

#7 The Responsible Supervisor

V1.2 | May 2019

Contents

1. Reflecting on role
2. National guidelines
3. Griffith University's approach
4. Risks and consequences
5. Due diligence
6. HDR candidate knowledge
7. Collegiate early conversation and ongoing communication
8. Authorship considerations
9. Intellectual property
10. Scope of these matters
11. Sources of advice and information



1) Reflecting on role

Supervisors play an essential mentoring role with regard to the development and responsible conduct of their HDR candidate. Griffith University supervisors are expected to re-enforce the message that research integrity is the foundation of quality research and essential for a successful research career. All supervisors must be conversant with, and adhere to the [Code of Practice for Higher Degree Research Supervision](#) and the [Supervision good practice guide](#).

2) National Guidelines

The [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (2018) is the Australian standard for research integrity/the responsible conduct of research. The [Supervision good practice guide](#) is a national standard for responsible supervision and constructive supervisory practice.

While not directly mentioned, the following general principle relates to supervision:

P4 Fairness in the treatment of others

The guidance text refers to fair treatment and respect; citing and acknowledging work; and giving credit where due.

P7 Accountability for the development, undertaking and reporting of research

The guidance text refers to complying with legislation, policies and guidelines; good stewardship of resources; and prior consideration of the consequences and outcomes of research.

P8 Promotion of responsible research practices

Promote and foster a research culture and environment that supports the responsible conduct of research.

Supervisors must remain cognisant of all eight principles as they apply to the work of their HDR candidate and mentor their candidate with regard to responsible conduct.

The following institutional responsibility relates to the supervision of students:

R5 Ensure supervisors of research trainees have the appropriate skills, qualifications and resources.

The following researcher responsibility relates to the supervision of students:

Principles of responsible conduct

P1 Honesty in the development, undertaking and reporting of research

P2 Rigour in the development, undertaking and reporting of research

P3 Transparency in declaring interests and reporting research methodology, data and findings

P4 Fairness in the treatment of others

P5 Respect for research participants, the wider community, animals and the environment

P6 Recognition of the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be engaged in research that affects or is of particular significance to them

P7 Accountability for the development, undertaking and reporting of research

P8 Promotion of responsible research practices

See the Australian Code (2018) for the full text of the eight principles

R15 Provide guidance and mentorship on responsible research conduct to other researchers or research trainees under their supervision and, where appropriate, monitor their conduct.

While to varying degrees all of the researcher responsibilities apply to the supervision of HDR candidates and students, the following two responsibilities are particularly relevant:

R14 Support a culture of responsible research conduct at their institution and in their field of practice.

R16 Undertake and promote education and training in responsible research conduct.

3) Griffith University's approach

Griffith University considers research integrity to be a core component of quality research and research training to be a core component of the University's mission. As such, Griffith University's approach to the matters discussed above is summarised below:

- (i) Only accredited supervisors can be appointed as a principal supervisor.
- (ii) Completion of the 'Research Integrity for Supervisors' workshop is required for accreditation.
- (iii) Griffith University considers the principal supervisor to be the chief investigator of the research project undertaken by their HDR candidate for their degree.
- (iv) Supervisors are expected to mentor their HDR candidates with regard to responsible conduct matters.
- (v) The mentoring of candidates includes identifying with them if they require capacity building/professional development in an area, and then suggesting appropriate sources of that training.
- (vi) An essential part of a mentor's role is reinforcing that responsible conduct is one of the defining characteristics of quality research and a shared responsibility for all Griffith University researchers.

Griffith University's implementation of the [Australian Code \(2018\)](#) is described in the [Griffith University Responsible Conduct of Research policy](#).

4) Risks and consequences

Failing to adhere to the principles and responsibilities described at (3 above) is likely to be considered a breach of the [Australian Code](#) (and

Researcher responsibilities

Researchers will uphold the principles of responsible research conduct in all aspects of their research. To this end, researchers will:

R14 Support a culture of responsible research conduct at their institution and in their field of practice.

R15 Provide guidance and mentorship on responsible research conduct to other researchers or research trainees under their supervision and, where appropriate, monitor their conduct.

R16 Undertake and promote education and training in responsible research conduct.

R17 Comply with the relevant laws, regulations, disciplinary standards, ethics guidelines and institutional policies related to responsible research conduct. Ensure that appropriate approvals are obtained prior to the commencement of research, and that conditions of any approvals are adhered to during the course of research.

so inter alia a breach of the [Griffith University Responsible Conduct of Research policy](#)).

Such breaches are cause for concern and every effort should be made to avoid them. Serious breaches may be classified as research misconduct, which can have disciplinary and other significant consequences.

Some types of breaches, or even disputes between co-authors can result in forced retractions of published research outputs.

It has been suggested that breaches, especially research misconduct as well as forced retractions can have a marked impact on the reputation of researchers. Some commentators have also suggested this damage can last for decades, can occur even if the misstep was made in ignorance, and impact upon collaborators even if they were unaware/not responsible for the problem. It has also been suggested that collaborating with someone who has previously found to have committed research misconduct or have had a forced retraction can have a negative impact on you.

Items 5-9 of this sheet suggests strategies that can be helpful to avoid some of the more common missteps and costly problems

5) Due diligence

It is prudent to engage in due diligence before commencing with a new candidate. Is their claimed previous publication record accurate? If they already have data was it collected responsibly and as per the [Australian Code](#)? If it relates to human research, do they have ethics approval and what does the consent say the data can be used for? Were the data/primary materials obtained under contract, and if so what are the terms of that contract? Perhaps use the [Retraction Watch database](#) to see if the candidate has any forced retractions against their name.

