

## **Birkbeck, University of London Code of Practice on Research Integrity**

### **I Research at Birkbeck**

- I.1 Birkbeck, University of London is a research-intensive university. Central to our mission is the aim of maintaining and developing excellence in research and providing the highest quality research training in all our subject areas, and also of making available the results of research and the expertise acquired, through teaching, publication, partnerships with other organisations and the promotion of civic and public debate. It is embedded in the culture of Birkbeck that we should carry out excellent research across the entire range of disciplines represented in the College's Schools; that this research should range across 'blue skies' scientific work, cutting edge scholarship in the arts, humanities and social sciences, and highly applicable interventions in technology, social policy and artistic work; and that we seek to offer research-led and research-informed teaching at all levels.
- I.2 The College has developed a *Research Strategy 2014-19* (<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/research/birkbeck-research-strategy>) to articulate the way we wish to set about achieving our aims and define the principles that characterise Birkbeck's research using the following themes:
- Inspiring research comes from empowered researchers
  - Everyone contributes
  - Working with others
  - Working across institutional boundaries
  - Good research is critical research
  - Good research is ethical research
  - Good research takes time and sustained attention
  - Research matters
  - Researchers need support and guidance
  - Research and teaching are linked
  - Research needs resources
  - Leadership matters
  - Future researchers matter
  - Equality of Opportunity matters
- I.3 This Code of Practice aims to complement the *Research Strategy* by defining and promoting a culture of good practice in research, demonstrating the College's commitment to a culture and environment where high standards of personal and professional conduct are encouraged and expected.
- I.4 Birkbeck expects all members of the College, including staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students and anyone conducting research on College premises or using College facilities, to observe the highest standards of professionalism, independent thought and application of ethical principles in the conduct of their research. This document provides guidelines on the issues involved in the proper conduct of research and on the standards expected and applies to all research and research-related projects

(such as consultancy and knowledge transfer) regardless of the source of funding. While detailed aspects of the guidelines are more applicable to some subject areas or groups of people than others, the principles of good research practice are relevant to all subject areas.

- 1.5 In this document, the term “Research” refers to all aspects of the research process including developing research questions, preparing applications for research grants and contracts, literature review, research project design, recruiting research participants, undertaking experiments, generating data, data recording and analysis, writing-up and publishing and other forms of disseminating results.
- 1.6 Anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity should contact the Chair of the College Ethics Committee or the Pro Vice Master Research in the first instance

## **2 Principles of research integrity**

- 2.1 Honesty, openness, accountability and integrity are vital qualities for any academic researcher in any academic discipline. At Birkbeck all research, whether funded externally or by the College, is carried out in a climate where high standards of personal conduct are encouraged and expected. Everyone engaged in research, no matter what their level of experience, will act with the highest standards of integrity.
- 2.2 To foster and maintain its research culture, Birkbeck expects all researchers to understand and observe these principles:
  - Maintaining open and honest professional standards
  - Exercising accountability in research
  - Ensuring leadership and cooperation in research groupings
  - Taking special account of the needs of inexperienced researchers
  - Ensuring training and supervision for researchers
  - Planning and conducting research in accordance with the requirements of funders and all relevant College and external codes of practice, legislation and regulatory bodies
  - Following best current ethical practice
  - Exercising care and respect for participants in research projects
  - Ensuring data is stored, shared, preserved and disposed of in an appropriate and responsible manner
  - Documenting and making available research data
  - Ensuring the results of research are openly accessible
  - Acknowledging the contribution of others
  - Taking appropriate measures to protect intellectual property
  - Taking action if research misconduct is suspected
  - Managing any conflicts of interest in line with the College policy

## **3 Open and honest professional standards**

- 3.1 Researchers are responsible for exercising honesty in respect of their own actions in research and in their responses to the actions of other researchers. This applies to all

aspects of the research process. While recognising that researchers will want to protect their own research interests in the process of planning research and obtaining results, the College encourages researchers to be as open as possible in discussing their work.

#### **4 Leadership and Organisation**

- 4.1 It is the responsibility of the College's senior academic staff, especially the Master, Vice Master, Pro Vice Master for Research and Executive Deans, to ensure that a climate is created which allows research to be conducted with integrity, to excellent standards and in accordance with best practice.
- 4.2 Within Schools, the Assistant Deans for Research, Assistant Deans for subject areas (Heads of Department), Directors of Research Centres and leaders of research groups are expected to promote a research environment of mutual cooperation, in which all members of a research team are encouraged to develop their skills and in which the open exchange of ideas is fostered. Leaders of research groups (or where there is not a research group leader Assistant Deans for subject areas) will ensure that appropriate direction of research and supervision of researchers is provided, which in the case of students undertaking research should comply with College and national codes of practice and in the case of research staff should be in accordance with the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers*. Responsibilities should be clearly allocated and understood.

