

## #6 Collaborative research: Hints & Tips

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### 1) About this sheet

This sheet in the Research Integrity Resource Sheets (RIRS) series provides essential research integrity hints and tips for Griffith University researchers intending to conduct collaborative research – regardless of whether the would-be collaborator is a Griffith University researcher, is based at another Australian institution or is based at an international institution.

### 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.

As discussed in RIRS#02, the [2018 version of the Australian Code](#) is a short statement of principles and responsibilities, significantly different to the longer and more detailed 2007 version it replaced.

There are three factors that may be of significance to collaborative research:

- (i) The [Australian Code \(2018\)](#) calls for individual institutions to set their own standards and expectations with regard to research integrity and provide guidance to their research community.
- (ii) While good practice guides are being produced by the NHMRC, ARC and UA, the process will take many months and even when these are all released they are intended to be guides to inform institutional arrangements, not standards that must be followed.
- (iii) Institutions have until 30 June 2019 to implement the [Australian Code \(2018\)](#).

This resource sheet is intended to assist Griffith University researchers to understand Griffith University's approach to collaborative research and avoid problems which may arise due to different applications of the [Australian Code \(2018\)](#) across different institutions.

### 3) Griffith University's approach

The [Responsible Conduct of Research policy](#) and the RIRS series describe Griffith University's implementation of the [Australian Code \(2018\)](#). They are complemented by a number of other University policies, procedures and arrangements (as listed in the [Responsible Conduct of Research policy](#)) as



**Griffith University  
Research Integrity  
web page**

[https://www.griffith.edu.au/  
research/research-  
services/research-ethics-  
integrity/research-integrity](https://www.griffith.edu.au/research/research-services/research-ethics-integrity/research-integrity)

**ON THE WEB PAGE**



**Link to Australian Code**



**Link to Griffith University's  
responsible research policy**



**The Research Integrity  
Resource Sheets**



**A resource paper about  
HDR candidate research  
outputs**



**List of RIAs and their  
contact details**



**Aboriginal Knowledge and  
Intellectual Property  
Protocol Community Guide**



**Research Data  
Management**



**International links**



well as related professional development and resource material.

When research is conducted under the auspices of Griffith University (a definition of which can be found in the [Responsible Conduct of Research policy](#)) the work must adhere to the standards and requirements described in Griffith University's research integrity arrangements.

The above is also the case when Griffith University is the lead institution in a multi-institution project.

In situations where Griffith University is not the lead institution in a multi-institution project, the work must adhere to the standards and requirements described in lead institution's research integrity arrangements. However if the lead institution has not implemented the [Australian Code \(2018\)](#) or if the lead institution's policies/guidance material does not discuss the issue and the matters are discussed by Griffith University's policies, Griffith University's researchers must adhere to the standards and requirements described in Griffith University's research integrity arrangements.

Prior to 1 July 2019, this may present additional complexity as many institutions may still be working on their implementation of the [Australian Code \(2018\)](#). Griffith University researchers who are encountering difficulties in this regard are urged to contact the Research Ethics/Research Integrity team (see details on page 4).

#### **4) Other institutional considerations**

Below are some considerations that may impact upon collaborative research considerations, including responsible conduct matters.

Two common areas are Intellectual Property and which policy is being applied:

- (i) Some Australian research institutions may not be required to adopt/implement the Australian Code.
- (ii) Non-research institutions in Australia will probably not adopt/implement the Australian Code.
- (iii) Depending on the jurisdiction, institutions based outside Australia may be required to adhere to a local research integrity standard.
- (iv) Prior to 1 July 2019, some Australian research institutions might not have implemented the Australian Code (2018) or might have only partially implemented the 2018 version.
- (v) Many, but not all, research institutions consider HDR candidates to have primary ownership of the intellectual property of their work and control over the data associated with higher degree study, unless they have formally signed it over to the institution.

## 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

- (vi) (Further to v) Many research institutions assert ownership of the intellectual property created by staff and the data they have created unless an agreement to the contrary has been reached.
- (vii) The terms of many competitive research grants and commercial research/consultancies require the recipient institution to own the intellectual property/control the data or that it be signed over to the funding body.

## 5) The responsibilities of researchers

When a Griffith University researcher is involved in collaborative research and the work is under the auspices of Griffith University and/or Griffith is the lead institution, the Griffith University researchers must ensure the design, conduct and the reporting the results of the project adheres to the Australian Code (2018) and to the guidance provided in the Research Integrity Resource Sheets series.