None of which necessarily would be a cause for serious concern, but you should enter into the partnership aware and forewarned.

6) HDR candidate knowledge

At an early stage in their journey together, the principal supervisor should discuss the candidate's awareness and understanding of the principles of the Australian Code (2018), the 16 researcher responsibilities and their implications for the candidate's work.

Global experience has highlighted this should include correctly referencing and citing the work of others.

Depending upon the likely research design it may be important to discuss research ethics, including allowing sufficient time for research ethics review.

R18 Ensure that the ethics principles of research merit and integrity, justice, beneficence and respect are applied to human research.

R19 Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and respect their legal rights and local laws, customs and protocols.

R20 Ensure that the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) are considered at all stages of research involving animals and minimise the impacts on animals used in research and in so doing support the welfare and wellbeing of these animals.

R21 Adopt methods appropriate to the aims of the research and ensure that conclusions are justified by the results.

R22 Retain clear, accurate, secure and complete records of all research including research data and primary materials. Where possible and appropriate, allow access and reference to these by interested parties.

R23 Disseminate research findings responsibly, accurately and broadly. Where necessary, take action to correct the record in a timely manner.

This conversation may identify areas where the candidate (and possibly you) need capacity building/professional development. Many of the specialist teams within Griffith University (e.g. the library, the Office for Research and Griffith Enterprise) offer professional development opportunities and online material.

Discussing these matters should lead easily into steps (7) and (8) below.

7) Collegiate early conversation and ongoing communication

The best way for a researcher to mitigate against the risks and consequences discussed at (4) above is to:

- (i) Re-familiarise yourself with the principles and researcher responsibilities of the [Australian Code \(2018\)](#) and the Griffith University's Research Integrity Resource Sheets series.
- (ii) Have an early discussion with your candidate about the approach to the Australian Code (2018) Griffith University takes.
- (iii) Discuss establishing a publication plan (see RIRS#4).
- (iv) Ensure there is a shared understanding of –
 - a. roles (including lead investigator and the corresponding author for any known research outputs),
 - b. the approach that is to be taken to
 1. authorship (including order of)
 2. the management of data
 3. research ethics
 4. conflicts of interest
- (v) If the HDR candidate's work will be part of a wider project (especially if that wider work is externally funded), discuss what impact that will have on intellectual property, data access/control, research outputs and what will happen after the candidate's involvement ends.

This conversation should be friendly, courteous and collegiate but soon after the meeting the supervisor should email the candidate to confirm the matters discussed and agreed. Preferably the candidate should reply to confirm their agreement. This is to establish a positive foundation for the collaboration and to serve as a record of what was agreed.

This early discussion should begin an open, ongoing conversation with your candidate. It is important they feel as though they have a mentor

R24 Disclose and manage actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

R25 Ensure that authors of research outputs are all those, and only those, who have made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to the research and its output, and that they agree to be listed as an author.

R26 Acknowledge those who have contributed to the research.

R27 Cite and acknowledge other relevant work appropriately and accurately.

R28 Participate in peer review in a way that is fair, rigorous and timely and maintains the confidentiality of the content.

R29 Report suspected breaches of the Code to the relevant institution and/or authority.

who genuinely cares about their research journey and success. It is important you have a solid insight into where they are at, if they understand the University's requirements and their responsibilities.

To varying degrees sticky problems and costly missteps can be traced back to communication breakdowns.

8) Authorship considerations

During the course of their candidature, HDR candidates **must publish at least one** peer-reviewed article, ensuring it is **in a quality publication** and with them listed as the **lead author**.

This is a vital milestone for HDR candidates and an essential component of their research training.

A research output that meets the requirement above may come after an earlier output where the candidate was only a co-author.

This process should afford the principal supervisor an opportunity to mentor the HDR candidate on the following matters:

- (i) Publication ethics;
- (ii) Authorship roles and criteria;
- (iii) Collegiate communications with potential contributors;
- (iv) Collegiate communication with co-authors;
- (v) Formulating a publication plan;
- (vi) Knowing where to publish (or at least where not to publish);
- (vii) The peer review process; and
- (viii) Fulfilling Griffith University reporting requirements.

All supervisors are encouraged to read the [HDR candidate authorship resource paper](#).

9) Intellectual property

As was noted at (7-v above) an important matter to discuss early with your HDR candidate, and then revisit as the work progresses is intellectual property – especially if there are matters that alter Griffith University's normal approach to students and intellectual property ([see 5.8 of the Griffith University intellectual property policy](#)).

Two such scenarios are where the candidate's work is a subset of wider work (e.g. being undertaken by other Griffith University researchers) and/or the work is externally funded.

There must be a signed agreement for any such agreement and the candidate must have been offered a reasonable alternative.



OR CONTACTS

**Manager, Research
Ethics and Integrity**

Tel: (07) 373 54375
research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

**Animal Ethics
Coordinator**

Tel: (07) 373 56618
animal-ethics@griffith.edu.au

**Research Ethics
Systems and Support
Officer**

Tel: (07) 373 5 2069
research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

Contact Griffith Enterprise for advice on these matters.

10) Scope of these matters

These guidelines apply to all Griffith University research, regardless of whether the work requires ethical or biosafety clearance, the expertise of the parties, the methodology/design used, and/or the funding for the work (if any).

11) Sources of advice

Researchers are urged to consult the [other resource sheets](#) in this series. Researchers with further questions should consult a [RIA](#) (whether in their Group or elsewhere in the University) or the Office for Research.



This Research Integrity Resource Sheet which was developed by the Office for Research, Griffith University, is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#)

