
Integrity in Research

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POLICY STATEMENT

New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) expects that its staff and students will carry out research and scholarly work maintaining the highest ethical and scientific standards of academic integrity. Misconduct of any sort will not be condoned and may be cause for disciplinary action.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to promote and advance a high standard of integrity in research and scholarship at NBCC through careful supervision of research, accepted research methodologies, competent use of methods; adherence to ethical standards and the refusal to engage in or to condone instances of fraud, misconduct and conflict of interest.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This policy applies to employees of NBCC, students enrolled in NBCC, and/or participating in research, or anyone else engaged in research at the College in any capacity.

Research activities include applied research (involves the practical application of knowledge to solve problems), collaborative research, research into teaching and learning; institutional research designed to improve the College's programs and services and research conducted by students. Students will only conduct research under NBCC supervision.

Research and scholarly activities include:

- a) publication or presentation of data/results, either completed or work in progress
- b) course writing and course design including creation of technological materials
- c) consulting and contract work on behalf of the College
- d) participation in panels
- e) unpublished research, including work in progress
- f) editorial and peer review duties
- g) creative works
- h) literature searches/reviews
- i) development and testing of computer applications or workflow processes
- j) any other research or scholarly activities which the College considers, and which are generally considered to be research or scholarly activities by the Academic Community

1.0 DEFINITIONS

Research Integrity

Research integrity is an important component of responsible research conduct. It involves following professional codes for research involving humans and animals, using honest and verifiable research methods, and reporting results in adherence with standards. As stated in Article 2.1.2 under the Tri-Agency Research Integrity Policy section of the RCR Framework, *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.” Research integrity requires:

- Honesty – conveying information truthfully
- Accuracy – reporting findings precisely
- Efficiency – avoiding waste
- Objectivity – avoiding bias

Conflict of Interest

- exists when a member of the College (as defined above in the Application clause) has or may be perceived as having the opportunity to advance or protect a Personal Interest of the member or of a person with whom the member has a family, personal business or similar relationship. A Conflict of Interest may arise in circumstances where Personal Interests may directly or indirectly affect the member’s professional judgement in the exercise of College duties and responsibilities.

Institutional Conflict

- a situation in which the College or an institution has an existing relationship with a party with which the College or the institution proposes to enter into an activity, contract or commitment, such that an impartial observer might reasonably question whether the existing relationship might prejudice decisions of the College or institution with respect to the activity.

Personal Interest

- exists where one has an interest, including, but not limited to, a financial, family or professional interest, in a decision, activity or business affair of the College.

2.0 IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Researchers Duties

All researchers must:

- a) reveal any conflict of interest, material or financial, in writing to the Director of Applied Research and Innovation
- b) follow the rules, regulations and requirements of the granting agencies, the College, and the relevant Federal or Provincial statutes or regulations for the protection of researchers, human participants, or the health and safety of the public, or for the welfare of laboratory animals (example: Health Canada Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines)
- c) make use of funds, equipment and materials acquired for the support of research in an appropriate, honest manner
- d) ensure any research project involving human subjects is ethically reviewed
- e) ensure data, research materials, and results are reported accurately
- f) acknowledge the contribution of student-researchers, research assistants, and co-researchers
- g) gain permission to use published or unpublished works of others as well as their data and acknowledge their use
- h) maintain TCPS2: CORE certification through the TriCouncil Panel of Research Ethics (for research involving humans)

Non-compliance with the above-mentioned principles constitutes misconduct on the part of the researchers.

Honest mistakes in data collection and/or differences in the interpretation of research data or research design do not constitute research fraud or misconduct.

2.2 Responsibilities

2.2.1 Principle Investigators and Supervisors

- a) provide collaborators, students, staff and assistants with all reasonable information necessary to prevent misconduct
- b) monitor the work of students, research assistants, and others, and oversee the design of research methodology and the processes of acquiring, recording, examining, interpreting and storing data. Simply editing the results of a research project does not constitute supervision
- c) hold regular discussions among all research personnel on a project to contribute to the scholarly efforts of group members and to provide informal review
- d) verify the authenticity of all data or other factual information generated in the research
- e) manage and protect all recorded and retrievable results
- f) ensure supervisory powers are used responsibly

2.2.2 College

- a) promote greater understanding of research ethics and a commitment to research integrity through workshops and seminars and by making the College's research policies widely available to the members of the NBCC community
- b) investigate, address and resolve allegations of misconduct in research and scholarship as quickly as possible
- c) report incidents of misconduct and the results of the investigations to granting agencies

2.3 Data Collection and Retention

The retention and safeguarding of accurately recorded and retrievable results is of the utmost importance for the progress of scholarly inquiry. Researchers must have access to their original results in order to respond to questions regarding their research. Errors may be mistaken for misconduct when the primary experimental results are unavailable.

