
Research Integrity Policy

Policy Sponsor:	Provost and Vice President Academic
Policy Contact:	Manager, Research Services
Policy Number:	N/A
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Procedure:	Breach of Research Integrity Procedures

Purpose

To specify the responsibilities of researchers with respect to research integrity, to define breach of research integrity, and to delineate the responsibilities of Athabasca University (AU) in addressing an allegation of a breach of research integrity. This policy and its related procedures reflect relevant Tri-Agency definitions and standards.

This policy applies to faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and other personnel involved directly or indirectly in research, including, but not limited to research assistants/associates, technical and support staff, adjunct professors, visiting scholars, and institutional administrators and officials representing the university.

Definitions

Allegation	A declaration, statement, or assertion communicated in writing indicating that there has been, or continues to be, a breach of research integrity.
Complainant	An individual or representative from an organization who has notified AU of a potential breach of policy regarding research integrity.



Conflict of interest	<p>The incompatibility of two or more duties, responsibilities or interests (personal or professional) of an individual or institution as they related to the ethical conduct of research, such that one cannot be fulfilled without compromising the other.</p> <p>Conflict of interest may arise in research when activities or situations place an individual in a real, potential or perceived conflict between the duties or responsibilities related to the research, and personal, institutional or other interests. These interests include, but are not limited to, business, commercial or financial interests pertaining to the individual, their family members, friends, or their former, current or prospective professional associates.</p>
Funding agreement	<p>A written agreement that sets out the terms and conditions that a funding agency or research sponsor and a researcher agree to for a particular grant or award. It defines the researcher's responsibilities, what constitutes a breach of the agreement, and the consequences of a breach.</p>
Inquiry	<p>The process of reviewing an allegation to determine whether the allegation is responsible, the particular policy or policies that may have been breached, and whether an investigation is warranted based on the information provided in the allegation.</p>
Investigation	<p>A systematic process of examining an allegation, collecting and examining the evidence related to the allegation, and making a decision as to whether a breach of research integrity has occurred.</p>
Misconduct	<p>An action that constitutes a breach of policy.</p>
Research	<p>An undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry or systematic investigation.</p>
Researcher	<p>Anyone who conducts research activities.</p> <p>Includes, but is not limited to, faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and other personnel involved directly or indirectly in research, including, but not limited to research assistants/associates, technical staff, adjunct professors, visiting professors, and institutional administrators.</p>
Respondent	<p>An individual who is identified in an allegation as having possibly breached university policy.</p>
Responsible allegation	<p>An allegation made in good faith, confidentially and without malice, that is based on facts, and which falls within one or more of the breaches set out in this policy</p>



Sponsor	An external entity that enters into a written agreement with AU to provide financial or other support for research activities.
Tri-Agency	Canada's three federal research agencies: the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Policy Statements

Researchers are responsible for conducting their research in strict accordance with

- a. relevant university policies and procedures,
- b. elements of research integrity outlined in [Appendix A](#) of this policy,
- c. ethical standards,
- d. terms and conditions of any related funding agreements, and
- e. relevant Tri-Agency policy and procedures in effect at the time and as amended from time to time.

Allegations of misconduct against students that relate to their meeting of course or program requirements shall be dealt with under the AU Calendar. Any other allegation of breach of research integrity shall be dealt with under this policy.

Individuals are expected to report in good faith any information pertaining to potential breach of research integrity.

Breach of research integrity includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Fabrication: Making up data, source material, methodologies or findings, including graphs and images.
- b. Falsification: Manipulating, changing, or omitting data, source material, methodologies or findings, including graphs and images, without acknowledgement and which results in inaccurate findings or conclusions.
- c. Destruction of research records: The destruction of one's own or another's research data or records to specifically avoid the detection of wrongdoing or in contravention of the applicable funding agreement, institutional policy and/or laws, regulations and professional or disciplinary standards.
- d. Plagiarism: Presenting and using another's published or unpublished work, including theories, concepts, data, source material, methodologies or findings, including graphs and images, as one's own, without appropriate referencing, and, if required, without permission.
- e. Redundant publications: The re-publication of one's own previously published work, or part thereof, or data, in the same or another language, without adequate acknowledgement of the source or justification.
- f. Invalid authorship: Inaccurate attribution of authorship, including attribution of authorship to persons other than those who have contributed sufficiently to take responsibility for the intellectual content, or agreeing to be listed as author to a publication for which one made little or no material contribution.



- g. Inadequate acknowledgement: Failure to appropriately recognize contributions of others in manner consistent with their respective contributions and authorship policies of relevant publications.
- h. Mismanagement of conflict of interest: Failure to appropriately manage any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest in accordance with university and/or funding agency policies and procedures.
- i. Misuse of research funds: Unauthorized and intentional diversion of research funds from the university, provincial or federal granting agencies or other research sponsors.
- j. Failure to adhere to ethical standards: Failure to comply with ethical standards related to the protection of human subjects or the welfare of laboratory animals.

