HEA PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN RESEARCH WITHIN IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
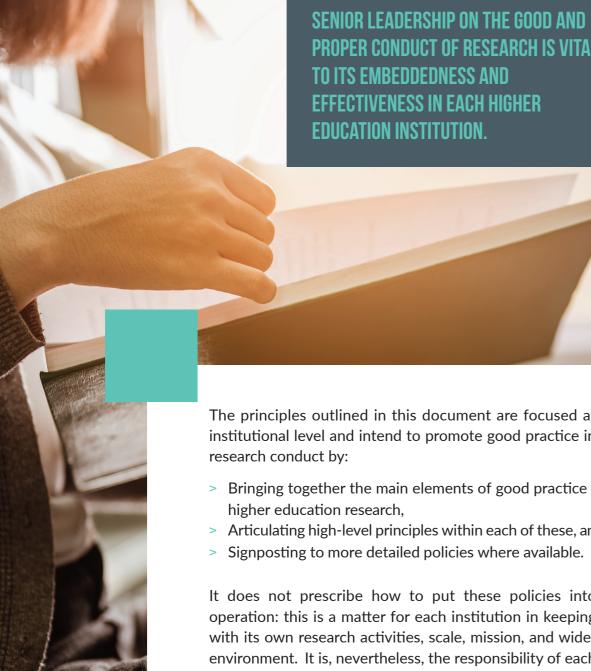AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

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.[1] Research ranges from fundamental to applied research activity and this is undertaken to varying degrees across all institutions and across all disciplines.[2] 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 the UN Sustainable Development Goals and 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. This global context requires that Irish institutions align with best practices of co-designed and co-produced research, knowledge and transformative action.

[1] Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy is a whole-of government strategy that aims to build on the embedding of good research practices already achieved to continue to drive research excellence and quality outcomes.
[2] The internationally recognised OECD Frascati Manual considers three areas of research: basic, applied and experimental.

RESEARCH WITHIN IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS SUPPORTS THE REALISATION OF THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND A RANGE OF OTHER PUBLIC POLICY OBJECTIVES, INCLUDING THOSE CONCERNING HEALTH, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE.

> **SENIOR LEADERSHIP ON THE GOOD AND PROPER CONDUCT OF RESEARCH IS VITAL TO ITS EMBEDDEDNESS AND EFFECTIVENESS IN EACH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION.**

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, scale, mission, 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 NINE ELEMENTS OF GOOD PRACTICE IN RESEARCH CONDUCT WHICH INSTITUTIONS ARE EXPECTED 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

VIII.
GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

IX.
RESEARCH AND SUSTAINABILITY

I.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The institution promotes excellence in all forms of research and in all aspects of how research is conducted at all career stages and across all disciplines. The institution 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 and the Framework to Enhance Research Integrity in Research Collaborations that have been developed through the National Research Integrity Forum and supports the national commitments contained therein. The institution is represented and is engaged in an active role in the Forum.

THE INSTITUTION UPHOLDS THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF HONESTY, ACCURACY, OBJECTIVITY AND METHODOLOGICAL RIGOUR IN THE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH.

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[3], 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 informed by international good practice[4] is provided to support the translation of policy into practice and to ensure that all researchers at all levels fully understand their obligations and responsibilities at all stages of the research process. Training on research integrity is to be provided as early as possible in a researcher's career and in the pathways provided for students into research including, where appropriate, in early stage pathways. Institutions are committed to providing access to training targeted at researchers transitioning into independent research supervision.

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.

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3   Guideline for Promoting Research Integrity in Research Performing Organisations
4   The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity

III.

OPEN RESEARCH

In keeping with developments at EU level, including the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024, Open Research is a priority for the Irish higher education system.

The commitment to Open Research is illustrated in the work of the National Open Research Forum and recognised in the principles and actions articulated in Ireland's National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment and National Action Plan for Open Research 2022-2030. The institution is engaging with the advancement of the evolving Open Research agenda and is working towards its principles, including that:

a. 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);

b. Research data produced at the institution reflect the FAIR principles: findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable;

c. Data produced is properly managed, stored and retained;

d. Researchers are supported in their engagement with the developing Open Research agenda and with the training available.

THE INSTITUTION IS ENGAGING WITH THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE EVOLVING OPEN RESEARCH AGENDA AND IS WORKING TOWARDS ITS PRINCIPLES.

IV.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The Higher Education Authority, through its governance and 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 exploitation of IP to maximise economic and social impact, in keeping with the 2019 National IP Protocol.

Fully respecting this, the institution seeks to maximise complementary 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, placements and the timely execution of license agreements with industry and new spin-out companies as appropriate.

THE INSTITUTION SEEKS TO MAXIMISE COMPLEMENTARY DISSEMINATION OF ITS RESEARCH OUTPUTS.

V.

RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT

THE INSTITUTION SUPPORTS THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ITS RESEARCHERS, AT ALL CAREER STAGES.

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 and ongoing work on career profiling by the National Framework for Doctoral Education Advisory Forum (NFDE) 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. Institutions are proactively engaged in reform of research assessment, in line with the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024.

This institutional duty of care applies at all researcher career stages, including:

a. Doctoral students, as outlined in the National Framework for Doctoral Education and Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes;
b. Those being supervised and their supervisors, with particular regard to those researchers who are becoming supervisors for the first time;
c. Early-career researchers;
d. 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.

