



National Suicide
Research Foundation

Limited Company 224676/Registered Charity 20030889/ Charity Tax CHY 11351

Research Integrity Policy V2.0 (July 2024)

1. Introduction

1.1 The National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) is committed to ensuring that all research carried out meets the highest standards of integrity, and that an environment of research integrity prevails through the promotion of good research practices, together with the use of fair, confidential, effective, and transparent procedures.

1.2 Research integrity relates to the performance of research to the highest standards of professionalism and rigour, and to the accuracy and integrity of the research record in publications and elsewhere.

2. Scope

2.2 This policy is aligned with the revised National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland (2019) (hereafter 'National Policy Statement'). This policy is aligned also with the revised European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity in 2017 (hereafter the 'European Code').

2.3 This policy applies to all current and former employees and students on work placement with the NSRF, and all other personnel officially engaged in research work with the NSRF and/or undertaking any research activity in the NSRF's name.

3. Principles of Research Integrity

3.1 The 'European Code' and the 'National Policy Statement' specify four fundamental principles of research integrity which the NSRF endorses. These principles guide researchers in performing their individual research, in dealings with research partners, and in dealings with the audiences who receive their research reports. The principles are:

- Honesty in presenting research goals and intentions, in precise and nuanced reporting on research methods and procedures, and in conveying valid interpretations and justifiable claims with respect to possible applications of research results.
- Reliability in performing research (meticulous, careful, and attention to detail), and in communication of the results (fair, full, and unbiased reporting).
- Respect for colleagues, research participants and subjects, society, ecosystems, cultural heritage, and the environment.

- Accountability for the research from idea to publication, for its management and organisation, for training, supervision, and mentoring, and for its wider impacts.

4. Good Research Practice

In addition to the principles of research integrity, the NSRF is committed to the following activities in promoting and safeguarding a culture of research integrity and promoting good research practice:

4.1 Training, Supervision and Mentoring: Education and training is a proactive way to embed a culture of research integrity. Further information on Research Integrity and Research Integrity training is available on the website of University College Cork (UCC), which is available for staff members of the NSRF through the NSRF-UCC memorandum of collaboration

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/research/support/integrity/researchintegritytraining/epigeumonlineresearchintegritytraining/>

Continuing education on research integrity is provided through mentorship by senior investigators responsible for the supervision/training of all research staff employed by the NSRF, including PhD students and postdoctoral researchers.

4.2 Research Data and Management Practices: All research data and records are stored in a secure and accessible form and managed in accordance with good data/record management practice across all stages of the research process. Retention dates as per ethics approvals should be strictly adhered to.

Where Data Protection requirements apply to research data/records (e.g., the holding/processing of personal information), researchers must at all times be aware of the provisions of and operate in accordance with European Union General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). The primary responsibility for observing good practice in the use, storage, and retention of data, resides with the individual researcher, and ultimate responsibility for good practice lies with the principal investigator in charge of each research project, and must follow the principles outlined below:

- Researchers and organisations acknowledge data as legitimate and citable products of research.
- Research data is organised in a manner that allows ready verification in either paper or electronic format.
- Research data is recorded in a clear and accurate format. Particular attention is paid to the completeness, integrity, and security of these records.
- The National Research Data Principles for Ireland underline the importance of making research data “as open as possible, as restricted as necessary”. Open access to research data facilitates re-use of data for further research, contribute to public knowledge and inform policy and practice.

4.3 Publication and Dissemination: The NSRF requires where possible, that research results are published in an appropriate form, usually as papers in peer-reviewed journals, books or book chapters with impactful publishers. Publication should occur in a timely fashion.

4.4 Reviewing, Evaluating and Editing. This aspect of good practice involves that:

- Researchers take seriously their commitment to the research community by participating in refereeing, reviewing and evaluation.
- Researchers review and evaluate submissions for publication, funding, appointment, or promotion in a transparent and justifiable manner.
- Reviewers or editors with a conflict of interest withdraw from involvement in decisions on publication, funding, appointment, promotion, or reward; in all regards, the provisions of the NSRF Conflict of Interest Policy is adhered to.
- Reviewers maintain confidentiality unless there is prior approval for disclosure.
- Reviewers and editors respect the rights of authors and applicants, and seek permission to make use of the ideas, data or interpretations presented.

4.5 Working Collaboratively. All partners in research collaborations must take responsibility for the integrity of the research as evidenced by the following actions:

- All partners in research collaborations agree at the outset on the goals of the research and on the process for communicating their research as transparently and openly as possible.
- All partners formally agree at the start of their collaboration on expectations and standards concerning research integrity, on the laws and regulations that will apply, on protection of the intellectual property of collaborators, and on procedures for handling conflicts and possible cases of misconduct.
- All partners in research collaborations are properly informed and consulted about submissions for publication of the research results.

