



**OP 70.03: RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF  
RESEARCH (RCR)**

**PURPOSE**

Mississippi State University is dedicated to the highest standard of research integrity through the responsible and ethical conduct of all those involved in research. The University is also concerned to protect the health, safety, rights and academic freedom of researchers and the reputation of the University as a center for properly conducted, high quality research. This policy is written to forward those ends, and to comply with the legitimate requirements of outside research funders and collaborators.

The purposes of Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training are to promote the responsible conduct of research, and to discourage research misconduct and questionable research practices, through education.

This policy is designed to comply with the National Institutes of Health (NOT-OD-10-019), the National Science Foundation (Award and Administration Guide, Chapter IV.B) and the United States Department of Agriculture, National Institutes of Food and Agriculture in the Responsible Conduct of Research (NIFA Research Terms and Conditions, February 2013, Page 5).

**DEFINITIONS**

The terms used in this policy statement are defined as follows:

*Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)* is defined as the practice of scientific investigation with integrity. It involves the awareness and application of established professional norms and ethical principles in the performance of all activities related to scientific research.

*Research Misconduct* is defined as fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing or reviewing research, or in reporting research results (see [http://ori.hhs.gov/documents/42\\_cfr\\_parts\\_50\\_and\\_93\\_2005.pdf](http://ori.hhs.gov/documents/42_cfr_parts_50_and_93_2005.pdf)). *Research Misconduct*, however, does not include honest error or honest difference of opinion.

*Fabrication* is defined as making up data or results and recording or reporting them.

*Falsification* is defined as manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.

*Plagiarism* is defined as the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.

## **POLICY**

Everyone carrying out research functions under the auspices of Mississippi State University, whether their current place of work is within or outside University premises, is expected to uphold and promulgate the highest professional standards of science that exemplify responsible practices and maintain society's trust in the scientific enterprise. This includes, but is not limited to, all faculty, staff, visiting researchers, individuals with honorary posts, and registered students. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PIs) on a research project to ensure that all personnel involved in the project are aware of and comply with this policy, as well as other applicable federal, state and University laws, rules, regulations, guidelines, policies and procedures.

Training in the RCR is required of research project personnel who are being supported by funds from the following federal agencies: National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)/National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Willful non-compliance on the part of any project personnel shall result in termination of that person's funding.

## **PROCEDURE FOR RCR TRAINING**

MSU recognizes that instruction in responsible conduct of research occurs formally and informally in educational settings and that informal instruction occurs throughout the research training experience. The procedures provided below are directed at formal instruction in responsible conduct of research. It reflects the accumulated experiences and the best practices of the scientific community over the past two decades. These practices have been incorporated into many of the best regarded programs of instruction in responsible conduct of research.

Core areas defined for instruction include data acquisition, management, sharing and ownership; mentor/trainee responsibilities; publication practices and responsible authorship; peer review; collaborative science; research misconduct; conflict of interest and commitment, human subjects, and research involving animals.

### **I. Responsibilities for Principal Investigator/Co-PIs**

Compliance with the requirements for providing instruction in RCR is a responsibility of the Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-Principal Investigator(s). Each solicitation for funding should be reviewed to determine if RCR requirements apply. Each award notice should be reviewed to determine if there are any RCR reporting requirements. The PI/Co-PIs should communicate the RCR requirement to project personnel and how to complete the requirement. The PI/Co-PIs are responsible for monitoring compliance.

The PI/Co-PIs must ensure that within the first 12 months of the grant period in which other personnel are assigned to the project, each individual complete the CITI online RCR training and attend 4 face-to-face sessions OR enroll in a face-to-face credit course.

The Office of Research Compliance (ORC) will maintain records of all online training and live sessions sponsored by ORC. The PI must take corrective action if individuals do not complete the RCR training requirement within the specified timeframe of training completion.

## **II. RCR Training Requirements**

### **A. Principal Investigator and Co-PIs:**

The PI/Co-PIs on funded NSF, NIH, and USDA-NIFA proposals must complete the MyCourses “What is RCR?” course and the CITI (<https://www.citiprogram.org>) online RCR training before the Office of Sponsored Projects will release an award.

### **B. Other Project Personnel:**

Other project personnel must complete the following RCR training requirement via one of two options listed below:

- 1) CITI online certification in RCR plus attendance at 4 one-hour face-to-face sessions covering ethical issues (8 sessions for NIH projects); or
- 2) Enrollment in an approved credit course in Research Ethics.

For NIH other personnel includes all trainees, fellows, participants, and scholars. For NSF other personnel includes undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers. For USDA/NIFA this includes program directors, faculty, undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and any staff.

All MAFES/FWRC scientists, Administrators, Research Associates, Graduate Research Assistants, and Post-doctoral Associates, regardless of funding source, must complete the MyCourses “What is RCR?” course and the CITI (<https://www.citiprogram.org>) online RCR training.

All other MAFES/FWRC personnel paid from NIFA competitive, Hatch (MAFES 16 funds), or McIntire-Stennis (FWRC 17 funds) must complete RCR training unless granted an exemption. Current exemptions are defined below.

Classes of employees exempt from RCR training requirements include:

- Employees working exclusively in an administrative role on a project (for example, administrative assistant, office associate, etc.).
- Employees whose project roles do not include core principles covered by RCR training (for example, washing glassware, providing animal care, plot preparation, equipment operation/maintenance, greenhouse labor, etc.).

Project personnel who are required to do so must complete the on-line CITI training component within the first 90 days of appointment to a covered project. The face-to-face training component must be completed within the first 12 months of appointment to a covered project.

**C. Course Information:**

A current schedule of face-to-face sessions can be found on the Office of Research Compliance (ORC) website (<http://orc.msstate.edu/conduct/training/>). These sessions are discussions of ethical issues associated with one of the nine core competencies recognized by the Public Health Service (PHS) Policy on Instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research. These sessions will be facilitated by ethics professionals at MSU.

A listing of all approved credit courses can be found on the ORC website. The courses have been determined satisfactory to meet the requirement of a program of study designed to contribute to the knowledge and respect of high ethical standards. A passing grade is required for the course to be counted as RCR training. Anyone wishing to enroll in credit courses should contact the MSU Registrar's Office.

**SOURCES:**

National Institutes of Health:

<http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-10-019.html>

National Science Foundation:

<http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/rcr.jsp>

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)/National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA): [http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/rtc/agencyspecifics/nifa\\_213.pdf](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/rtc/agencyspecifics/nifa_213.pdf) (Page 5).

**REVIEW**

This policy and procedure will be reviewed as needed, but at least every four years, by the Office of Research Compliance with recommendations for revisions presented jointly to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development and the Vice President of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine.

**REVIEWED BY:**

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Vice President for Research and  
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09/23/2016  
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**APPROVED:**

/s/ Mark Keenum  
President

10/11/2016  
Date