

A CODE OF PRACTICE OF STUDY BY RESEARCH

Introduction

The reputation of the University of Buckingham is critically dependent on the integrity of those members of its staff who conduct or supervise research. The University has a responsibility to ensure that its own funds and any funds that it administers on behalf of research councils or similar organisations are spent properly, in accordance with the law and in the public interest.

This statement provides guidance on good research practice. It also describes how it will be monitored and which procedures will be used to investigate and deal with alleged misconduct. It is intended for all researchers, their support staff, and any with responsibility for the activities of such staff. It applies to employees of the University and any others conducting their work at the University. Such workers should also be satisfied that any of their external collaborators adhere to the principles of the statement. The statement is designed to fulfil the principles laid down in the University's **Research Degrees Handbook** (available on the website as 'Research Degrees – general information and regulations') and in the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: **Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes – September 2004.**

Principles

- 1 Results shall not be fabricated or falsified. Inconvenient data shall not be ignored in order to deceive.
- 2 The results of others shall not be plagiarised, misquoted or misappropriated.
- 3 Collusion or concealment of the misconduct of others, including external collaborators, is itself misconduct.
- 4 The University shall investigate all allegations of misconduct appropriately, and shall ensure that any person requesting such an investigation in good faith is protected and not victimised.

Good Research Practice

1. Ethics

The University recognises the importance of the provision of guidance on the ethical pursuit of research and the avoidance of research misconduct. The University is responsible for ensuring that ethical issues relating to research projects are identified and discussed with students prior to commencement of the research.

2. Honesty

Researchers must show honesty in all aspects of their work, including experimental design, recording, analysing, interpreting and publishing of results, and acknowledging the contributions of others. They must not plagiarise ideas given to them in confidence, whether explicitly or implicitly; nor must they plagiarise results. The work and opinions of other researchers should be represented honestly.

3. Openness

The University recognises the need to protect research ideas, avoid publication or public oral presentation of potentially patentable work, and adhere to confidentiality agreements. With these constraints, researchers should be as open as possible in discussing their work. In particular, there should be little impediment to, and considerable benefit to be gained from discussing results openly with other members of the researcher's department at the University.

4. Publication

Researchers are encouraged to present their work at internal and external meetings. They should also publish their results in an appropriate form – usually refereed journals – as soon as it is reasonable so to do. However, before any **external** presentation or publication, they must first:

- a) Take reasonable steps to check that their presentation and interpretation of their data is of high quality. Usually, this will involve discussion with co-authors, supervisor, or other suitably qualified colleague.
- b) Ensure that any confidentiality agreement is adhered to.

- c) Consider with a suitably experienced colleague, and if necessary with a patent agent, whether any of the material could form the basis of a patent.
- d) Be satisfied that repetition of the work would probably produce essentially similar results, or be honest about problems that may be encountered in reproducing the results.
- e) Include as authors all those who have made a significant contribution to the work. Minor contributions, such as supply of materials, suggestions for improvement to the manuscript or limited support during the course of the work should be acknowledged. All authors must agree to their authorship. Other members of the main author's department should have access to the manuscript (e.g. on a shared database) before it is submitted for publication so that any dispute about authorship can be aired. Final decisions about authorship will usually be made by the Departmental Head. If work is conducted under the terms of a confidentiality agreement or with collaborators, the external body must be consulted about authorship. The author submitting the publication should keep documentary evidence (emails or paper) to show that proper consultation concerning authorship has been made.

All sources of funding, especially from sponsors who are not listed as authors, must be revealed in manuscripts.

5. Documentation and storage of data

Researchers must keep clear and accurate records of their methods and results, including primary data. Methods used to analyse data for publication or preparation of reports to sponsors must be clearly recorded. This information may be recorded electronically or on paper. It must be stored at the University for at least seven years, or it may be returned to the sponsor if there be one. If the results of the research are published the period of storage shall be at least five years from the date of publication.

6. Leadership

The Vice-Chancellor, Heads of Research Departments, and supervisors of those conducting research, shall create an environment of mutual co-operation and open exchange of ideas. One measure of such an environment is the holding of regular meetings, seminars, etc., at which researchers can present and discuss their ideas and results in a relaxed and supportive setting. Researchers are also expected to support their colleagues in practical ways, provided that such support is reasonable and necessary, and that they are acknowledged appropriately in publications.

7. Education of new researchers

Research Department Heads and supervisors shall ensure that new researchers read this statement, discuss any issues that arise from it, and are given a copy of the Research Degrees Handbook. All research departments shall discuss this statement at a departmental meeting. This shall be repeated for new researchers as appropriate.

Assessment procedures and consultancy

When applying for support of any kind, applicants must ensure that the information that they submit is clear and accurate, and accords with the guidance provided. Applicants must not attempt to identify or approach assessors.

All information submitted to researchers as assessors or reviewers must be treated in confidence. Often such information is provided on the understanding that it may be discussed in confidence with colleagues who can provide assistance in the assessment. Assessors and reviewers must be sure that this is so before seeking advice.

Assessors must not take advantage of information provided for their own research proposals.

Researchers must declare any potential conflicts of interest to all relevant parties when asked to act in any confidential role, such as an assessor, referee or consultant.

Allegations of misconduct

1 'Misconduct' in relation to research matters that requires action as described below shall be generally be taken to mean one of the following:

- Dishonest conduct
- Deliberate contravention of the processes described above.
- Unintentional contravention of policy
- Issues of Openness, Leadership (3.5) and Education (3.6) may also be raised and addressed by the same individuals and groups described below.
- Failure to respond to recommendations or instructions made by an appropriate authority.

2 Misconduct in relation to research matters may be brought to light through several channels, these are:

- Complaint from a source external to the University.
- Complaint from an internal University source.
- Direct investigation by a Head of Department.

3 Where misconduct is initially raised as a complaint by a third party (external or internal), the issue will be dealt with through the University Grievance procedure. Where the investigations relating to the grievance show that misconduct has occurred measures may be taken in line with the University Discipline procedure.

Where the misconduct is not brought to light by a complaint, but through the investigations of the Head of Department, it may be appropriate to refer immediately to the University Disciplinary procedures.

4 It may be necessary during the course of an investigation into a complaint or misconduct of this nature to bring in an external expert in the field the research was carried out in. This expert will be nominated by the Head of Department of the Accused, or if the Head of Department is accused by the Vice-Chancellor.

5 For specific details relating to the procedures for dealing with complaints and/or misconduct you should refer to:

- a) The University of Buckingham Discipline Procedures
- b) The University of Buckingham Grievance Procedures