National and University guidelines

The national guidelines and integrity principles that apply to the publication, reporting and other dissemination of results can be found in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007). The University has implemented, and clarified our implementation of, the Australian Code with the release of the Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. The Research Integrity Information Sheet Series is a resource for researchers to assist with the implementation of these guidelines. These guidelines apply to all Griffith University researchers, including students.

The sharing of research results

Griffith University is committed to the principle that, in nearly all cases, a research project cannot be considered complete until the results of the work are appropriately disseminated - irrespective of whether those results are what we had expected and/or hoped to see. This sharing of results, and its contribution to the academic, professional or other body of knowledge, may be an important part of the benefits of the work.

There may be valid contractual, commercial, privacy constraints that may impact upon the timing, what is reported, or even whether wider dissemination will occur. Researchers must comply with contractual undertakings with regards to the dissemination of results, and must act responsibly with regards to matters such as commercial and privacy issues. However, when negotiating contracts and/or reaching agreements with regards to the dissemination of results, researchers are urged to strive to see results widely disseminated.

Agreement as to who can publish

Research can frequently involve collaboration between teams of researchers and others, who might inform the design of a project, play a role in the various stages of data collection, and / or contribute to the analysis of the data. This collaboration might be brief or could continue through the various stages of the work.

Whilst there are criteria that inform who can be listed as the authors of a publication / report on the results, it is important to ensure upfront that all the various people who make a contribution to the design, conduct and analysis of a project have a clear and shared understanding of who can publish results from the work. Ideally, prior to an individual's involvement in a project, there should be an email exchanged with the project leader, which articulates who will be able to publish based on the results of the research. This might be expressed in terms of a finite number of publications and should speak to future related publications that might further explore the theories / concepts / experience discussed in the initial publication.
Who can be listed as an author?

With the recognition of differences that can exist between disciplines and publications, s9.1 of the Griffith University Code lists the criteria that should be used to assess whether the contribution of an individual to a project and / or publication warrants them being named as an author. In summary this requires a substantive conceptual or theoretical contribution, a significant role in the analysis of data, or significant contribution to the writing or refining of a publication. A person who does not meet these criteria must not be listed as an author (eg ‘padding’ a list of authors with a “distinguished person” is not appropriate if that person has not made a contribution to the work). Consequently it is possible for an individual to make a contribution to the research or publication without necessarily being an author (see Recognising other contributions, see below).

Responsibilities of authors

Section 9.3 of the Griffith University Code lists the responsibilities of authors, including appointing an executive author, acknowledging all authors and contributors, and completely and accurately reporting findings.

Order of authors

Some disciplines and some publications will have their own conventions with regards to the order authors are listed for a publication. In some cases this will be in alphabetical order, the executive author and then alphabetical order, or in an order that reflects the significance of the contribution. Ideally, the order will not be just on the basis of the seniority of the researchers (unless this is also a reflection of the contribution of the authors).

Recognising other contributors

As was noted above, others can make a significant contribution to a project and / or the associated publication, without meeting the criteria to be listed as an author. Some example contributions include: being an author of an earlier publication that laid the foundation / inspired this new publication; advising on the questions to be included in a data collection instrument; and providing advice on cultural traditions or protocols that increased the level of participation and / or enhanced the usefulness of the results. It should be noted that any of the listed contributions could be significant enough to meet the criteria where the individual should be invited to be an author. Where there has been a contribution, but it does not warrant a person being listed as an author, this must be clearly acknowledged when then the results are disseminated.

Accuracy and honesty

Research has the potential to make a significant contribution to public and private lives, the commercial sector, the environment and the future. Griffith University is absolutely committed to the principle that accuracy and integrity in the reporting of the results of research is a key demonstration of the integrity of work. The fabrication of results or otherwise misrepresenting a research project is a serious matter, and is likely to be considered serious research misconduct.
Disclosure of any limitations of the results

The results of research will often have limitations. Some examples include: a participant pool that only includes men; the research is conducted only in one geographic location; the agent was only tested on one species of animal; the issues explored in the interviews were limited to one set of experiences; the testing used only computer models; and the participant pool excluded persons living with a mental or intellectual impairment. Such limitations do not invalidate the research, but they do need to be acknowledged in the results. For example, it would be erroneous to claim that the results of testing a pharmacological agent only on male participants of a limited age range, would necessarily have the same results for everyone. Griffith University researchers must report any such limitations when reporting the results of any research they have been involved in.