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:

a. Laws, regulations and standards including Export Controls Regulations, as set out in the guide published by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Export Licensing and Control: Information for Exporters, and which are part of a global framework designed to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to preserve regional stability and to protect human rights[5];

b. Financial policies including procurement, as well as funder terms and conditions;

c. Health and safety procedures;

d. Quality assurance procedures as set out in the Topic Specific QA Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes;

e. Policies in relation to recruitment and remuneration of research personnel;

f. Insurance and indemnity requirements;

g. Institutional risk identification and management procedures.

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[5] The European Commission's 'Tackling R&I foreign interference' provides a non-exhaustive list of possible mitigation measures that can help HEIs and RPOs to develop a comprehensive strategy, tailored to their need

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, including sexual harassment, with clear countermeasures in place;
  - Gender, 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 inter-alia through various forms of impact, including the role of research in human capital development, as well as its economic, societal, cultural and intellectual objectives;
  - Value-for-money and accountability, including effective collaboration with industry and other third parties to improve research outputs and enhance economic return on investment.
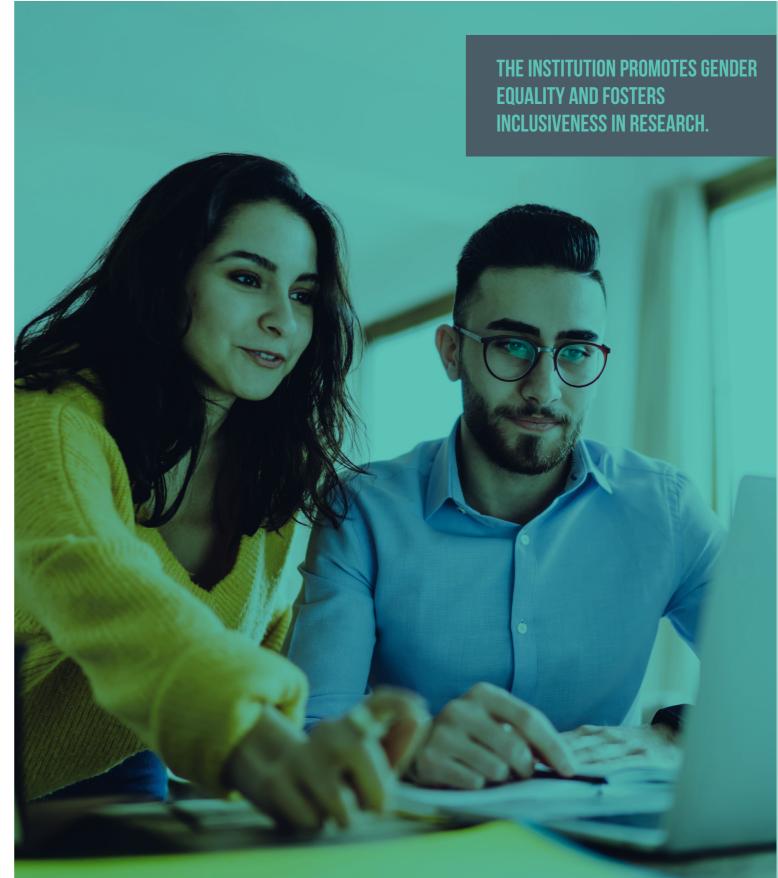 - Dissemination of, and public engagement with, publicly funded research.
  - Institutional planning for impact with reference to the work of Campus Engage as set out in their suite of policy briefings on Engaged Research for Impact for HEIs, Senior Civil Servants and Policy Makers and for funding agencies.

THE INSTITUTION PRIORITISES DIGNITY AND RESPECT FOR ITS RESEARCHERS AND ASSOCIATED STAFF, ALL OTHERS PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH BEING UNDERTAKEN UNDER ITS AUSPICES AND THE CITIZEN.

VIII.

GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

The institution promotes gender equality and fosters inclusiveness in research. Institutions will have regard to ERA priority action 5, "Promote gender equality and foster inclusiveness, taking note of the Ljubljana Declaration" as outlined in European Research Area Policy Agenda 2022-2024 and will be cognisant of Ireland's obligations as a signatory to the Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality. Key objectives in this area include:

> gender equality in research careers;
> gender balance in decision-making;
> the integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content;
> an inclusive approach that addresses elements of equality beyond gender.

THE INSTITUTION PROMOTES GENDER EQUALITY AND FOSTERS INCLUSIVENESS IN RESEARCH.

IX.

RESEARCH AND SUSTAINABILITY

The institution recognises its responsibility to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its important role in securing a sustainable future and to the implementation of The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development.

Through its research activity, the institution will endeavour to bring about positive change and solutions to significant global challenges with regard to Ireland's Climate Action Plan (2021) and will support researchers in achieving the objectives of the Plan as they relate to project management.

Across its research activity, the institution pays due regard to potential direct and indirect impacts on the environment, the 'Do No Significant Harm' principles (Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852), and the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Researchers will be supported to ascertain the connections between their research and the SDGs.

RESEARCHERS WILL BE SUPPORTED TO ASCERTAIN THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THEIR RESEARCH AND THE SDGS.