

RESEARCH CONDUCT & COMPLIANCE

Academic Conduct in Scholarly Activity or Research

At William & Mary, honesty and integrity of students and faculty members are paramount in the conduct and dissemination of research and scholarly and creative activity. This responsibility extends to documents prepared as reports, or as proposals for funding, or other support. It is the responsibility of scholars to ensure that the quality of published works is high, that careful citation credits prior work and related contributions, and that the accomplishments of co-authors and other colleagues are given full acknowledgment. Co-authorship must be conferred only to those who have made significant, identifiable contributions. All authors must be willing and able to defend publicly those contributions.

In general, academic misconduct "does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments" of results of scholarly activity.¹ Deception, misappropriation of intellectual property, and other deeds that seriously deviate from commonly accepted practices for proposing, conducting, or reporting research within a given community of scholars, is grounds for disciplinary action. Although academic misconduct is well-defined for some disciplines or within certain schools or departments, it is generally defined to include fraudulent behavior, especially "fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism".

- Fabrication is the creation, invention and reporting of results in the absence of experiments, computations, or other efforts to support such results.
- Falsification is the unwarranted alteration of results, to include deceptive or selective reporting, purposeful omission of conflicting data, or other such actions intended to deceive.
- Plagiarism and misappropriation involve willfully appropriating the ideas, methods, or written words of another, without acknowledgment and with the intention that they be taken as one's own work. Plagiarism includes the unauthorized use of privileged information, such as information gained confidentially in peer review, or other confidential circumstances. Self-plagiarism includes duplicate publication without proper citation, or the submission of substantially identical or similar written work for credit or payment. This applies to submission of highly similar work for credit in more than one course without prior approval of the current instructor or without agreement of both instructors for concurrent courses.

Research misconduct may also include material failure to comply with legal requirements governing research, including requirements for the protection of researchers, human subjects, or the public, or for ensuring the welfare of laboratory animals.

¹United States. Office of Research Integrity. "Guidelines for Institutions and Whistleblowers: Responding to Possible Retaliation Against Whistleblowers in Extramural Research." 1995. 1 June 2008.

Please refer to the Office of Sponsored Programs webpage (<https://www.wm.edu/offices/sponsoredprograms/>) for additional information.

Institutional and Federal Compliance Requirements for Research/Teaching

Research compliance and safety are overseen by the Vice Provost for Research. Federal regulations require formal review for certain classes of activity that lead to generalizable knowledge before employees or students begin work. Review is required whether these regulated activities are supported by external or internal funds, whether they are performed as independent or guided inquiries, or as part of normal instruction in a classroom, lab, or practicum, whether they are performed on or off university grounds, and whether they are part of a formal research program or undertaken as the result of academic curiosity on the part of a professor or Student. Before graduate students can perform the following work for research/teaching, the faculty research advisor must submit a proposal to the appropriate William & Mary compliance committee(s) and receive written approval.

These classes of work include:

1. work involving living human subjects leading to generalizable knowledge (including survey research or questionnaires);
2. work that involves the use and care of vertebrate animals;
3. work that uses or produces radioactive materials; and
4. work that involves institutional bio-safety concerns such as:
 - a. Recombinant DNA
 - b. Work with any human fluid, tissue or infectious agent
 - c. Research involving direct or indirect contact with wild-caught animals that may harbor infectious agents.

By law, proposed work in any of the four categories above must be reviewed by duly constituted committees appointed by and reporting to senior university administrators. Investigators must submit compliance proposals that include detailed, step-by-step procedures to be used in the research. Further, committee review is required for survey work that may be done year after year in scheduled classes or laboratories.

Annual renewals are not automatic. Researchers must update protocols annually in order to continue the work. Further, any revision in the authorized protocol during the period covered by the protocol must undergo additional review prior to implementation.

Detailed descriptions of the compliance committees, along with guidance for investigators, can be found on the Office of Sponsored Programs website (<https://www.wm.edu/offices/sponsoredprograms/>).

William & Mary policy mandates that those individuals who will perform, or intend to perform, a particular activity involving these regulated areas may not judge for themselves whether that activity is exempt from formal review. Therefore, whenever you have any doubt about whether your work might require review, the correct approaches are either to submit that work through the Protocol and Compliance Management electronic submission program, or to contact a Committee Chair to discuss it.

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