- a) Keep data generated during the research in the department where said research was done.
- b) Maintain results in an accessible format for the retention period outlined in the Records and Information Management policy (5306).
- c) Ensure agreements are in place regarding ownership, publication, and reproduction of primary data before research begins. The College's policy on Intellectual Property will apply to questions of copyrights and patents.
- d) Address issues of confidentiality and privacy in consultation with the department involved and ARI.
- e) Ensure free access for the principal investigator and all co-investigators to all original data and products of the research subject to any limitations imposed by the terms of grants, contracts, or other arrangements for the conduct of research.
- f) Ensure that data and research results are safeguarded by the ARI office when researchers leave the College.

2.4 Authorship

Requirements:

- a) Each author must verify and take responsibility for the part of the manuscript that they have contributed.
- b) One author must be designated to be responsible for the validity of the entire manuscript.
- c) Authorship must be the result of having contributed in a significant manner to the intellectual and practical work on which the report is based. There is no such status as “honourary author.”
- d) Students must be given appropriate recognition for authorship or collection of data in any publication.

2.5 Conflict of Interest

Trust and integrity lie at the core of research activity. Real or perceived conflicts of interest among researchers, research participants, or members of review committees cannot be permitted to undermine that trust.

See [Appendix A](#) for examples of conflict of interest.

Responsibilities

- a) **Disclosure:** Disclosure of a perceived, potential or actual conflict of interest must take place as soon as the individual becomes aware of the conflict. The conflict must be reported to the Director, Applied Research and Innovation. Any conflict of interest must be disclosed and resolved prior to the expenditure of any related research funds.
- b) **Notice:** A disclosed conflict of interest must be recorded in writing and the Office of Applied Research and Innovation will inform, in writing, any relevant funding bodies.

2.6 Reporting and Investigating Academic Misconduct in Research

Allegations

- a) Participants in research who hold well-founded suspicion of misconduct on the part of any researcher may seek informal assistance, and may request a preliminary investigation from the Director, ARI. Such inquiries must be kept confidential.
- b) The Director, ARI and Vice President-Academic Development (VP-AD) must take reasonable steps to protect complainants, including students, staff and research assistants, when they are supervised by the person against whom the complaint has been lodged.

Anonymous allegations will not normally be entertained; however, a preliminary investigation will be initiated if compelling evidence of misconduct is received from an anonymous source.
- c) Complaints should be sufficiently detailed in writing to permit the ARI office to understand and be able to evaluate in a preliminary manner the potential severity of the allegation. The ARI office may require the person making the complaint be identified if it is concluded that such identification is necessary to investigate the allegations.

2.7 Informal and Confidential Inquiry

- a) Within five working days of receiving an allegation, the Director, ARI must meet with the researcher named in the complaint to inform the researcher of the complaint, provide them with an opportunity to respond to the charges or allegations, as well as to understand whether information provided by the researcher resolves the issue, or whether grounds exist for further action.
- b) The Director, ARI may decide that the complaint has no merit and that no further action should be taken. In such a case the Director, ARI must immediately inform the complainant of the result of the inquiry and provide written explanations for the decision not to proceed any further. The complainant may appeal the decision of the ARI office to the VP-AD for consideration and a decision. The decision of the VP-AD will be binding.
- c) If, as a result of the preliminary inquiry, the Director, ARI decides that the complaint has merit, but that it may be possible to resolve it through mediation, an informal process of mediation may be followed. As mediator, the Director, ARI will attempt to find a solution which is acceptable to all parties concerned.
 - i. If the mediation is successful, no further action will be taken, and the file will be closed. The complaint will be deemed resolved through an informal mediation process when both the complainant and the researcher agree that it has been resolved. The complaint will be considered to have been formally "Withdrawn" (WI).
 - ii. If the mediation process fails to produce a resolution, or if the Director, ARI decides that a formal investigation is required, the Director, ARI must launch a formal investigation.

