

Complete Policy Title:

Policy Number (if applicable):

**POLICY ON RESEARCH ETHICS  
AT McMASTER UNIVERSITY**

N/A

Approved by:

Date of Most Recent Approval:

**Senate  
Board of Governors**

**May 26, 1993  
June 17, 1993**

Date of Original Approval(s):

Supersedes/Amends Policy dated:

Responsible Executive:

Enquiries:

**Vice-President (Research)**

**[University Secretariat](#)**

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**DISCLAIMER:** *If there is a Discrepancy between this electronic policy and the written copy held by the policy owner, the written copy prevails.*

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The two principles underlying integrity in research in a university setting are these: a researcher must be honest in proposing, seeking support for, conducting, and reporting research; a researcher must respect the rights of others in these activities. Any departure from these principles will diminish the integrity of the research enterprise. This policy applies to all those conducting research at or under the aegis of McMaster University. It is incumbent upon all members of the university community to practice and to promote ethical behaviour.

Research misconduct is defined to include the following in proposing, conducting or reporting research:

- (a) misrepresentation, fabrication, or falsification of data;
- (b) plagiarism, including plagiarism of one's own work;
- (c) abuse of confidentiality with regard to information and ideas taken from manuscripts, grant applications, or discussions held in confidence;
- (d) other kinds of misconduct, such as: violation of the regulations of the granting bodies; improper use of funds, equipment, supplies, facilities, or

other resources; failure to respect University policies on use of human subjects or animals; falsification or misrepresentation of credentials;

- (e) failure to reveal any material conflict of interest to the sponsors or to those who commission work or when asked to undertake reviews of research grant applications or manuscripts for publication, or to test products for sale or distribution to the public; or
- (f) failure to reveal to the University any material financial interest in a company that contracts with the University to undertake research, particularly research involving the company's products. Material financial interest includes ownership, substantial stock holding, a directorship, significant honoraria or consulting fees but does not include routine stock holding in a large publicly traded company.

The University demands integrity in the conduct of research. It expects ethical behaviour in respect to authorship and appropriate acknowledgement of research contributions. It is recognized that there are varying degrees of severity in violation of standards of research conduct. Further, there will be cases where disputes may arise which do not clearly involve misconduct but rather are differences of opinion as to what is considered ethical behaviour.

In cases where research *misconduct* is at issue, the University will take action as described in the document, "**Procedures for Inquiries and Hearings Regarding Allegations of Misconduct in Research**", unless the individual being accused is a student carrying out research as part of his or her academic programme. In that case, action will be taken as described in the document, "**Senate Resolutions on Academic Dishonesty**". The University will impose sanctions on those who have committed research misconduct.

For cases involving issues which are not clearly *misconduct* but do deal with issues of research ethics, it is recommended that informal dispute settlement mechanisms be used.