

Responsible Conduct of Research in the Social Sciences

This handout is intended to outline the standards of integrity that the School and University hold with respect to the conduct of research. Social scientists are generally familiar with the ethical guidelines regarding the treatment of human subjects in research, and many graduate students will have had—or will soon have—first-hand experience with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the process of informed consent for human subjects. The responsible conduct of research involves more than simply human subjects protections, however. It also involves discipline-specific issues that you should discuss with your faculty mentor or research supervisor, and broad principles to which all academic inquiry should adhere.

Research activities in the social sciences vary from fMRI tests and model building to surveys involving thousands of respondents, to reflection on philosophical, historical or public documents, and ethnographic research, both face to face and online. Yet all social science is guided by the shared values that Nicholas Steneck identifies in his *Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research*, available via the School's RCR website at http://www.socsci.uci.edu/ss_academics/research_conduct:

- **HONESTY** — conveying information truthfully and honoring commitments
- **ACCURACY**— reporting findings precisely and taking care to avoid errors
- **EFFICIENCY**— using resources wisely and avoiding waste
- **OBJECTIVITY**— letting the facts speak for themselves and avoiding improper bias

The term “research conduct” refers to all stages of the research process, from conceptualization to execution to publication and reporting.

Responsible conduct applies even if the research involves just you and some books: Responsible conduct extends to library work, and includes proper attribution of others' insights and faithful reporting of others' ideas.

Responsible conduct involves discussing and making decisions about allocation of responsibility and credit in collaborative projects: Disciplines vary in their norms for the reporting and dissemination of research results, as well as collaborative authorship and the attribution of credit and responsibility for collaborative work. It is important to have frank conversations about roles and the attribution of credit at the start of any research project.

Responsible conduct applies to all your research-related relationships: It extends to your relationship with your faculty mentors, your collaborations with peers, as well as formal and informal mentoring of fellow graduate students and undergraduate students.

Responsible conduct means the integrity of research data is vital to the research process: Both data and the sources of data—which may include human or animal subjects—must be treated with care.

Research design should strive to create data that can be validated by others, in line with discipline-specific norms and professional practice.

Responsible conduct involves being attentive to the possibility of conflicts of interest, and disclosing any such conflicts: Conflicts of interest may be financial, personal, or intellectual. Could anything about your personal, professional or financial situation be seen as compromising your judgment with respect to your research activity? Would the combination of your research activities and your potential conflicts of interest pass the “smell test?” The Office of Research website has valuable information to help you think about the potential for a conflict of interest in research settings:

<http://www.research.uci.edu/ora/coi/index.htm>

As social scientists, we are entrusted to create, communicate and curate new knowledge. The professional societies of the social science disciplines have developed codes of ethics and responsible conduct that address issues specific to each field as well as the general principles and shared values underling all research activity. These standards are constantly being updated, and serve not only to guide research behavior but also to foster discussion and debate. You will find links to each field’s ethical code, as well as additional resources, on the School’s responsible conduct of research webpage (http://www.socsci.uci.edu/ss_academics/research_conduct). We encourage you to learn more about your professional, scientific and ethical obligation to conduct research in accordance with these shared standards of ethical behavior.

Certification:

I, _____, have read and understood the attached UC Irvine
[print name]

School of Social Sciences Responsible Conduct of Research handout.

signature

date