Research Peer Review Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This Policy provides researchers with direction on the application of the principles of the [Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) to their conduct, management or participation in peer review, to ensure the integrity and quality of the peer review process.

Background

(2) This Policy supports the [Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (Macquarie Research Code) and outlines the expected standards of peer review of research. The Policy aligns with "[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).

(3) 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.

(4) 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.

Scope

(5) This Policy applies to anyone who conducts Research or Research support under the auspices of Macquarie University (the University), per the Macquarie Research Code.

(6) 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:

  a. assessment of Research proposals, Research outputs and grant applications;
  b. review and selection of material for publication and dissemination; and
  c. evaluation of the Research conducted by Researchers, research teams, academic units and institutions.

(7) While this document outlines the standard expectations for all Macquarie University Researchers, additional requirements may be imposed on those involved with external or overseas institutions, external funding bodies or publishers, external collaborators, or where required by local legislation, for example in the case of Graduate Research students 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 peer review is likely to have its own peer review policy to which they must also adhere.

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

Section 2 - Policy

Responsibilities of Researchers

Participate in peer review

(9) All Researchers should recognise the importance of participating in peer review processes and embrace the opportunity to participate.

(10) Researchers in receipt of public funding have a responsibility, and in some cases a requirement, to participate in peer review.

(11) The University encourages Researchers to participate in peer review to provide public credibility in the reporting of Research.

Conduct peer review responsibly

(12) 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.

(13) Peer reviewers must:

    a. ensure that they are informed about and comply with the criteria to be applied in the peer review process;

    b. review Research objectively and impartially with respect to the review criteria;

    c. apply standards equally to all Research under review;

    d. give proper consideration to Research that challenges or changes accepted ways of thinking, which may include innovative, interdisciplinary or collaborative Research;

    e. disclose interests and manage perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest;

    f. avoid introducing considerations or taking into account factors that are not relevant to the review criteria;

    g. be aware of how personal biases could affect the peer review process, including, but not limited to, biases in relation to gender, ethnicity, nationality, institutional employer and Research discipline and ensure that personal prejudice does not influence the process;

    h. only agree to review Research which is within the scope of their skills or expertise (or declare any limitations to their capacity for review);

    i. maintain professionalism in the tone of their comments, ensuring that peer reviews are as constructive as possible; and

    j. 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.

(14) Peer reviewers wishing to utilise Generative AI to supplement their own judgement and analysis of quality in a peer review activity, can do so, provided such use:

    a. is not prohibited by those commissioning the peer review;

    b. does not jeopardise confidentiality obligations;

    c. is implemented responsibly following the Macquarie University Research Code and the [Using Generative AI in Research Guidance Note](#); and

    d. is disclosed to those commissioning the peer review.

(15) 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 University Research Code](#)

[Complaints, Breaches and Investigation Procedure](#) (or if it involves external parties, should be reported to the relevant external institution commissioning the Peer Review).

Respect confidentiality

(16) Peer reviewers are required to maintain the confidentiality of the peer review process and must not inappropriately disclose the content of any material under review or the outcome of any review process in which they are involved. One exception to this is when participating in an Open Peer Review process.

(17) 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.

(18) 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.

Disclose interests and manage conflicts of interest

(19) Peer reviewers must appropriately disclose interests (including perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest) and abide by the Conflict of Interest Policy and other relevant policies and procedures.

(20) Researchers asked to nominate potential reviewers for their own work must declare any Conflict of Interest with those nominated, where possible.

Avoid interference in the peer review process

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

(22) Researchers asked to nominate potential reviewers for their own work must only nominate those that are qualified to perform the review.

Mentor trainees in peer review

(23) Research mentors and supervisors have a responsibility to assist Research trainees, including but not limited to Graduate research students and early career Researchers, to develop the necessary skills for peer review and in understanding both their obligation to participate in peer review and the required skills and standards.

Engage in relevant training

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

Establishing peer review criteria

(25) Those responsible for establishing peer review criteria and processes, for example but not limited to during editorial roles or for the purpose of grant assessment, should ensure:

    a. fairness and transparency across all stages;
    b. appropriateness and balance of experience, expertise and representation of peer reviewers; and
    c. a best practice approach to the incorporation of peer review and the establishment of peer review criteria as a component of Research evaluation.

Section 3 - Procedures

(26) Nil.

Section 4 - Guidelines

(27) Nil.

Section 5 - Definitions

(28) The following definitions apply for the purpose of this Policy. They 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).

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.

b. Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI) is subset of Deep Learning and a wide-ranging term that refers to any form of artificial intelligence capable of generating new content, such as text, images, video, audio or code (New South Wales Government's Generative AI: Basic Guidance).

c. Macquarie Research Code means the [Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#).

d. Open Peer Review refers to a set of peer review practices that involve modifications to the traditional scholarly peer review process with the aim of enhancing transparency, accountability and inclusivity in scholarly publishing. These practices may include open identities (where the identities of reviewees and reviewers are known to each other), open reports (where the review reports are published alongside a publication), or open participation (where the wider research community are invited to participate in the process).

e. 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.

f. Researcher means 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.

g. Research Integrity Advisor (RIA) means a member of Macquarie University staff who has been nominated by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) to promote the responsible conduct of research and provide advice to those with concerns or complaints about potential breaches of the Macquarie Research Code. 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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