



**Middlesbrough**  
**College**

# **Higher Education Code of Practice for Research**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

This Code of Practice sets out the standards that govern the conduct of research at Middlesbrough College. It covers:

- Principles
- Responsibilities
- Legal and ethical requirements
- Research data and records
- Authorship, publication and access to research outputs
- Collaborative working
- Conflict of interest
- Where to go for advice on the conduct of research
- What to do if malpractice or misconduct is suspected.

Research is defined as original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge and understanding and to make research outcomes widely available. Research at Middlesbrough College is based on the principles of high standards, honesty, openness, accountability, integrity, inclusion and safety. The College expects high standards of personal conduct from all those engaged in research, and its research environment is one where excellence and high ethical standards are promoted.

The College's high standards are applicable to all those who conduct, supervise or support research in the College's name, including staff, students and other individuals working on College premises or using College facilities. It also applies to Middlesbrough College staff working in collaboration with other organisations.

All those to whom the Code is applicable are expected to work in accordance with it. The following College policy documents should also be consulted in conjunction with this policy:

- Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy
- Staff Computer Acceptable Use Policy
- Discipline, Suspension and Dismissal Procedure of all Staff (excluding Senior Potholders)
- Data Protection Policy (General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Policy)
- Research Ethics Policy
- Health, Safety, Welfare Policy
- Procedure for dealing with allegations of academic malpractice or misconduct.

## **2.0 Principles for Research Conduct**

The principles which govern the conduct of research at Middlesbrough College are based on the [Nolan Principles of Public Life](#). They are:

- *High Standards*: Researchers are expected to strive for excellence and the highest ethical standards when conducting research.
- *Honesty*: At the heart of all research, regardless of discipline, is the need for researchers to be honest in respect of their own actions in research and in their responses to the actions of other researchers, at every stage in the research process.
- *Openness*: While recognising the need for researchers to protect their own research interest in the process of planning their research and obtaining their results, the College encourages researchers to be as open as possible in discussing their work with other researchers within and outside the College and with the public.
- *Accountability*: Researchers are expected to ensure that the work they undertake is consistent with the expectations of the College and any other parties involved in the research, such as funding or regulatory bodies, professional associations, collaborators or participant groups.
- *Integrity*: Researchers are expected to take appropriate actions to address actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest throughout their research.
- *Inclusion*: Middlesbrough College aims to promote and sustain an inclusive research culture, providing equality of opportunity for all who are part of its research community and advancing equality by identifying and removing barriers affecting researchers. Researchers are expected to treat individuals with dignity and respect, to challenge inequalities, and to anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances in carrying out their research.
- *Safety*: Middlesbrough College and its researchers will ensure the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of all involved in its research and avoid unreasonable risk or harm to its research subjects, participants, researchers and others. Research will only be initiated and continued if the anticipated benefits justify the risks involved.

### **3.0 Responsibilities**

Both the University and individual researchers have responsibility for research conduct and standards. The College is responsible for:

- *Leadership*: it is the responsibility of the College, through the Academic Board and the Research Ethics Committee, to foster a climate in which research is conducted in accordance with good research practice.
- *New researchers*: The College has a special responsibility for the well-being and career development of students and early career researchers. Managers must ensure that there are systems for monitoring and mentoring to provide adequate opportunities for career development.
- Keeping this and other governance documents relating to research conduct current, ensuring that they reflect relevant external requirements.
- Monitoring compliance by all researchers with this Code of Practice.

All those conducting research at Middlesbrough College are responsible for:

- Leadership in maintaining best practice standards among all members of their teams.
- Demonstrating good practice in all aspects of their research.
- Maintaining awareness of the College's and relevant external policies and procedures relating to research.
- Ensuring that their research complies with these policies and procedures, seeking guidance if necessary, and reporting any concerns to the proper persons.
- Engaging with opportunities for training and development.

#### **4.0 Legal and Ethical Requirements**

Middlesbrough College and its researchers must comply with all legal and ethical requirements relating to their research. Research must be conducted in accordance with the highest contemporary ethics standards, and researchers must obtain the required ethical approvals. In particular, researchers must comply with the following requirements:

- Researchers who are planning to collect data or biological samples from human participants must submit protocols for ethics review by the Research Ethics Committee where appropriate and abide by the outcome of such reviews.
- Researchers collecting or using information about living individuals (personal data) must also comply with the requirements of UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) legislation and register their project with the College's Data Protection Officer.

Research data can also be subject to the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations. Researchers must deal appropriately with any requests for information made under this legislation.

