



Title: Principles for the Conduct of Research Policy
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Purpose

A program of active scientific research is essential to the functioning of an academic institution. Ideally, such research should be carried out at all levels and include faculty from all disciplines. Guidelines which govern the conduct of scientific research may be considered from several points of view. Of basic importance is the question of responsibility for research conduct. Although each investigator bears individual responsibility for his/her research conduct, it is essential to identify individuals within the institution with primary responsibility for the integrity of scientific research. A second area of major concern is the establishment of a research environment which encourages scientific interchange. Finally, the concept of publication of the results of scientific investigations deserves critical analysis with respect to authorship, particularly in the case of multi-authored publications.

Scope

This policy applies to all Mercer University faculty and administrators who are involved in research.

Exclusions

None

Policy Statement

A. Responsibility for Research Conduct

1. Dean of the School or College

The Dean shall be responsible for the overall conduct of scientific research carried out in their school or college. It shall be the responsibility of the Dean to address the concept of research responsibility in each new appointment of an individual to a faculty position within their school or college. The new faculty member shall be made aware of this policy and the Principles for Investigation of Misconduct in Research.

2. Department Chair

The department chair shall assess annually the total commitment of time and resources to research, training, and/or contractual obligations by the department's faculty. The Chair shall assure that this commitment by the individual faculty is appropriate. The department chair shall also be responsible for keeping a file of publications by individual department faculty, as outlined in Section C.

3. Faculty (Principal Investigator)

The faculty member (Principal Investigator or PI) shall have primary responsibility for the conduct of scientific research within his/her laboratory or project. This responsibility shall include the research technicians. The faculty member (PI) shall be responsible for his or her own safety and the safety of all other individuals working in their laboratories and compliance with all applicable State and Federal regulations. The faculty member (PI) shall be responsible for the maintenance and storage of all primary research data accumulated under his/her direction.

B. Procedures for Research Conduct

1. Primary Data Gathering and Storage

The Principal Investigator (PI) bears responsibility for instructing all members of his/her research team in the maintenance of appropriate records of research data. Each PI may have a somewhat different system for gathering and storing primary data.

The PI bears the final responsibility for the integrity of the primary record, and it is generally inappropriate for the record to be removed from the research area. While co-investigators and/or trainees may be allowed to make a copy of the record before leaving the research project, the original should remain in the possession of the PI. In investigations concerning human subjects, the PI is responsible for implementing a system which will provide a means of assuring privacy while at the same time permitting definite identification of the subjects.

2. Trainee/Principal Investigator Interactions

The PI has a continuing responsibility for discussion and review of primary data with technicians and with others involved in the generation of the data. Critical review of work in progress is an essential element of research training. It involves review of the adequacy of experimental design and execution, the adequacy of primary records, the accuracy of summaries and calculations based on primary data, and a judgment of the project. In some instances, the research may include collaborative observations made in research settings distinct from those of the PI. Under these circumstances, it is appropriate for the PI and trainee to meet together with their collaborators to undertake similar review as well as gain perspective on the various components of the project.

3. Research Seminars

Research in an academic environment benefits from the input of colleagues who are not

directly involved in the research effort. Research seminars provide a format for the researcher to present his or her work to interested but impartial critics. Regularly scheduled opportunities for presentation of research projects at various stages – from conception, through work in progress, to completion – are recommended.

C. Procedures for Publication

1. Guidelines for Authorship

Multiple authorship poses a thorny problem which has been addressed extensively in the scientific literature. It is recommended that the following principles be considered in the assignment of authorship for publication:

- a. An author should have participated in the initiating or planning of the study or have assented to its design if enlisted late in the study.
- b. An author should have made some of the reported observations or generated some of the data.
- c. An author should have participated in interpreting the observations of data and deriving from them the reported conclusions.
- d. An author should have taken part in the writing of the paper.
- e. An author should have read the entire contents of a paper and assented to its publication before it is sent to a journal.

2. Departmental Monitoring of Publications

It is recognized that every member of the University Faculty is entitled to the freedom to conduct research and to publish the results of that research. It is, however, recommended that each department maintain a file of manuscripts and abstracts submitted or accepted for publication by department faculty. The primary functions of such procedures are to allow the department chair to review publications of individual faculty. In addition to providing relevant information on productivity, this review process provides the opportunity for recommendations by the department chair with regard to the publication itself.

It shall be the responsibility of each department to develop and implement departmental procedures for the monitoring of publications. A copy of each department's procedures shall be provided to the Dean of the school or college and to the Provost.

Additional Resources

Principles and Procedures for Investigation of Misconduct in Research:

<https://policies.wip.mercer.edu/principles-for-investigation-of-misconduct-in-research/>