

# CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH

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World Health  
Organization

[www.who.int/about/ethics](http://www.who.int/about/ethics)

WHO considers research fundamental for the advancement and attainment of health, and is committed to the highest standards of scientific quality and ethical integrity.

Shaping the research agenda and stimulating the generation, translation and dissemination of valuable knowledge is one of WHO's core functions.

WHO ensures that all of its public health and research interventions are founded upon a robust ethical framework and is committed to developing and promoting ethical, evidence- and human-rights-based guidance for the development of evidence-based health policies, and guidelines.

Responsibility for ethical behaviour in research lies with all staff members at all levels, and forms the basis of WHO's reputation.

The Code of Conduct for Responsible Research (The Code) provides standards of good practice to guide individuals working on all research associated with WHO, including non-clinical research.

It is based on WHO ethical principles:

- **Integrity**
- **Accountability**
- **Independence and impartiality**
- **Professional commitment**

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## THE CODE:

- Provides a standard to guide individuals working on all research associated with WHO, including non-clinical research.
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- Provides general principles and standards for good practice in the conduct of research, applicable to all individuals engaged in research associated with WHO.
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- Is informed by existing WHO, international, national, institutional research guidance on best practices and codes of conduct for health research, and reflects WHO ethical principles as described in the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.
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- Is also guided by policies, guidance and academic and scientific communities' commonly accepted norms such as those promoted by the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences.
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- Gives particular emphasis to good research practice, conflict of interest, intellectual property, publication, and research wrongdoing.
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## WHAT THE CODE COVERS

Applicable to **all staff members** involved in research, as well as to **WHO collaborators** in spirit and principles, the Code of Conduct for responsible Research outlines WHO staff responsibility in the following areas:

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- Research standards

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- Research training and supervision

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- Conflict of interest and bias

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- Managing collaboration in research

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- Financial management of research

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- Quality management in research

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- Managing and monitoring research data

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- Peer review

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- Intellectual property and authorship

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- Publication and dissemination of research findings

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## WRONGDOING IN RESEARCH AND QUESTIONABLE OR POOR PRACTICE

The non adherence to the principles laid out in The Code is considered wrongdoing and will be treated in a manner commensurate with its seriousness.

In this context, the term wrongdoing in research means intentional, fraudulent or grossly negligent behaviour that breaches the principles of this Code. Such behaviour includes without being limited to:

- Inappropriate development of research protocols.
- Failure to disclosure or take action on declared conflict of interest.
- Inadequate management of a research project.
- Fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, deliberate misrepresentation or other practices that deviate from this Code and from the academic and scientific communities' commonly accepted norms for proposing, conducting or reviewing research or for reporting research results.

Wrongdoing in research does not include honest errors or differences in interpretation or judgement of data. It also differs from poor practice, which can include inadequate data management for research procedures. Such deviations from the Code, while not necessarily amounting to wrongdoing may have similarly serious effects on public health. They must be reported to the immediate attention of supervisors, or the [Integrity Hotline](#).

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## DEFINITIONS

**Misconduct** – any improper action by a staff member that brings the Organization into public discredit; any improper use or attempt to make use of his position as an official for his personal advantage; any conduct contrary to the terms of his oath or declaration.

*(Please refer to the Policy on Misconduct in Research which outlines actions to be taken when reports of wrongdoing in research are brought against individuals working for or collaborating with WHO).*

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## WHO's policy on Misconduct in Research provides detailed procedures for reporting, screening, examining and taking action on reports of wrongdoing in research.

- WHO staff and collaborators becoming aware of violations of The Code must report their concerns to their supervisors, and in instances where this may be problematic, must contact the [Integrity Hotline](#)

### **If you have knowledge of sexual exploitation and abuse you can report it to The Integrity Hotline.**

The Integrity Hotline is an independent service which takes in reports **confidentially** and when requested, **anonymously**.

**EMAIL** [integrity@expolink.co.uk](mailto:integrity@expolink.co.uk)

**WEBSITE** [wrs.expolink.co.uk/integrity](http://wrs.expolink.co.uk/integrity)

You can also raise your concerns confidentially and directly to [ethicsoffice@who.int](mailto:ethicsoffice@who.int)

[www.who.int/about/ethics/integrity-hotline](http://www.who.int/about/ethics/integrity-hotline)

- Individuals reporting suspicions of research wrongdoing in good faith will be considered whistleblowers and protected against retaliation as per WHO's Policy on Whistleblowing and Protection against Retaliation.