

University Policy

Responsible Conduct in Research (RCR)

Responsible Administrator: Associate Vice Provost of Sponsored Programs and Research

Responsible Office: Sponsored Programs and Research Office

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Policy Statement

Claflin University's policy is to ensure compliance with federal guidelines regarding Responsible Conduct in Research.

Statement of Purpose

Claflin University is committed to fostering a research environment that upholds the highest standards of integrity, ethics, and professional conduct. This Responsible Conduct in Research (RCR) Policy guides faculty, staff, and students engaged in research to ensure compliance with federal regulations and promote a culture of ethical scholarship.

This policy aligns with the requirements set forth by federal agencies such as the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Office of Research Integrity (ORI) to ensure that research conducted at Claflin University adheres to ethical standards.

Applicability

This policy applies to all individuals involved in research at Claflin University, including:

- Faculty
- Staff
- Postdoctoral researchers
- Graduate and undergraduate students
- Visiting scholars
- Any individuals involved in externally or internally funded research

All individuals engaged in research are expected to comply with the principles outlined in this policy, including those supported by federal grants that require RCR training and oversight.

Principles of Responsible Conduct in Research

Claflin University promotes the following core principles of RCR:

1. Research Integrity – Honesty and accuracy in proposing, conducting, and reporting research findings.
2. Data Management – Proper collection, storage, and data sharing to ensure accuracy and reproducibility.
3. Authorship and Publication Practices – Responsible authorship, acknowledgment of contributions, and avoidance of plagiarism.
4. Mentoring and Supervision – Ethical guidance and training of students and junior researchers.
5. Conflict of Interest and Commitment – Disclosure and management of conflicts affecting research objectivity.
6. Human Subjects and Animal Welfare – Comply with Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) regulations.
7. Research Misconduct Prevention – Avoidance of fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism.
8. Collaboration and Peer Review – Ethical engagement in peer review and research collaborations.
9. Whistleblower Protection – Assurance of non-retaliation against individuals reporting research misconduct.

Definitions

Claflin University defines research misconduct as:

- Fabrication – Making up data or results and recording or reporting them as factual.
- Falsification – Manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes to misrepresent research findings.
- Plagiarism – Appropriating another’s ideas, processes, or words without giving proper credit.

Allegations and Reporting

Individuals who suspect research misconduct should report their concerns to the Sponsored Programs and Research (SPAR) Office or the Associate Vice Provost of Research, who serves as the Research Integrity Officer. The university will investigate all allegations in compliance with federal regulations (42 CFR Part 93).

Investigation Process

1. Preliminary Inquiry – An initial assessment of the allegations.
2. Formal Investigation – If warranted, a formal review by an RCR Investigation Committee.
3. Findings and Actions – If misconduct is confirmed, corrective actions (e.g., retraction of publications, disciplinary action) will be taken per federal and university policies.

RCR Training Requirements

To comply with NSF, NIH, and other federal agency requirements, all individuals engaged in research at Claflin University must complete Responsible Conduct in Research (RCR) training.

Who Must Complete RCR Training?

- NSF-funded researchers – Undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral researchers.
- NIH-funded researchers – Any individual involved in NIH-funded projects, including trainees and fellows.
- Other federally funded researchers – As required by specific agency guidelines.

Training Methods

1. Online RCR Training Modules – Offered through CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) or an equivalent platform.
2. In-Person RCR Workshops – Annual training sessions hosted by Claflin University's Sponsored Programs and Research (SPAR) Office or Fiscal Affairs.
3. Mentor-Led Discussions – Faculty mentors must integrate RCR discussions into research training for students and junior researchers.

Training Compliance

Proof of RCR training completion must be submitted to the Sponsored Programs and Research (SPAR) Office before research participation begins. Non-compliance may result in suspension of research privileges or funding restrictions.

Data Management and Protection

- Research data must be recorded accurately, securely stored, and available for review if required.

- Faculty and Principal Investigators (PIs) are responsible for data retention for a minimum of five (5) years after project completion or longer if required by funding agencies.
- Confidential or sensitive data must be protected per the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and federal guidelines.

Authorship and Publication Ethics

An individual must meet the following criteria to be listed as an author:

1. Significant contribution to research design, execution, or analysis.
2. Participation in drafting or revising the manuscript.
3. Approval of the final version before submission.

Avoiding Plagiarism

- All research publications must adequately cite sources and acknowledge contributions.
- Use of plagiarism detection software (e.g., Turnitin or iThenticate) is encouraged before submission.

Peer Review Responsibilities

- Reviewers must evaluate research objectively and confidentially.
- Conflicts of interest must be disclosed before accepting review assignments.

Conflict of Interest (COI) Policy

Researchers must disclose any financial or personal conflicts of interest that could influence research integrity.

- Annual COI disclosure forms must be submitted to the Sponsored Programs and Research Office.
- Conflicts will be reviewed, and management plans will be established if necessary.

Examples of Potential COIs

- Financial ties to a company that could benefit from research findings.
- Personal relationships affecting research objectivity.
- Undisclosed intellectual property interests.

Human and Animal Research Compliance

All research involving human subjects must receive IRB approval before initiation, in accordance with 45 CFR 46.

- Researchers must complete Human Subjects Protection Training.
- Informed consent must be obtained from all participants.

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)

Animal research must comply with the Federal Public Health Service (PHS) Policy and receive approval from Claflin University's IACUC.

Whistleblower Protection

Claflin University prohibits retaliation against individuals who report research misconduct in good faith. All reports will be handled confidentially to the extent possible.

Policy Enforcement and Sanctions

Non-compliance with this policy may result in:

- Suspension or termination of research funding.
- Disciplinary action, including possible termination of employment.
- Notification of federal agencies in cases of serious misconduct.