4.6 Ethical Research. Ethical Practice Research which seeks to involve human participants (including data collected on an anonymous basis) must have prior approval from the relevant Research Ethics Committee. Once approved, the research is conducted in line with the conditions, if any, of such approval. In addition, researchers ensure that research involving the holding/processing of any personal data aligns with the good data management practices and GDPR as described in 4.2 above.

4.7 Conflict of Interest. The NSRF is committed to the principle that the activities of its researchers should not give rise to situations in which its researchers have, or appear to have, conflicts of interest. In accordance with the 'Conflicts of Interest Policy', the primary obligation rests with the researcher to recognise situations, in which he or she has an existing and/or potential conflict of interest, and to disclose and discuss that conflict with his/her Line Manager.

5. Procedure in cases of suspected research misconduct/ disputes

5.1 Complaints of possible infringements of this policy and requests for the resolution of research integrity related disputes, should be made in writing and addressed to the Research Integrity Officer.

5.2 The Research Integrity Officer will acknowledge receipt of such complaint or request within five working days and will advise the complainant/requestor of the procedure to be followed, following consultation with relevant members of the NSRF Senior Management Team. Any procedure implemented following this consultation will be fair, comprehensive and conducted as expeditiously as possible, without compromising the accuracy, objectivity or thoroughness of any such procedure, ordinarily completed in four months.

5.3 A complainant who raises an allegation of research misconduct will, where possible and consistent with the natural justice entitlements of the respondent, be provided with an opportunity to review the responses to the allegation and to provide any further information or documentation necessary to support their case.

5.4 Unless and until the contrary is proven, a person accused of research misconduct will be presumed to be innocent. As a corollary, a person will not have any penalty imposed as a result of an accusation of research misconduct unless and until the allegation is proven. Notwithstanding the foregoing and depending on the circumstances, the continued use of the NSRF's premises and facilities by the respondent(s), may be temporarily suspended or curtailed by the Research Integrity Officer at his or her absolute discretion pending the outcome of a preliminary review and any follow-up processes; solely as a holding exercise and not as a sanction.

5.5 A complainant will not suffer any penalty for making an allegation of research misconduct in good faith. The NSRF's policy is, where the Research Integrity Officer considers it appropriate, to attempt to resolve issues or disputes outside the disciplinary procedure, i.e. informally. The Research Integrity Officer may seek, at any stage before the application of a disciplinary procedure, to resolve informally any matter regarding performance or conduct which might be subject to this procedure. Where appropriate, at the discretion of the Research Integrity Officer, this may involve a process of mediation. Where the Research Integrity Officer does not consider it appropriate to attempt to resolve the dispute.

5.6 Throughout the course of an investigation, investigative procedures will be conducted in a manner that is fair to all parties, and in accordance with relevant laws. Respondents will be provided with the opportunity to present their argument(s) or explanation(s) in both written and verbal form. In addition, respondents will be afforded the opportunity to review any response(s) to their argument(s) or explanation(s) and to provide further information or documentation in support of their case.

5.7 Following receipt of a complaint or allegation of potential research misconduct, the Research Integrity Officer (or an appropriate person or persons appointed by him/her for that purpose) will conduct a preliminary investigation. This investigation will be conducted in a timely manner and the Research Integrity Officer (or the person(s) nominated by him/her) will seek advice from at least two members of the Senior Management Team, ensuring that neither representative is the Principal Investigator of the project in question. The Research

Integrity Officer (or the person(s) nominated by him/her) may seek the advice of other such persons, internal or external to the organisation as s/he or they consider appropriate having regard to the nature of the complaint or allegation. The Research Integrity Officer may also, at his/her discretion, choose to conduct a preliminary investigation of anonymous complaints, depending on the seriousness of the issues, the credibility of the complaint, and the feasibility of confirming the complaint with credible sources.

5.8 The preliminary investigation shall be limited to determining whether there is demonstrated a prima facie case of misconduct which should be the subject of a disciplinary hearing or whether an issue can be resolved locally and informally.

5.9 Following the preliminary investigation, if the Research Integrity Officer determines that further investigation is not required, the matter may be dismissed or addressed under another applicable policy or procedure. Complaints or allegations that are considered to be mistaken, frivolous, vexatious and/or malicious will be dismissed at this stage. The Research Integrity Officer will provide the complainant and the respondent with a written determination summarising the reasons for the decision reached following the preliminary review.

5.10 The preliminary investigation of a research integrity complaint or allegation must be conducted in the strictest confidence. The identity of the respondent is confidential. If, following investigation, the Research Integrity Officer concludes that a prima facie case of research misconduct exists, the case will be dealt with under in accordance with the NSRF's grievance and disciplinary procedures.

6. Relevant External Sources

- National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland
- European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity
- UCC Research Code of Conduct (Version 2.4; September 2021)