#### **5 Accountability in research**

- 5.1 Where research is externally funded, researchers, especially Principal Investigators, must ensure that the research that they are undertaking is consistent with the terms and conditions agreed with the funder of the research. This includes, but is not restricted to, ensuring that the research programme carried out is as defined in the original proposal to the funder (or as defined in amendments agreed with the funder); that the funds are used solely for the research purpose as agreed with the funder; that reports are accurate and delivered on time; and that conditions relating to publication and ownership of Intellectual Property are adhered to.

#### **6 Inexperienced researchers**

- 6.1 Researchers who are new to the academic community will need support as they gain experience. Responsibility for ensuring that new researchers understand good research practice lies with all members of the community, but particularly with leaders of research groups and Assistant Deans for subject areas where there are no group leaders. Good practice includes the induction of researchers to their new environment and the relevant procedures and guidelines for the School and the College.

#### **7 Training and Supervision**

- 7.1 All researchers should receive good supervision appropriate to their experience at all relevant stages of the research process. Leaders of research groups, or Assistant Deans for subject areas where there are no group leaders, are responsible for ensuring that all new researchers undertake appropriate training in accordance with their specific requirements. Supervision for research students will follow the provisions of the College's *Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students*. The College will provide

training for researchers and supervisors.

## **8 Planning and Conducting Research**

8.1 When designing research projects, researchers should take all reasonable measures to ensure accuracy of information and compliance with the relevant College procedures.

8.2 Purchasing and expenditure of funds should be in accordance with the terms and conditions of any grant or contract held for the research and the College's *Financial Regulations*. Guidance on compliance with the financial regulations in the conduct of research is available from the Research Grants and Contracts Office.

8.3 Researchers must develop ethical protocols for conducting the research that are in accordance with the College's *Procedures and Responsibilities for Ethical Review* (please also see section 9).

8.4 Researchers must be honest about conflict of interest issues, whether actual, potential or perceived, at the earliest opportunity and at all stages of research, e.g. when designing projects, applying for funding, identifying collaborators and reporting results.

Research Students or visiting researchers who are not employees of the College should normally report any concerns to their supervisor in the first instance (or seek independent advice as described in paragraph 9 of the Research Misconduct Procedures).

Conflicts of interest should be managed in line with the College's Code of Conduct for Managing Conflicts of Interest.

8.5 There should be a Data Management Plan, clearly setting out arrangements for the management, security, storage and disposal of research data, in compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and the *College Data Management and Sharing policy*, in place and understood and implemented by all researchers involved in the project.

8.6 All research that includes the appointment of researchers must be carried out in a manner that complies with:

- The College's Equal Opportunities and Diversity policy
- The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
- The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Safety Regulations approved under this Act
- The College's Health and Safety policies and regulations
- The College's employment policies

8.7 Advice on Health and Safety should be sought as appropriate from the Department Safety Co-ordinators and the College Health and Safety Officer.

8.8 All researchers involved in the project should be made aware of this Code and the relevant policies and procedures.

8.9 In collaborative projects, researchers should try to anticipate any issues which may

arise (e.g. around research design, authorship and publishing, the ownership of IP, and who is responsible for resolving questions about research integrity/misconduct). These issues should be discussed and agreed before the project commences and this should be held under review for the duration of the project (in recognition that things may change over the course of the project). Normally, for inter-HEI collaborations, the collaboration agreement should specify which institutions policies take precedence in the event that the policies conflict.

## **9 Ethical practice**

9.1 Ethical research not only protects researchers, research participants and the College against potential harm that could arise during the research process, but it also seeks to make a positive contribution to the interests and well-being of participants, researchers and society as a whole. This can be through many routes, such as actively addressing suffering and hardship, opening out neglected areas of oppression, identifying talents and opportunities for personal growth or social development, or simply expanding the boundaries of knowledge. Birkbeck is fully committed to encouraging ethical research in this broad sense and to ensuring that its research community has ethical practice as a cornerstone of its activities.

