in order to ensure the integrity and quality of the peer review process.

3. Scope

- a. This standard applies to anyone who conducts research or research support under the auspices of Macquarie University, as per the *Macquarie Research Code*.
- b. While this document outlines the standard expectations for all Macquarie researchers, additional requirements may be imposed on those involved with external or overseas

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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. Peer reviewers must also be aware that each agency from whom they receive funding or for whom they conduct reviews is likely to have its own peer review policy to which they must adhere.

- c. Researchers may consult with a Research Integrity Advisor (RIA) at any time for advice in relation to the implementation of this standard.

4. Definitions

The following definitions have been adapted and modified from the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (2018) and from “Peer Review – A guide supporting the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*” (National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and Universities Australia, 2019).

Term	Definition
Breach	A failure to meet the principles and responsibilities of the <i>Macquarie Research Code</i> (including failing to meet the standards accompanying the <i>Macquarie Research Code</i>). Breaches occur on a spectrum from minor to more serious breaches. A serious breach of the <i>Macquarie Research Code</i> which is also intentional or reckless or negligent constitutes research misconduct.
Conflict of interest	A conflict of interest refers to circumstances in which someone’s personal interests may conflict with their professional obligations. A conflict of interest exists when a reasonable person might perceive that an individual’s personal interest(s) could be favoured over their professional obligations.
Macquarie Research Code	<i>Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research</i>
Macquarie Research Code Procedure	The <i>Macquarie University Research Code Complaints, Breaches and Investigation Procedure</i> outlines the process for managing complaints, concerns or allegations regarding the conduct of research and describes how potential or actual departures from the principles and responsibilities outlined in the <i>Macquarie Research Code</i> , should be reported, assessed, investigated, and managed.
Peer review	Peer review is the impartial and independent assessment of research by others with appropriate expertise.
Research	The concept of research is broad and includes the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative.
Researcher	Any person (or persons) who conducts, or assists with the conduct of, research under the auspices of Macquarie University which may include staff members (academic and professional), visiting students, visiting fellows, volunteers, honorary and adjunct title holders, Emerita/us Professors, occupational trainees, and any student in any course at the University who conducts or assists with the conduct of research at or on behalf of the University.

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Research Integrity Advisor (RIA)	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 (RIAs) 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.
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5. Responsibilities of researchers

5.1 Participate in peer review

- a. All researchers should recognise the importance of participating in peer review processes and embrace the opportunity to participate.
- b. Researchers in receipt of public funding have a responsibility, and in some cases a requirement, to participate in peer review.
- c. Macquarie University encourages researchers to participate in peer review to provide public credibility in the reporting of research.

5.2 Conduct peer review responsibly

- a. Researchers participating in peer review ('peer reviewers') must do so in a way that is fair, rigorous and timely, and maintains the confidentiality of research content during the peer review process.
- b. Peer reviewers must:
 - i. ensure that they are informed about and comply with the criteria to be applied in the peer review process
 - ii. review research objectively and impartially with respect to the review criteria
 - iii. apply standards equally to all research under review
 - iv. give proper consideration to research that challenges or changes accepted ways of thinking, which may include innovative, interdisciplinary or collaborative research
 - v. disclose interests and manage perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest
 - vi. avoid introducing considerations or taking into account factors that are not relevant to the review criteria
 - vii. be aware of how personal biases could affect the peer review process, including in relation to gender, ethnicity, nationality, institutional employer and research discipline and ensure that personal prejudice does not influence the process
 - viii. only agree to review research which is within the scope of their skills or expertise

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- ix. maintain professionalism in the tone of their comments, ensuring that peer reviews are as constructive as possible
- x. gain appropriate authorisation if they wish to contact the author(s) or other reviewers, delegate their peer review responsibility, or ask others to assist with the review.

If a peer reviewer becomes aware of a potential breach of the *Macquarie Research Code* during a peer review exercise it must be reported in a timely manner in accordance with the *Macquarie Research Code* (or if it involves external parties, be reported to the relevant national or international external institution commissioning the peer review).

5.3 Respect confidentiality

- a. 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 in which they are involved.
- b. Peer reviewers must ensure that they adhere to the confidentiality requirements of all bodies including universities, publishers and funding agencies in relation to the conduct of peer review.
- c. Peer reviewers must not take undue or calculated advantage of knowledge obtained during the peer review process or use information from research projects under review without permission.

5.4 Disclose interests and manage conflicts of interest

Peer reviewers must appropriately disclose interests (including perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest) and abide by any policies and procedures established to manage conflicts of interest.

5.5 Avoid interference in the peer review process

Researchers whose work is undergoing peer review must not seek to influence the process or outcomes.

5.6 Mentor trainees in peer review

Research mentors and supervisors have a responsibility to assist research trainees, including but not limited to Higher Degree Research candidates and early career researchers, in developing the necessary skills for peer review and in understanding both their obligation to participate in peer review and the required standards.

5.7 Engage in relevant training

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

6. Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
ARC	Australian Research Council
DVC(R)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
RIA	Research Integrity Advisor

7. Key related documents

7.1 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 Standard
- d. Collaborative Research Standard
- e. Conflict of Interest Policy
- f. Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy
- g. Publication and Dissemination Standard
- h. Research Data Management Standard
- i. Research Supervision Standard

7.2 External documents

- a. Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018
- b. Peer Review – A guide supporting the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and Universities Australia, 2019)
- c. NHMRC Research Integrity Fact Sheet Two (“Concerns about research integrity arising during NHMRC peer review”)
- d. Guide to NHMRC Peer Review and ARC Peer Review (web pages)
- e. The International Congress on Peer Review and Scientific Publication (<https://peerreviewcongress.org/index.html>)
- f. COPE Council, Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers, September 2017 (www.publicationethics.org)
- g. Global Research Council, Statement of Principles on Peer/Merit Review 2018 (https://www.globalresearchcouncil.org/fileadmin/documents/GRC_Publications/Statement_of_Principles_on_Peer-Merit_Review_2018.pdf)

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8. Commencement and amendment history

8.1	Contact Officer	Research Integrity Office	
8.2	Implementation Officer	Director, Research Ethics and Integrity	
8.3	Approval Authority / Authorities	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	
8.4	Date Approved	30 October 2020	
8.5	Date of Commencement	November 2020	
8.6	Documents Superseded	Peer Review Standards_interim 2019 07 25	
8.7	Amendment History		
Version	Approved by	Effective date	Sections modified
1.0	Professor Sakkie Pretorius, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	November 2020	This is a new Standard.

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