#### **5.0 Research Data and Records**

Research data and records must be accurate, and sufficiently detailed and complete in the context of the conventions of the relevant discipline to enable verification of research results and to reflect what was communicated, decided or done.

Data, including electronic data, must be recorded in a durable, secure and retrievable form, be appropriately indexed, and comply with any relevant protocols. Appropriate levels of data security should be applied based on a systematic assessment of sensitivity and risk.

The individual researcher is responsible for the retention and archiving of data and must comply with any external requirements (e.g. funders), and the terms on which ethical approval was granted. Where there are no specific external requirements for retention, the researcher should keep the data as long as is necessary for the purpose of the research, and in line with any data collection agreements, or funder or institutional requirements.

It is the responsibility of each researcher to monitor research outputs and to ensure that the institution complies with its obligations to funders to manage intellectual property arising from research and to disseminate the results of publicly funded research.

Data forming the basis of publications must be available for discussion with other researchers. Where confidentiality provisions apply, the data must be kept in a way that allows reference by third parties without breaching confidentiality. Where data are obtained from limited access databases or via a contractual arrangement, written indication of the location of the original data, or key information regarding the database from which it was obtained, must be retained by the researcher of the unit.

It should be recognised that offering a right of confidentiality to research participants and other persons associated with research cannot be an absolute right. Certain circumstances, such as a risk of imminent harm to a person or persons, or the disclosure of information such as an undetected serious crime, may require a researcher to act in the public interest or in the interest of protecting a person(s), by passing on the information to an appropriate agency such as the police. Where the nature of the research is such that there is a significant risk of such disclosures arising, any agreement made with participants or other persons associated with the research, such as may be made via an information sheet and consent form, should be clear about the limits of any confidentiality right.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to mitigate the risk by asking the consenting persons to avoid giving any information that is not directly relevant to the research topic and that might challenge the confidentiality agreement. Where relevant, advice should be sought from the Middlesbrough College Research Ethics Committee (REC) on developing secure protocols to manage risks associated with confidentiality challenges.

For specific guidance relating to the management of records held on Middlesbrough College computing network, or elsewhere (e.g. laptops, portable storage devices and websites not hosted by Middlesbrough College) researchers are advised to consult the College's Computing Acceptable Use Policy.

## **7.0 Authorship, Publication and Access to Research Outputs**

### Authorship

- For a person to be recorded as an author of a publication requires that s/he is directly involved in the creation of the publication by:
  - being solely responsible for, or making a significant contribution to, the conception of the project, or collection, analysis and interpretation of the data on which the publication is based;

### AND

- writing or revising the intellectual content.
- The right to authorship is not tied to position or profession; ghost, gift or honorary authorship is unacceptable. Authorship must honestly reflect the contribution to the work being published.
- Any part of an article critical to its main conclusion must be the responsibility of at least one author.
- An author's role in a research output must be sufficient for him/her to take public responsibility for at least that part of the output in their area of expertise.
- No person who fulfils the criteria for authorship should be excluded from the submitted work.
- When there is more than one co-author of a research output, one co-author (by agreement with the other authors) must be nominated as executive author for the purposes of administration and correspondence. When there is more than one co-author of a research output, the authors are required to discuss and reach agreement on the order in which authors shall be listed.
- Other persons who contributed to the work who are not authors must be named in Acknowledgements (where the publisher provides for this, and in a manner consistent with the norms of the research field or discipline). An author must ensure that the work of research students, research assistants and technical officers is recognised in a publication derived from research to which they have made a contribution.
- Researchers must comply with authorship criteria appropriate to their discipline and/or according to the requirements of the journal their work is to be published in.



## Publication

- Publication of more than one paper based on the same set(s) or sub-set(s) of data, or material previously published by the same author(s) is not acceptable, except where each subsequent paper fully cross-references and acknowledges the earlier paper or papers (for example, in a series of closely related work, or where a complete work grew out of a preliminary publication and this is fully acknowledged). It is the researcher's obligation to follow publishers' guidelines. Material may normally be republished only when it is for a different audience, e.g. if an internal work-in-progress report becomes a journal article, or if an article in one language is republished in a different language.
- Submission of substantially similar work to more than one publisher at the same time is not acceptable. Work may be submitted to a second publisher only when the first publisher approached has rejected it.
- Publications must include information on the source of financial support for the research and must include a disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest. Financial sponsorship that carries an embargo on such naming of a sponsor should normally be avoided. Therefore, you must seek advice from a Senior Manager, before entering into such an agreement.
- Intellectual Property in relation to publications is governed within College employee's Contract of Employment.
- The Freedom of Information Co-ordinator should be consulted where confidentiality provisions to protect Intellectual Property rights, which may limit free publication and dissemination, are being considered.
- Researchers must ensure that their Middlesbrough College affiliation is properly recorded on publications.