2.8 Formal Inquiry

- a) The VP-AD will create a formal inquiry committee of at least two independent persons.
- b) The VP-AD must ensure that the members of the formal inquiry committee are not collaborators with the complainant, or the person charged. The members shall be unbiased and have appropriate background to judge the issues being raised and/or have relevant experience in the area of research and scholarship involved in a particular case. No member of the department/campus involved shall be among the persons appointed. Persons external to the College may be appointed if necessary.
- c) The committee will conduct interviews with the Complainant, Respondent and other individuals as they deem appropriate to discern the facts. All interviews will be documented. During any meeting with the Respondent, the Respondent is entitled to be accompanied by an advocate of the Respondent's choosing. The Respondent has the right to know the allegations against them and has the right to answer the allegations both orally and in writing.
- d) Within 30 calendar days from its appointment, the committee will report in writing to the VP-AD its final decision, including recommendations for sanctions. The final decision of the committee will be binding on the institution.
- e) The VP-AD will make the final determination of sanctions. The VP-AD will have ten (10) working days to provide a copy of the final report to the individuals named, to the ARO, and to any affiliated Agency.

2.9 Actions Taken

- 2.9.1** Sanctions will depend on the severity of the offence. For faculty and staff (all of whom will comply with the relevant provisions of the appropriate):
- a) Collective Agreement or employment contract, sanctions may include, but are not limited to:
 - i. verbal warning
 - ii. closer monitoring of future work
 - iii. letter of reprimand to the individual's permanent personnel file
 - iv. withdrawal of specific privileges
 - v. removal of specific responsibilities
 - vi. suspension or steps to terminate the appointment
 - vii. suspension of funding
 - b) For students, sanctions may include, but are not limited to:
 - i. verbal warning
 - ii. closer monitoring of work
 - iii. a letter of reprimand in the student's official file
 - iv. suspension
 - v. suspension of funding
 - vi. expulsion.
- 2.9.2** In the case of unfounded allegations, the College is obliged to protect or restore the reputation of those unjustly accused. Complainants who have been found to have made allegations of misconduct that are unfounded, reckless, malicious, or in bad faith shall be subject to sanctions as above.
- 2.9.3** A person subject to sanctions, who believes that the decision was reached improperly or disagrees with that decision or with the sanctions, may file an appeal or grievance as appropriate in accordance with the relevant collective agreement or employment contract or in the case of students with the Discipline and Rules of Conduct Policy. The appeal must be filed with the VP-AD within 30 calendar days of the date of the VP-AD's final report.
- 2.9.4** Reports and records will be kept by the VP-AD for a period of ten (10) years, and access to such records will be by application to the VP-AD. Access to reports and records are subject to any pertinent legislated privacy acts.
- 2.9.5** Where misconduct is found to have occurred, the Director, ARI will be responsible for the protection of Agency funding by informing the Controller's Office to withhold any payments or disbursements of Agency funds, if such action is deemed appropriate.
- 2.9.6** If a project is still in progress, the Director, ARI, Funding Agency and any collaborators will consult to determine the continued viability of the project.

3.0 OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS

Records and Information Management (5306)

Employee Code of Conduct (4129)

Tri-Agency Framework - Responsible Conduct of Research

Appendix A – Examples of Conflict of Interest

Examples of conflict of interest in research include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A researcher's private business interests or that of family or associates comes into conflict with the researcher's responsibilities and obligations to the College and its policies and/or to the staff, students and other members of the College community.
- A researcher uses College resources (e.g., materials, equipment, technical and administrative services, laboratories, staff, the College's logo or official insignia) without prior agreement, for personal gain or for the benefit and advantage of others related to or associated with the researcher.
- A researcher, as supervisor or teacher, structures or directs the work of student(s) to the personal or business interest of the researcher or that of associates to the detriment of the student's scholarly and academic interests.
- The ability of the researcher to act independently and with impartiality in performing College duties is compromised by personal or business interests.
- The researcher uses confidential information in the course of duties for personal or business gain or for that of associates or relatives.
- A researcher influences or attempts to influence decisions made by the College or an outside agency for personal or business gain.
- A researcher joins any organization outside the College that may reasonably expect the researcher to disclose confidential or proprietary information to which their connection to the College may provide access.
- A researcher accepts, without written authorization from the College, a research grant or contract for College research from any non-College organization with whom the researcher serves as an executive officer or shareholder.
- A researcher employs students in any commercial venture related to the student's study or research or proceeds to commercialize the student's work in such a way as to restrict the student's ability to complete their academic program or their ability to communicate their findings.