

STANDARD ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

15.99.99.M0.04 Responsible Conduct of Research

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SAP Statement

The responsible and ethical conduct of research is critical for excellence as well as for maintaining public trust in research. It is the goal of Texas A&M University to promote a university-wide environment of responsible conduct of research (RCR), and to ensure that individuals subject to federal responsible conduct in research requirements complete required training. Education and training in the ethical and responsible conduct of research are integral elements of research for all undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers who engage in research in any field or who pursue advanced degrees at University facilities.

Reason for SAP

The purpose of this SAP is to provide guidance on the minimum responsible conduct of research training requirements for compliance with federal requirements where individuals are supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institutes of Health (NIH), and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), and to establish University requirements for the training of students and postdoctoral researchers involved in University-related research, regardless of funding.

Definitions

Responsible Conduct of Research: Generally, the rules, regulations, and best practices established to guide research and scholarly activities in order to produce results that are honest, accurate, efficient, and objective. Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) is synonymous to Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR), as used by some federal agencies.

- RCR Subject Matter:
 - Research misconduct, research data management, conflict of interest/commitment, collaborative science, responsible authorship, plagiarism, peer review, mentoring, human subjects protection, animal welfare, biosafety, export controls, scientific ethics, safe research environments, and research security among others.

- RCR Training Formats:
 - CITI RCR Training: Online RCR training via the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) providing individuals with broad exposure to many important areas of responsible and ethical research and serving as a good informational resource for future reference.
 - Face-to-Face RCR Training: Interactive workshops and courses that cover a variety of responsible conduct of research topics. This training is meant to build and expand on the research topics covered in CITI RCR Training and fosters an environment for group discussion and interaction. Face-to-face training is designed to promote a deeper understanding of scholarly ethics so that individuals integrate ethical decision-making into daily scholarly activities. Face-to-face training opportunities can be found on the Texas A&M University RESEC webpage.

Researcher: an individual/employee who conducts research, whether funded or unfunded. For the purposes of this SAP, this term includes, but is not limited to, undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, faculty, and other personnel.

- University-Related Research: includes both internally and externally funded research activities.
 - Internally funded research: research that is not funded via an agreement with a sponsor but is instead funded through internal sources. This includes competitively awarded internal proposal programs as well as other internal sources that may or may not be restricted to research.
 - Externally funded research:
 - Sponsored Research: funded activities, including cost-sharing as described in 15.01.01.M1.03 *Cost Sharing Procedures*, in which a formal agreement (e.g., a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement) is entered into by the University and a sponsor or sponsors. These activities generally have a defined scope of work, require detailed financial accountability (e.g., detailed budget, regular financial reporting, and audit, return of unexpended funds at end of project), and deliverables.
 - Research gifts: funding from an external sponsor (donor) who expects nothing of significant value in return, other than recognition and disposition of the gift in accordance with the donor's wishes. Gifts may be accompanied by an agreement that restricts the use of the funds to a particular purpose. Beyond that, no contractual requirements are imposed (beyond the requirements of responsible stewardship) and there are no "deliverables" to the donor (i.e., no rights to tangible or intellectual property). There is no formal fiscal accountability to the donor beyond periodic progress reports and summary reports of expenditures.

Principal Investigator: The individual responsible for the administrative and programmatic aspects of a University-related research project.

RESEC: the Research Security and Export Controls (RESEC) unit of Texas A&M University's Division of Research.

Official SAP/ Responsibilities/ Process

1. Federal RCR Training Requirements

1.1. Recipients of awards from the National Science Foundation (NSF), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are required to comply with specific requirements to ensure appropriate training in the responsible conduct of research as follows:

1.1.1. National Science Foundation (NSF):

- All undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, faculty, and other senior personnel "who will be supported by NSF to conduct research" must complete the CITI RCR training. Effective October 10, 2025, RCR training needs to include export control and research security training. Individuals supported by the NSF must also complete export control and research security training via TrainTraQ courses.

1.1.2. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA):

- All program directors, faculty, undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and any staff participating in the research project must complete the CITI RCR training.