## Access to Research Outputs

- Middlesbrough College believes that the ideas and knowledge from publicly funded research should be made available and accessible for public use, interrogation and scrutiny, as widely, rapidly and effectively as possible, and should be preserved and remain accessible for future generations. Accordingly, all Middlesbrough College-affiliated research outputs, including journal articles (mandatory), published peer reviewed conference proceedings (mandatory), book chapters and similar material (recommended), either in the form of the author's final peer-reviewed manuscript or the formally-published

version, where copyright allows, should be deposited in Canvas upon acceptance for publication or as soon as possible thereafter and no later than three months after the date of acceptance. This version may be replaced or augmented with the final published version of the output, with publisher's type setting and formatting, at a later date if appropriate.

## **8.0 Collaborative Working**

- The College will work with partner organisations to ensure the agreement of, and compliance with, common standards and procedures for the conduct of collaborative research.
- Researchers should be aware of the standards and procedures for the conduct of research followed by any organisations involved in collaborative research that they are undertaking. Being aware the standards is particularly important for international collaborations, where researchers should ensure that they recognise any differences in expectations or requirements. They should also be aware of any contractual requirements involving partner organisations, seeking guidance and assistance where necessary and reporting any concerns or irregularities to the appropriate person as soon as they become aware of it.

## **9.0 Conflicts of Interest**

### Definition

A conflict of interest is a situation in which a researcher, or their close family or associates has a private, personal or commercial interest which may influence the objective exercise of any aspect of their College duties. This may include perceived and potential conflicts of interest. A test for whether a conflict of interest exists is whether an external observer, knowing the facts of the situation, would reasonably think that the person might be influenced by the interest.

The basic principles to be applied to cases of conflict of interest are:

- To disclose always.
- To manage the conflict as appropriate, including prohibiting the activity if necessary.
- To protect the interests of the College, other parties who may be affected, and the public interest.

## Responsibilities

Researchers are responsible for:

- Disclosing to their line manager, any conflict of interest that may arise.
- Complying with all reasonable actions taken to manage or remove such conflicts of interest.

Line managers are responsible for:

- Consulting with the individual involved to determine areas of concern and identify and agree actions.
- Implementing the appropriate action required to manage or eliminate the conflict of interest.
- Documenting the circumstances and action taken.

### **10.0 Advice**

Researchers who have questions about how the provisions of this Code of Practice apply to their research should seek advice from the Higher Education Office or if a research student, their supervisor.

### **11.0 Allegations of Research Malpractice or Misconduct**

Research misconduct or malpractice is characterised as behaviour or action that falls short of the standards required to ensure that the integrity of research at Middlesbrough College is upheld.

Research misconduct or malpractice, which includes acts of omission as well as acts of commission, means any breach of the College's Code of Practice for Research, including, but not limited to:

- fabrication or falsification, including the creation of false data, imagery of other aspects of research, including documentation and/or participant consent, and the inappropriate manipulation/selection of data, imagery, documentation and/or consents;
- dishonesty in proposing, carrying out or reporting results of research, including suppression of relevant findings or data, and misrepresentation of data and/or interest and/or involvement;

- plagiarism, including the general misappropriation or use of others' ideas, intellectual property or work (written or otherwise) without acknowledgement or permission;
- deliberate, dangerous or negligent deviation from accepted practice in carrying out research;
- failure to follow agreed protocols or accepted procedures, or to exercise due care, including:
  - failure to exercise due care in carrying out responsibilities for avoiding unreasonable risk or harm to humans, animals used in research or the environment;
  - failure to properly handle privileged or private information on individuals collected during research;
- facilitation of misconduct in research by collusion in or concealment of such actions by others;
- failure to comply with College policies regarding ethics review;
- intentional non-compliance with:
  - the terms and conditions governing the award of external funding for research;
  - the College's policies and procedures relating to research, including accounting requirements, ethics, and health and safety regulations;
  - any other legal or ethical requirements for the conduct of research.

The College believes that staff and students should feel able to raise legitimate concerns without fear of their position within the College being jeopardised. Therefore, a Whistleblowing Policy for staff and a Complaints Procedure have been created for dealing with such allegations. The Associate Director – HE (Teaching & Learning) is responsible for the investigation of such allegations.

Revision History		
Version	Date	Detail
1.0	September 2017	
1.1	August 2018	Document edited for clarity and to homogenise presentation and implement URLs to College website <a href="#">HE Essential Information</a> page.
1.2	January 2022	Checked for accuracy.