

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD RESEARCH PRACTICE FOR PEER REVIEWERS

1. OVERVIEW

- 1.1 Recent guidance has highlighted the need for standards to be applied in the conduct of peer review (Research Council Code of Conduct and Policy on the Governance of Good Research Conduct, 2008 and UK Research Integrity Office Code of Practice for Research: Promoting Good Practice and Preventing Misconduct, 2009). For the purpose of this guidance, peer review refers to the impartial and independent assessment of research grant applications, articles or journals by contemporaries within the field of expertise.
- 1.2 Sheffield Hallam University recognises the importance of peer review in the assessment, publication and dissemination of research and in the advancement of academics. This document therefore provides a code of conduct for individuals who review the work of others, and for those who submit work for peer review. This document supports the University's existing [Research Ethics Policy and Procedures](#) and is in line with Research Council UK and UK Research Integrity Office guidance.

2. THE ROLE OF SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

2.1 The University:

- will recommend and encourage the practice of internal and/or external peer review of research before it is published or disseminated in the public domain;
- will encourage researchers to act as peer reviewers and support those that do so;
- will recognise the obligations of peer reviewers to be as accurate and honest in their work, and maintain confidentiality;
- will not put pressure, directly or indirectly, on peer reviewers to breach their obligations.

3. THE ROLE OF THE PEER REVIEWER

- 3.1 Reviewers who undertake peer review should always adhere to the specific guidance, criteria and processes of the relevant review body. In addition, the following good practice should be applied to all reviews:
- 3.2 Objectivity, impartiality & integrity: this should be maintained throughout the review process, irrespective of the personal or professional bias of the reviewer.
- 3.3 Competence: reviewers have a responsibility to inform the relevant review body in cases where they consider themselves to be insufficiently expert in the area for review. If necessary, reviewers should decline the review and return the material unread.
- 3.4 Constructive critique: while reviewers are required to critically evaluate proposals, they should aim to do so in a balanced way wherever possible identifying strengths and phrasing criticisms in a constructive way. Personal attacks or criticisms are unacceptable. The review should provide guidance on how the proposal might be improved.
- 3.5 Timeliness and responsiveness: every effort should be made to complete the review within the specific period and reviewers should notify the relevant review body in cases where this is not possible.

- 3.6 Disclosure of Conflict of interests: reviewers should identify and declare in advance of the review, any conflicting interests that could impinge on the effectiveness or objectivity of the review process. This could include, but is not limited to, any institutional, legal, ethical, financial, moral, or personal conflict of interest. This should be assessed in conjunction with the review body's guidance and the University Statement on conflict of interests. Where applicable, reviews should be declined.
- 3.7 Confidentiality: reviewers should maintain confidentiality and protect the ideas and plans of authors/applicants by not disclosing, retaining or copying any information and by not discussing any aspect of the review process with authors/applicants or colleagues. Reviewers must not take advantage of any information obtained as a result of their role and must adhere to both the confidentiality policies of the relevant body and the confidentiality statement of the University.
- 3.8 Data protection: reviewers must store and dispose of documents in compliance with the Data Protection Act and the University Data Protection Policy, by storing documents in a secure place, not sharing or making copies of documents and returning or destroying documents in accordance with guidance from the relevant body.
- 3.9 Intellectual Property: reviewers must respect intellectual property and should not disclose to third parties, cite, or use as their own, any concepts, preliminary data, or new ideas contained within research documents which are being reviewed.
- 3.10 Misconduct: the relevant review bodies should be informed in situations where reviewers become aware of practice which falls below good conduct.
- 3.11 Ethics: reviewers should apply good ethical practice and comply with the University Research Ethics Policy and Procedures when assessing research documents and in considering the ethical implications of the research they are reviewing.

4. THE ROLE OF THE AUTHOR IN SUBMITTING WORK FOR PEER REVIEW

- 4.1 Applicants or authors who submit work for peer review should always adhere to the highest level of research ethics and standards, in line with requirements set out by national regulatory bodies, professional and regulatory research guidance, and the University Research Ethics Policy and Procedures. In addition, when submitting work for peer review, applicants or authors should refer to the specific guidance, criteria and processes of the relevant review body and should not:
- attempt to identify or approach peer reviewers;
 - directly or indirectly attempt to influence the review of their own work or that of others.

5. Further information

5.1 Internal guidance

- Confidentiality: <https://staff.shu.ac.uk/hr/StaffHandbook/SHconfidential2.asp>
- Conflict of interests: <https://staff.shu.ac.uk/hr/StaffHandbook/SHconflictofinterest.asp>
- Data Protection Policy: https://staff.shu.ac.uk/university_secretariat/dataprotection.asp
- Research Ethics: <http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics/>

5.2 External guidance

- AHRC (2008), 'Code of Practice for Council, Committee, Panel, Peer Review College and Advisory Group Members', AHRC, [online].
<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/About/PeerReview/Documents/prc%20code%20practice.pdf>
- BBSRC (2006), 'Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice', BBSRC, [online].

- http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/publications/policy/good_scientific_practice.html
- EPSRC (2012), ' Good Practice in Science and Engineering Research', EPSRC, [online].
<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/managing/Pages/goodpractice.aspx>
- MRC (2009), 'Reviewers Handbook 2011-12', MRC [online].
<http://www.mrc.ac.uk/Utilities/Documentrecord/index.htm?d=MRC003184>
- RCUK (2011), 'Code of Conduct and Policy on the Governance of Good Research Conduct', RCUK, [online]:
<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/reviews/grc/goodresearchconductcode.pdf>
- The UK Research Integrity Office (2009), 'Code of Practice for Research: Promoting Good Practice and Preventing Misconduct: Public Consultation Document', UKRIO [online]:
<http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/>