1.1.3. National Institutes of Health (NIH):

- NIH requires that all Institutional Research Training Grants, Individual Fellowship Awards, Career Development Awards (institutional and individual), Research Education Grants, Dissertation Research Grants, or other grant programs with a training component include a plan for training in responsible conduct of research.
- All trainees, fellows, participants, and scholars receiving support are required to complete RCR training, in accordance with the plan submitted and approved as part of the grant application.
- Substantial face-to-face discussion, combination of didactic and small-group discussions (e.g. case studies), and participation of research training faculty members in instruction are highly encouraged, with a minimum of eight total hours recommended.
- The PI for the project may have developed a specific course to address this RCR requirement or may utilize face-to-face workshops offered by RESEC or collaborating offices/departments across campus.
- Online instruction such as CITI RCR training can be a component but is not sufficient to meet the NIH requirements.

- Training must be undertaken at least once during each career stage (undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, predoctoral, and postdoctoral), but no less than once every four years.

2. University RCR Training Requirements

2.1. A university wide environment pertaining to responsible and ethical conduct of research requires researchers to have the knowledge, skills, and tools to allow them to be responsible for their research conduct. In addition to the federal requirements outlined above, the University requires RCR training for all postdoctoral researchers and students participating in research. This training provides researchers with the knowledge, skills, and tools to allow them to conduct their research in a responsible and ethical manner. The specific type of training required depends on the researcher's role and funding source, as defined further below.

2.1.1. Undergraduate students

- All undergraduate students who are participating in research, regardless of funding type or source, must complete the CITI RCR training within 60 days from their initial involvement in the research activity unless required earlier.

2.1.2. Graduate students

- Internally funded research, gift-funded research, or participation in research activities: Graduate students participating in research funded internally or by research gifts (including all courses for which research is an integral element, such as honors thesis, master's thesis, or doctoral dissertation) must complete the CITI RCR training within 60 days from commencement of the research activity unless required earlier.
- Externally funded research: graduate students participating in externally funded research must complete the CITI RCR training within 60 days following receipt of such support unless required earlier. In addition, each graduate student must complete four hours of face-to-face RCR Workshop training within the first six months of his or her involvement in externally funded research unless required earlier.

2.1.3. **Postdoctoral researchers** must complete the CITI RCR training within 60 days of employment, regardless of their source of funding. In addition, each postdoctoral researcher must complete an additional four hours of face-to-face RCR Workshop training within the first six months of his or her employment unless required earlier.

3. General Responsibilities

3.1. RESEC is responsible for providing and monitoring RCR training through the online Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program, as well as other university/system training modules. In addition, RESEC provides face-to-face training workshops oriented towards students and postdoctoral researchers.

- 3.2. The **College/School** is responsible for ensuring that students and postdoctoral researchers are compliant with the training requirements. The PI supports the College in this effort when the research is funded through PI specific research grants.
 - 3.3. The **Principal Investigator (PI)**, with the support of the College/School and RESEC, is responsible for ensuring that students and postdoctoral researchers participating in their University-related research projects are compliant with training requirements and that records are shared with their College/School and the RESEC as applicable.
 - 3.4. **Researchers** are required to complete RCR training in accordance with federal and university requirements.
4. Monitoring Requirements
 - 4.1. RESEC will track online and workshop training completions and will send a report of these completions to each College/School for review and appropriate action, if needed. The College/School is responsible for updating the report, as needed, and returning the report to RESEC.
5. Enforcement
 - 5.1. The Vice President for Research (VPR) will work with the Colleges/Schools to resolve any issues of non-compliance. As necessary, the VPR will be authorized to suspend University research privileges for non-compliance with Federal, State, System, and/or University policies and regulations. Any questions regarding exceptions and re-instatement of privileges must be sent in writing to the VPR.
 - 5.2. In order to promote compliance with this SAP, any student or postdoctoral researcher supported by external grant funds who fails to satisfactorily complete the required CITI RCR training within 60 days and/or the additional four-hour requirement of face-to-face training within the designated period shall be removed from the externally funded sponsored research project. Reinstatement on the project (or employment) is strictly conditional on satisfactory completion of the training requirements detailed in this SAP.

Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements

[National Science Foundation, Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research](#)

[42 USC 1862o-1: Responsible Conduct of Research](#)

[National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research](#)

[National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Research Terms and Conditions](#)

[NIH NOT-OD-10-019, Update on the Requirement for Instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)

[NIH NOT—22.055 Updated Guidance: Requirement for Instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)

Contact Office

[Responsible Conduct of Research Office](#)

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