9.2 The College's policy on *Responsibilities and Procedures for Ethical Review* apply to

- all researchers in the College (staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students) who are conducting or contributing to research activities;
- all individuals who are not members of the College (including visiting academics and visiting Professors) but who are conducting or contributing to research activities which take place within the College or using college facilities;
- all investigations which may have ethical dimensions and put participants or the College at risk.

9.3 Researchers are responsible for establishing whether ethical approval is likely to be needed for a research project, in accordance with the *Procedures and Responsibilities for Ethical Review*. Researchers should seek advice from their Departmental Research Ethics Officer in the first instance.

9.4 Research projects must not be carried out unless and until all the necessary approvals, notifications and licences are in place. The leader of the research group should ensure that the appropriate approvals are identified, obtained and documented prior to the start of the research.

9.5 The standards and requirements set out in guidelines published by funding bodies, learned societies and other relevant professional bodies must also be observed by researchers within each relevant subject discipline.

## **10 Research results**

10.1 It is important that research ideas can be challenged and tested once published. Researchers should always be prepared to question and critique the outcome of their research. Researchers will check all research results before being made public.

- 10.2 It is important that researchers or research groups should not become subject to pressures that conflict with the normal processes of research inquiry, for example constraints imposed by the source of funding of the research. Researchers should resist any pressure to produce results that suit the specific interests of a funder. This is particularly the case where researchers could be perceived to have a conflict of interest through involvement with the funder. Any such conflict of interest, whether actual, potential or perceived, should be disclosed at the earliest opportunity following the procedure described in the Colleges policy. Any pressure to suppress research findings should be reported to the Assistant Dean for the subject area, or to the PVM Research, or the Chair of College Ethics Committee, and (in all cases) to the Head of the Research Grants and Contracts Office. All sensitive research should be subject to ethical review as described in Colleges 'Responsibilities and Procedures for Ethical Review' document.

## **11 Documenting Results**

- 11.1 Throughout their work, researchers should keep clear and accurate records of the procedures followed, of the sources of research material and of the results obtained, including interim results. This is necessary not only as a means of demonstrating proper research practice, but also in case questions are subsequently asked about the conduct of the research, the results obtained or ownership of the data or results. Proper documenting and storage procedures will minimise cases of allegations of research misconduct where original data cannot be located or replicated.
- 11.2 Researchers are responsible for complying with the Data Protection Act ensuring that copyright, any third party's intellectual property rights and confidentiality are not breached. The Data Protection Act applies to research that involves personal data collected about living individuals and requires that such data should not be used for purposes other than those for which it was collected. Researchers should understand and observe the College *Data Protection Policy*.
- 11.3 In cases where recordings or transcripts of interviews or group discussions are the basis for research, these should be kept confidential and should follow the procedures agreed when ethical approval was given for the research. In clinical studies, consent forms and raw data should be kept securely. In social sciences and humanities research, sources (such as published works, archives or collections) should be accurately recorded and any transcription or data archive rules recorded at the start of the project to ensure consistency. Maintenance of laboratory notebooks and other data sources can also help to ensure that intellectual property can be protected. In all cases, research data should be managed in line with the Data Management Plan prepared as part of the research grant application, or at the beginning of the research project.

## **12 Management of Data**

- 12.1 Primary data which is the basis for publications should be securely stored for an appropriate time in a durable form, in accordance with the Data Management Plan, funder requirements, undertakings given to participants and the College *Data Protection Policy* and *Data Management and Sharing Policy*.

- 12.2 The means of data storage (including paper, electronic media, electronic data archive) should be appropriate to the task, and for studies requiring ethical approval must be consistent with the methods agreed when ethical approval was given for the research. Provision should be made for the automatic back-up of data or software stored on a computer and special attention should be paid to guaranteeing the security of electronic data. Advice should be sought from the Research Data Support Manager.
- 12.3 The appropriate period for retaining data depends on circumstances and varies according to subject area. Where research is externally funded, any requirements of the funder for keeping data must be complied with. Timescales and mode of data storage for each project should be confirmed at the outset of the research programme in the Data Management Plan.
- 12.4 Disposal of data and samples should be carried out in accordance with the appropriate internal or external procedures according to the nature of the research data and any School or College Ethics Committee requirements and must be consistent with undertakings given to participants.
- 12.5 Researchers must also take into account legislation affecting the storage and release of data, for example:
- The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, through which individuals have the right to request any information that is held by the College. The College as a publicly funded body is obliged to comply with the Act, and all staff have the responsibility to make themselves aware of their obligations under the Act
  - The Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) through which individuals have the right to request any environmental information (information about state of the environment and factors, measures and activities that affect it) that is held by the College. The College is obliged to comply with the Regulations, and all staff have the responsibility to make themselves aware of their obligations under the Act
  - The Data Protection Act (DPA) places responsibilities and obligations on the College in the way that it processes information about living individuals. The Act gives individuals certain rights and also specifies that those who record and use personal data must be open about how that information is used and must follow specific data protection principles when processing that information

