

Responsible Conduct of Research Policy

1. Background, Purpose, and Scope

As a research institution, Northern Illinois University (NIU) is accountable to the research and university communities to ensure the ethical and safe conduct of research. Federal statutes and policies, including [Section 7009 of the American COMPETES ACT of 2007 for National Science Foundation](#) and [NOT-OD-10-019 for National Institute of Health](#) require funded grants to provide mentoring and training in the responsible conduct of research (RCR).

The purpose of this document is to articulate the principles, goals, and procedures to be followed by the Office of Research Compliance, Integrity and Safety (ORCIS) and its Responsible Conduct of Research Advisory Committee (RCR-AC) in its efforts to strengthen the culture and the practice of RCR at NIU.

Undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral students who participate in research projects should have a basic understanding of RCR topics. For those working on National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institute of Health (NIH) training grants the training is mandatory. Faculty and staff are also encouraged to include aspects of RCR in one-on-one interactions with their students.

This policy, and with it the establishment of the RCR-AC, recognizes that creating a culture of responsible and ethical research is in line with [NIU's mission statement](#) by promoting excellence in research.

2. Policy

All members of the NIU community are expected to adhere to the highest ethical and professional standards as they pursue research and scholarly activities. In doing so, NIU requires the vigilance of all members engaged in research and scholarly endeavors to comply with the legal, regulatory, and ethical requirements established by the University, regulatory agencies, funding sources and professional organizations.

Oversight in the responsible conduct of research has been charged to the Federal Office of Research Integrity (ORI). The following topics are generally accepted as RCR functions:

- Authorship and Publication
- Collaborative Research
- Conflicts of Interest
- Data Management
- Mentor/Trainee Responsibilities
- Peer Review
- Research Misconduct
- Human Subject
- Animal Welfare
- Safe Laboratory Practices

These categories are broad, and information regarding compliance expectations for each can be provided in multiple ways. This document recognizes the need for RCR instruction to have flexibility in content and delivery methods to address the needs, issues, and concerns across various target audiences as well as numerous disciplines.

3. Responsibilities

NIU faculty and staff engaged in research are responsible for the undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral students working on their projects and must determine the avenues by which students receive RCR training. If the student is funded by NSF or NIH, Section 4 below will take precedence.

The Office of Research Compliance, Integrity, and Safety (ORCIS) is responsible for offering and monitoring RCR programs at NIU. All programs must have the approval of the Vice President for Research and Innovation Partnerships (VPR) or a designee. ORCIS also has the ability to create and call upon the RCR-AC, whose responsibilities are addressed in a later section. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of the researcher to ensure completion of these programs.

4. National Science Foundation and NIH training grants

As stated above, RCR training is a requirement for NSF and NIH-training grants. All undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral students must receive training in the responsible conduct of research. The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for ensuring that students are compliant with these federal regulations.

The PI is expected to provide hands on training to their students, as many RCR topics will be addressed organically in actual research situations. However, in order to ensure compliance, NSF and NIH policies require that individuals receive additional training. This goal can be achieved by completing the requirements for a transcript notation in RCR (Procedures - Section 3), or completing the online CITI training.

ORCIS is responsible for monitoring student participation and ensuring compliance. If a PI refuses to comply with the requirements the VPR or a designee may set training requirements for the student.

All training must be completed within one year of beginning research on an NSF or NIH-training grant.

Responsible Conduct of Research Procedures

1. Responsible Conduct of Research Advisory Committee (RCR-AC)

a. Charge

The RCR-AC is charged to:

- Guide the development and implementation of the RCR forum series or any other in-person training deemed necessary by the VPR.
- Advise ORCIS and the VPR in requirements for students to receive the RCR transcript notation.

- Advocate and promote a culture of RCR across the university.
- b. Makeup
Committee membership is at the discretion of the representative from ORCIS responsible for monitoring RCR requirements. Committee membership will represent faculty from a diverse group of disciplines and faculty whose work has demonstrated a commitment to research integrity.

2. RCR Forum Series

The RCR Forum Series is a live training program offered each semester. At a minimum, ten sessions must be offered per calendar year, one dedicated to each topic listed in Policy - Section 2. The RCR-AC committee may recommend expanding or altering the program based on need or demand. ORCIS is responsible for implementing the sessions and monitoring attendance and compliance with any written assignments.

Attendance at the forum series will satisfy NSF and NIH-training requirements.

3. RCR Transcript Notation

Students who complete a thorough RCR training are eligible to receive a notation on their transcript that they are certified in RCR. The requirements for the notation will be determined on the advice from the RCR Advisory Committee. These requirements will be made available on the ORCIS website.

Current requirements include:

- 1) Attendance at a minimum of seven sessions of the RCR Forum Series
- 2) Documented interaction in the online portal involving each attended topic (information will be provided during the corresponding session).

This requirement must be completed within two years of the first session but prior to completion of the degree program. This does not waive the one-year requirement for students working on NSF or NIH-training grants.

The requirements for the notation in RCR may change over time. In order to ensure compliance this policy will be updated as needed to reflect these changes.

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