When a project is not being conducted under the auspices of Griffith University and/or Griffith is not the lead institution, if the lead institution is an Australian research institution that is subject to the Australian Code (2018), Griffith University researchers must ensure their own involvement in design, conduct and the reporting the results of the project adheres to the Australian Code (2018) and to the guidance provided in the sheets of the Research Integrity Resource Sheets series. They should urge the collaborators to also adhere to the Australian Code (2018) and their own institution's policies/guidance material.

When faced with standards/requirements that are different, or perhaps conflicting (e.g. in terms of authorship or data retention), Griffith University researchers should seek the advice of a Research Integrity Adviser (see p2 left) and keep a file note of the consultation.

## 6) Being aware of the pitfalls and consequences

It is important to approach possible collaborations positively. They are after all often associated with work on a new research project, new funding opportunity, new research output, network and influence expansion, capacity building and professional development, as well as another step in your research career progression.

But collaborations are not without the potential for pitfalls and costly consequences.

The most common of these are:

- 1) **Different expectations/understanding** about matters such as who will be listed as co-authors, order of authorship, roles and recognition, control and use of the data/materials, and future related research.

## Research Integrity Resource Sheets

### #6 Collaborative research: Hints & Tips

#### The Griffith University research integrity resource sheets

- #1 Introduction to research integrity at Griffith University
- #2 Moving to the 2018 version of the Australian Code
- #3 Planning and conducting a project responsibly
- #4 Responsible research outputs
- #5 Responsible data management
- #6 Collaborative research: Hints and tips
- #7 The responsible supervisor
- #8 The responsible candidate
- #9 Conflicts of interest
- #10 Tips for peer review
- #11 Disputes between researchers
- #12 Investigations of alleged breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research
- #13 Alleged breaches: Tips for complainants
- #14 Alleged breaches: Tips for respondents
- #15 Research Misconduct



- 2) **Different approaches to research integrity principles and researcher responsibilities** about matters such as publication ethics, data retention and conflicts of interest.
- 3) **Communication breakdown** about matters such as timing of research outputs and liaison with publishers where one collaborator might feel the other is acting too slowly and the other might feel they are impatient/wanting to act precipitously.

Unfortunately, such situations can easily turn into acrimonious disputes that can be time consuming and stressful, lead to complaints and counter-complaints, a breach and research misconduct proceedings and forced retractions. Such matters can diminish impact and reputation, as well as harm careers. That is of course in addition to the lost opportunity of the original reason for the collaboration, as well as the prospect of future collaborations.

### 7) Collegiate early conversation

The best way for a researcher to mitigate against the matters discussed at (6) above is to:

- (i) Re-familiarise yourself with the principles and researcher responsibilities of the [Australian Code \(2018\)](#) and the sheets of Griffith University's Research Integrity Resource Sheets series.
- (ii) Discuss with your collaborators what approach to the Australian Code (2018) the respective institutions take.
- (iii) Agree with your collaborators which institution is the lead institution.
- (iv) Agree with your collaborators how to approach any circumstances where the institutional approaches conflict.
- (v) 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
- (vi) Agree on a publication plan.

This conversation should be friendly, courteous and collegiate but soon after the meeting the lead investigator should email all the collaborators to confirm the matters discussed and agreed. Preferably

**OR CONTACTS**

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all the collaborators 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.

**8) Good communication and a collegiate approach**

After the positive start of an early collegiate discussion that establishes shared understanding on key research integrity matters (see 7 above), it is essential collaborators maintain good communication and a collegiate approach. Regular and open communication can forestall many of the difficulties that can occur in collaborative research. There are real cases that demonstrate how damaging even accidental lapses in communication can be.

**9) Disputes**

Despite the steps described earlier in this sheet, disputes can and do sometimes occur. Griffith University researchers are expected to make a good faith attempt to resolve disputes, including looking for a reasonable compromise (even if they believe themselves to be the injured party) before asking their Head of Element to mediate the matter.

Early in the dispute the parties should consult separate Research Integrity Advisers ([RIA](#)) for advice with regard to the [Australian Code \(2018\)](#) and Griffith University's research integrity arrangements. An [RIA](#) cannot adjudicate or mediate a dispute.

Before attempting a mediation, a Head of Element will expect information about the attempts made to resolve the matter and why this effort was unsuccessful. Griffith University researchers must approach both the attempt to negotiate a resolution, and the mediation, in good faith (even if they believe themselves to be the injured party) before asking their Head of Element to recommend the matter for University-level investigation. Such an investigation is a serious matter and is not a matter to be entered into lightly.

**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.

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