### **13 Documenting and making available research data**

- 13.1 Birkbeck recognises the importance of the principle of public accessibility of research data to the integrity of the research process, and the value of research data as a resource both to the originating researcher(s) and to subsequent researchers for data re-use and meta-analysis.
- 13.2 Birkbeck further recognises that publicly-funded research data are a public good, produced in the public interest, and should be made openly available with as few restrictions as possible in a timely and responsible manner that does not impinge upon the intellectual property of the originating researcher(s).
- 13.3 Researchers should lodge relevant data and arrange for it to be made accessible under the provisions of the College *Data Sharing and Management Policy*.

## **I4 Publishing Results**

- 14.1 The issue of authorship is important in the context of good research practice and must be taken seriously. The College expects anyone listed as an author on a paper to accept personal responsibility for their ownership of the contents of the paper.
- 14.2 Authorship conventions vary across disciplines; however, the College expects a fair recognition of contribution in line with disciplinary norms. Any person who participates in a substantial way to the relevant research should be given the opportunity to be included as an author of any publication derived from that research. Only those who have participated in the research should be listed as authors. The contributions of formal collaborators and all others who directly assist or indirectly support the research should also be properly acknowledged. This applies to any circumstances in which statements about the research are made, including provision of information about the nature and process of the research, and in publishing the outcome. Where appropriate, the funders of the research and other collaborating bodies should be acknowledged.
- 14.2 If an error is found that impacts on the value of the published results, the researcher should discuss the matter with the other researchers in the project and publish a correction as soon as possible. Where the findings are found to be in serious doubt, a retraction should be published promptly.
- 14.3 Research should be published and disseminated when appropriate and wherever possible. Researchers are responsible for meeting the requirements of the College's *Open Access Policy*.

## **I5 Peer Review**

- 15.1 Peer review makes a vital contribution to scholarship, and the College encourages all researchers to consider acting as peer reviewers as appropriate for their discipline. The College recognises the need for researchers who are acting as peer reviewers to be thorough and objective, and to maintain the confidentiality of the process.
- 15.2 The College expects that any researchers who choose to act as peer reviewers to discharge these duties with the highest standards of thoroughness and thoughtfulness, and that these researchers will not retain or copy the material they have been asked to review nor use a research design or research findings from material they have been asked to review, other than: as necessary for the purposes of the review; in line with the guidance of the body who has asked for the review; or with the express permission of the original author.
- 15.3 The College expects all researchers to declare any relevant conflicts of interest in peer review by the mechanism appropriate to the review in question, under the terms defined by the body requesting the review.
- 15.4 If a researcher from the College suspects research misconduct in the material they have been asked to review then they should follow the research misconduct policy defined by the body requesting the review.

## **16 Public Engagement, Impact and Intellectual Property**

- 16.1 The College recognises and is supportive of the strategic need to engage the public and society with our research, and is supportive of the principles defined in the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research.
- 16.2 The College recognises that research should be disseminated for the maximum benefit of society at large and expects all researchers to consider how to engage the public with the research and the potential impacts which may arise from their research projects as a standard part of the research development process, whether or not this is an explicit requirement from a funder.
- 16.3 The College believes that the public interest is directly served where access to a piece of research would further the public's understanding of (and/or participation in):
- the debates of the day
  - accountability and transparency in research
  - allowing individuals to understand how research affects their lives and support them to make informed decisions;
  - and, where information is brought to light which affects public wellbeing and safety.
- 16.4 The College notes that considerations about whether or not withholding information is in the public interest include: considerations of national defence, maintaining good international relations; and law enforcement considerations. Commercial interests may also need to be considered. The policies and procedures for ethical review set out how an individual researcher should consider these questions and the process for obtaining approval in each of these cases.
- 16.5 Researchers must ensure that any research project design or any research contracts or agreements that they enter into include provisions for the ownership and management of resulting intellectual property (IP). IP includes (but is not limited to): innovations in research design; research data and findings; processes; hardware and software; apparatus and equipment; substances and materials; and, artistic and literary works including academic and scientific publications.
- 16.6 Under normal circumstances, the College would be the body seeking to protect the IP generated by research projects undertaken by our researchers. However, there are instances where this does not apply. Examples include publication (where the College normally passes copyright to the publisher), research projects undertaken by students (where the IP automatically belongs to the student unless they have chosen to assign it to the College), and collaborative projects (where IP arrangements will be agreed between all parties as part of the collaboration agreement).
- 16.7 It is the responsibility of the lead researcher from the College to anticipate any possible issues relating to IP at the earliest possible opportunity and to agree in advance how they might be addressed, and then to communicate this information to the wider research team.