Disclosure of conflicts of interest

The presence of a conflict of interest (e.g. being an employee of a correctional facility and conducting research that evaluates an official program in that facility), or at least a potentially perceived conflict of interest, can impact upon the way in which the validity of a research project and its results are regarded. This can have an even more marked effect if the conflict of interest is not disclosed and then comes to light later. Consequently, Griffith University expects that our researchers will fully and honestly disclose any potentially perceived conflict of interest, and discuss the measures (if any) to address that conflict.

External funding or sponsorship

External funding or sponsorship can be vital to the conduct of some research. Furthermore, Griffith University researchers can be commissioned by private or public sector entities to conduct specific research. Such arrangements are not necessarily ethically inappropriate. However, this can sometimes represent a special kind of potential conflict of interest. The fact that a project has been supported by external funding or sponsorship (including in-kind support) must be disclosed when the results of the research are disseminated.

As was noted in The sharing of research results (above), external sponsors may place contractual limitations on the dissemination of results. This might relate to commercial concerns. Such limitations must be adhered to. However, when negotiating contracts, researchers should strive to see the results of work widely disseminated.

Privacy considerations

When preparing to disseminate the results of human research (see Booklet 01 of the Griffith University Research Ethics Manual for a definition), researchers must consider whether there are any regulatory or ethical privacy considerations that could apply to how the results are published. There is no ethical imperative that the identity of participants must always be concealed (indeed, in some cases individuals will only participate if their comments will be attributed to them), but if they are given an assurance about their privacy, this should be honoured. See Booklet 23 of the Griffith University Research Ethics Manual for more about privacy in human research.
Deleterious impacts of research results

Griffith University is committed to the principle of academic freedom, and the positive role research plays in contemporary Australia. However, it is a responsibility of Griffith University to carefully consider all potential deleterious impacts of their work, and the degree to which these are justified by the benefits of that work. Researchers must not bring the University into disrepute.

Ethical review or Office of Gene-Technology Regulator approval

If work requires animal ethics or human research ethical review, or approval under the gene-technology arrangements, the results of that work cannot be disseminated unless the work had an appropriate clearance and complied with the relevant University policies. A growing number of academic publications will not publish an article without an assurance of adherence to the relevant standards / requirements. Misrepresenting whether a project had an appropriate clearance is likely to be considered serious research misconduct.

Simultaneous submission and repeated dissemination of the same results

The executive author must advise the various editors if the same article / paper / commentary / report is submitted simultaneously to multiple publications. The results of the same research should not ordinarily be the basis of multiple pieces. If there has been a fresh analysis of the data, or a new ‘take’ on the results, the previous publication must be brought to the attention of the editor of the new publication.

Deciding where to publish

The decision of where to publish will be shaped by the disciplinary area, the topic and research design, the intended audience, the preference and career of the authors, whether the work was sponsored, and a range of other considerations. Griffith University researchers should strive to disseminate their research findings in a way that will have the maximum impact on academic knowledge, professional practice or the body of other valuable understanding. Griffith is committed to the concept of open access, so researchers are strongly encouraged to make their research accessible on Griffith Research On-line (GRO) and, where appropriate, through data exchange hubs.

Scope of these guidelines

These guidelines apply to all forms of dissemination of results of research by Griffith University researchers, regardless of whether refereed or non-refereed, online or offline, books, conference proceedings, internal reports, formal or more informal publications. The guidelines also apply to all research, irrespective of whether it requires animal ethics or human research ethical clearance, or how the work was funded (if at all).