Higher Education Authority 2020

HEA Principles of Good Practice in Research within Irish Higher Education Institutions

Purpose

Research, which creates new knowledge and enables the application of knowledge in innovative ways, is a core part and purpose of the Irish higher education system. It[1] ranges from fundamental to applied research activity and this is undertaken to varying degrees across all institutions and across all disciplines. It enriches undergraduate formation, trains a skilled postgraduate and postdoctoral community, and contributes to societal as well as enterprise development across Ireland. Research within Irish higher education institutions supports the realisation of a range of other public policy objectives, including those concerning health, the environment and culture. Globally, it contributes to Ireland's reputation and supports institutional performance in international rankings. Excellence in the practice of research in our higher education system is therefore essential to our national development and international standing. It is undertaken in a global context where knowledge and people are increasingly mobile.

The principles outlined in this document are focused at institutional level and intend to promote good practice in research conduct by:
- Bringing together the main elements of good practice in higher education research,
- Articulating high-level principles within each of these, and
- Signposting to more detailed policies where available.

It does not prescribe how to put these policies into operation: this is a matter for each institution in keeping with its own research activities and wider environment. It is, nevertheless, the responsibility of each institution to ensure researcher awareness of all relevant policies and to prioritise their adherence to these. Senior leadership on the good and proper conduct of research is vital to its embeddedness and effectiveness in each higher education institution.

There are seven elements of good practice in research conduct which institutions are encouraged to follow:
i.   Excellence in research and academic freedom;
ii.   Research integrity and ethics;
iii.   Open research;
iv.   Intellectual property and knowledge transfer;
v.   Researcher development;
vi.   Research project and programme management;
vii.   Dignity and respect.

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[1] The internationally recognised OECD Frascati Manual considers three areas of research: basic, applied and experimental.

i. Excellence in Research and Academic Freedom

The institution promotes excellence in how research is conducted at all career stages and across all disciplines.

It embraces the fundamental principles of academic freedom and recognises that its researchers shall have the freedom, within the law, to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas and to state unpopular opinions.

ii. Research Integrity and Ethics

Research integrity provides the foundation for all good practice in research in Irish higher education institutions. This document complements the updated National Policy on Research Integrity that has been developed through the National Research Integrity Forum and supports the national commitments contained therein.

The institution upholds the fundamental principles of honesty, accuracy, objectivity and methodological rigour in the conduct of research. It recognises the need to actively foster a culture of research integrity at all levels of the institution, and the importance of senior leadership in this regard.

Policies and procedures for research misconduct including but not limited to fabrication, falsification and plagiarism, are in place, clearly communicated and explicitly enforced.

Training on research integrity is provided to support the translation of policy into practice and to ensure that all researchers fully understand their obligations and responsibilities at all stages of the research process.

Where there are human or animal participants, approval is secured from the appropriate ethics committee and other appropriate regulatory bodies. The institutional duty of care for vulnerable participants is fully considered and acted upon.

Policies for institutional conflicts of interest are in place, fully up-to-date and enforced.

iii. Open Research

In keeping with developments at EU level, Open Research is a priority for the Irish higher education system. This is illustrated in the work of the National Open Research Forum and recognised in the principles articulated in Ireland's National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment.

The institution is engaging with the advancement of the evolving Open Research agenda and is working towards its principles, including that:

➢ Scholarly publications and research data developed are as open as possible and only as closed as necessary (while fully respecting appropriate data privacy responsibilities and disciplinary needs);
➢ Research data produced at the institution reflect the FAIR principles: findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable;
➢ Data produced is properly managed, stored and retained;
➢ Researchers are supported in their engagement with the developing Open Research agenda.

iv. Intellectual Property and Knowledge Transfer

The Higher Education Authority, through its governance oversight of the higher education system and its work with Knowledge Transfer Ireland, has supported institutional oversight of intellectual property (IP) management.

The institution is fully committed to the management and use of IP, in keeping with the 2019 National IP Protocol.

Fully respecting this, the institution seeks to maximise the dissemination of its research outputs in recognition of their public importance and the Exchequer investment in them.

Where there is external collaboration, for example with enterprise or internationally, the institution works with these partners to ensure appropriate conduct of collaborative research in all its forms, including projects, programmes and placements.

v. Researcher Development

The institution supports the professional development of its researchers, at all career stages. This includes supporting them to maintain their knowledge of, and skills in, good research practice throughout their careers. Cognisance is also taken of the evolution of good practice in this area. This is illustrated nationally, for instance, in the Researcher Career Framework whose development is being led by the Irish Universities Association and in the report recommendations arising from the HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions and from the subsequent Gender Equality Taskforce in their Gender Action Plan. It is manifested internationally through initiatives such as the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment.

This institutional duty of care applies at all researcher career stages, including:
➢ Doctoral students, as outlined in the National Framework for Doctoral Education and Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes;

- Those being supervised and their supervisors, with particular regard to those researchers who are becoming supervisors for the first time;
- Early-career researchers;
- Established and leading researchers.

The institution is also committed to the professional development of its research support staff.

vi. Research Project and Programme Management

The institution ensures clear lines of accountability for the organisation and management of research taking place under its auspices. This includes, but is not limited to, compliance with and adherence to relevant:

- Laws, regulations and standards;
- Financial policies including procurement, as well as funder terms and conditions;
- Health and safety procedures;
- Quality assurance procedures;
- Policies in relation to recruitment and remuneration of research personnel;
- Insurance and indemnity requirements;
- Institutional risk identification and management procedures.

vii. Dignity and Respect

The institution prioritises dignity and respect for:

- Its researchers and associated staff, covering but not limited to:
    - Recognition of good practice in the conduct of research and of research support;
    - Freedom from bullying and harassment, with clear countermeasures in place;
    - Equality, diversity and inclusion.
- All others participating in research being undertaken under its auspices, covering but not limited to:
    - Care for vulnerable participants;
    - Appropriate regard for moral and cultural values;
    - Informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and data protection;
    - Due respect for animal subjects.
- The citizen in terms of:
    - The return on public research investment through various forms of impact, including its role in human capital development, as well as its economic, societal, cultural and intellectual objectives;
    - Value-for-money and accountability;
    - Dissemination of, and public engagement with, publicly funded research.