- 16.8 Researchers must not disclose any research or research findings if this will invalidate commercial property rights and should seek advice where this may be an issue. The College recognises the need to minimise any delay in publication pending the formal protection of IP and the vital role that timely publication plays in maintaining the intellectual infrastructure of disciplines and will work with individual researchers to find the appropriate balance between these two competing demands as and when this situation arises. The presumption of the College is that IP developed from public or charitable funds should be disseminated widely for the maximum possible public benefit.
- 16.8 The College expects researchers to note and comply with any additional conditions relating to IP that may be defined by the funder of the research. In the event that the funders terms and conditions appear to conflict with this policy, the researcher should take advice from the relevant parties within the College (e.g. the Research Grants and Contracts Office).
- 16.9 Further advice about intellectual property can be found at <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/staff-information/research>

\*\*\*\*\* NB this information about IP may contradict the information currently in the Colleges financial regulations until the financial regulations are updated.\*\*\*\*\*

## **17 Research misconduct**

### **17.1 Research misconduct potentially includes:**

- Fabrication – creating false data, research or consent.
- Falsification – inappropriate manipulation of data, images or consent.
- Fraud – deliberate deception.
- Plagiarism – misappropriation of others’ ideas or intellectual property.
- Misrepresentation (whether deliberately, recklessly or by gross negligence) – including suppression of relevant findings and/or data; presenting a flawed interpretation of the data, findings and outcomes; inappropriate declaration of interests or funding; misrepresentation of qualifications or experience; and inappropriate claims of authorship; Undisclosed duplication of publication, including undisclosed duplicate submission of manuscripts for publication
- Mismanagement or inadequate preservation of data or materials – including interim results.
- Breach of duty or care (whether deliberately, recklessly or by gross negligence) including - Disclosing improperly the identity of individuals or groups involved in research without their consent, or other breach of confidentiality; unacceptable risk to or treatment of participants including placing any of those involved in research in danger, whether as subjects, participants or associated individuals, without their prior consent, and without appropriate safeguards even with consent; reputational danger where that can be anticipated; Not taking all reasonable care to ensure that the risks and dangers, the broad objectives and the sponsors of the research are known to participants or their legal representatives, to ensure appropriate informed consent is obtained properly,

explicitly and transparently ; Not observing legal and reasonable ethical requirements or obligations of care for animal subjects, human organs or tissue used in research, or for the protection of the environment; Improper conduct in peer review of research proposals or results (including manuscripts submitted for publication); this includes failure to disclose conflicts of interest; inadequate disclosure of clearly limited competence; misappropriation of the content of material; and breach of confidentiality or abuse of material provided in confidence for peer review purposes

17.2 Research misconduct does not include:

- Honest errors in research design, methodology or the interpretation of results.
- Consideration of unpopular or controversial ideas or methods.
- Challenging received understanding or consensus.
- Poor quality research, unless it involves the intention to mislead or deceive.

17.3 The College will take seriously any allegation of research misconduct. Plagiarism, deception or the fabrication or falsification of results is regarded as a serious disciplinary offence. All researchers are expected to report cases of suspected misconduct or malpractice and to do so in a responsible and appropriate manner in accordance with the College's procedures.

## **18 Procedure for dealing with allegations of research misconduct**

18.1 The Colleges procedure for dealing with allegations of research misconduct can be found (<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/committees/research-integrity/Research%20misconduct%20procedures%20V11%20after%20CEC%2022%2011.pdf>).

18.2 Anonymised summary information about significant research misconduct issues is made available to relevant institutional bodies (CEC, Governors, HR, Research Committee etc.) and a statement about research integrity will be included in the annual research report which is produced for the Governors. This statement shall also be published on our website.

18.3 Annual reviews of research integrity will be provided to funders of research if they so require.

Agreed by College Ethics Committee November 2017  
(Next review due November 2019)