Allegations of breach of research integrity shall be reported in writing to the Associate Vice President, Research (AVPR). Allegations shall be signed, dated and include supporting documentation.

Unsigned allegations will not normally be considered however if the AVPR receives compelling evidence of a breach of research integrity anonymously, the AVPR may initiate an inquiry based on this evidence.

Upon receipt of an allegation, the AVPR will conduct an initial inquiry to determine whether the allegation is responsible and warrants an investigation.

The AVPR shall deal with allegations in an unbiased and timely manner and shall ensure that all parties involved are advised of the procedures available to them.

Persons against whom allegations of breach of research integrity have been made shall be advised by the AVPR at the earliest possible opportunity, and shall be afforded the opportunity to respond.

Subject to any applicable laws, including privacy laws, and existing funding agreements, the AVPR shall immediately advise the relevant research sponsor(s) of allegations of breach of research integrity that involve significant financial, health and safety, or other risks and shall submit additional reports as required regarding the investigation of the allegations.

All documents or statements are required to be made available to all relevant parties at the outset and during the course of an investigation, subject only to the need to respect the privacy of third parties.

If the AVPR deems investigation to be warranted, an Investigation Committee shall be formed in accordance with the [Breach of Research Integrity Procedures](#).

Respondents and Complainants are entitled to obtain representation in investigations. Representatives may include union or association officials, legal counsel, or any other chosen person.

University authorities shall take reasonable precautions to protect the funds of any external funding agency or research sponsor during the course of an investigation of an allegation of breach of research integrity.



University authorities shall protect, to the extent possible, an individual making an allegation in good faith or providing information related to an allegation taking into account applicable privacy laws and regulations.

The respondent has the right to appeal any decision made in relation to an allegation of breach of research integrity.

Appeals shall be submitted in writing to the Provost and Vice President Academic. The decision of the Provost and Vice President Academic shall be final.

University authorities may take disciplinary action against employees or students who make allegations of misconduct that are reckless, malicious or in bad faith.

Where there is any conflict between this policy and any collective agreement, or, in the case of students, the AU Calendar, such collective agreement or AU Calendar shall take precedence and this policy shall be modified accordingly.

Applicable Legislation and Regulations

[2nd edition of Tri-Agency Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans](#) (2010) and as amended from time to time.

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) [Memorandum of Understanding on Roles and Responsibilities in the Management of Federal Grants and Awards](#) (2011, December) and as amended from time to time.

[Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (*The Framework*) (2011, December) and as amended from time to time.

[Terms and Conditions of Agreement between AUBG and AUFA](#)
[Collective Agreement between AUBG and AUPE](#)
[Collective Agreement between AUBG and CUPE](#)
[Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)

Related References, Policies, Procedures and Forms

[Breach of Research Integrity Procedures](#)
[Conflict of Interest in Research Policy](#)
[Conflict of Interest in Research Procedures](#)
[Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Policy](#)
[Records Management Policy](#)
[Student Academic Misconduct Policy](#)
[Protected Disclosure \(Whistleblower\) Policy](#)

History

The Governors of Athabasca University, Motion # 180-12, January 11, 2013 (approved)



Appendix A Promoting Research Integrity

Researchers shall strive to follow the best research practices honestly, accountably, openly and fairly in the search for, and in the dissemination of knowledge. In addition, researchers shall follow the requirements of applicable institutional policies and professional or disciplinary standards and shall comply with applicable laws and regulations. At minimum, researchers are responsible for the following:

- a. Providing true, complete and accurate information in funding applications and related documents and representing themselves, their research and their accomplishments in a manner consistent with the norms of the relevant field.
- b. Ensuring that others listed on a funding application have agreed to be included.
- c. Using a high level of rigor in proposing and performing research; in recording, analyzing and interpreting data; and in reporting and publishing data and findings.
- d. Keeping complete and accurate records of data, methodologies and findings in accordance with the applicable funding agreement, institutional policies and/or laws, regulations, and professional or disciplinary standards in a manner that will allow verification or replication of the work by others.
- e. Referencing, and where applicable, obtaining permission for the use of all published and unpublished work, including data, source material, methodologies, findings graphs and images.
- f. Including as authors, with their consent, all those and only those who have materially or conceptually contributed to, and share responsibility for, the contents of the publication or document, in manner consistent with their respective contributions and authorship of relevant publications.
- g. Acknowledging, in addition to authors, all contributors and contributions to the research, including writers, funders and sponsors.
- h. Appropriately managing any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest in accordance with AU policy on conflict of interest.
- i. Providing true, complete and accurate information on documents related to expenditures from grant or award accounts.

Source: *The Framework (2011). Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research* <http://www.rcr.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/framework-cadre/>