

UT MARTIN: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS POLICY

SUBJECT: Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Institutional Plan

AUTHORITY: VCAA

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Background

Responsible and ethical conduct of research (RCR) is critical not only to ensure excellence but also to promote the public trust. As such, it is considered an essential component of the education of future scientists, engineers, educators, and researchers. The University of Tennessee at Martin (UT Martin) is committed to the implementation and support of best practices in research, scholarship, and creative endeavors. This plan has been developed to provide appropriate guidance and oversight in the responsible and ethical conduct of research in accordance with Section 7009 of the *America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science (COMPETES) Act* (42 U.S.C. 1862o-1).

The NIH defines RCR as “the practice of scientific investigation with integrity. It involves the awareness and application of established professional norms and ethical principles in the performance of all activities related to scientific research” (2009, p. 2). The NSF and the NIH, announced in January, 2010, that training in the ethical considerations of research activity and scholarly inquiry, plus more pragmatic competencies such as publication practices, would be required for personnel supported by funding provided by these agencies. While the two agencies have outlined slightly different requirements and populations targeted for the training, the implications are clear that demonstrated RCR training is now an expectation as well as a consideration when applying for grants from these two agencies (for NIH see <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-10-019.html>; For NSF see <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/rcr.jsp>). It is anticipated that other Federal agencies will soon follow with similar requirements.

Ethical norms in research are important for a number of reasons. First, ethical norms support the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error. Second, ethical norms support the values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, fairness, and mutual respect. Third, ethical norms help ensure that researchers are held accountable to the public. Fourth, these ethical norms help build public support for research.

The public trust in the quality and integrity of research has a significant impact not only on the support of research endeavors but also on the implementation of research findings. And finally, many of the ethical norms of research also promote an assortment of other moral and social values, such as human rights, social responsibility, animal welfare, and environmental concerns.

RCR training programs should contain the following modules:

1. Data acquisition, management, sharing and ownership
(http://utrf.tennessee.edu/PDF/IP_Policy.PDF and/or
https://my.tennessee.edu/portal/page?_pageid=34,140536&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_policy=FI0120);
2. Conflicts of interest and commitment
(<http://www.utm.edu/acadaff/fachandbook/fachbook.pdf> and/or
https://my.tennessee.edu/portal/page?_pageid=34,140536&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_policy=FI0125);
3. Use of human subjects in research
(http://www.utm.edu/departments/rgc/_pdf/irbhandbook.7.07.pdf);
4. Use of animals in research
(http://www.utm.edu/departments/rgc/_pdf/IACUC_bylaws.pdf);
5. Research misconduct (plagiarism, fabrication, and falsification)
(http://www.utm.edu/departments/rgc/_pdf/statementofpolicyonmisconduct.pdf);
6. Publication practices and responsible authorship
(http://utrf.tennessee.edu/PDF/IP_Policy.PDF);
7. Mentor and trainee responsibilities
(<http://www.utm.edu/acadaff/fachandbook/fachbook.pdf>);
8. Peer review (<http://ori.hhs.gov/all-discussion-points#peer>);
9. Business ethics
(https://my.tennessee.edu/portal/page?_pageid=34,140536&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_policy=FI0205,
<http://www.utm.edu/departments/purchasing/index.php>, and/or
<http://rwd.tennessee.edu/nav/training/index.htm>); and
10. Collaborative research (<http://ori.hhs.gov/all-discussion-points#collaborations>).

Training

Training in RCR is available to everyone at UT Martin. Anyone engaging in any type of research activities is strongly encouraged to complete training in any and all components related to their research endeavors. Training is also available in a variety of formats. A number of course offerings through various academic departments include components related to RCR. Also, several training modules are available on the Office of Research Grants, and Contracts (ORGC) website (<http://www.utm.edu/departments/rgc/>). A training calendar showing dates, times, and places of training has been developed and mounted to the ORGC website. This training can be used by faculty and staff as part of their annual training. Personnel from the ORGC will facilitate face-to-face training for class sessions or group meetings upon request.

Additionally, UT Martin subscribes to the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program to allow UT Martin affiliated researchers and students to participate in online research ethics training. CITI offers online coursework regarding the use of human subjects in research, the use of animals in research, and the responsible conduct of research. These courses are available to faculty, staff, and students at no cost. CITI courses are recognized by a number of other universities and facilities and offer certificates of completion that are transferrable and valid for a period of three years. Instructions for accessing the CITI training are available by contacting the ORGC.

Occurrence of RCR Training

Federal regulations require that all IRB and IACUC members and all persons involved with the care of animals on campus have documentation of training on file. UT Martin requires all graduate students, undergraduate students, and postdoctoral researchers to complete the online CITI training prior to engaging in any research endeavors. Consistent with that requirement, the UT Martin Institutional Review Board (IRB) strongly suggests that all applications for review and approval of human subjects research include documentation of completion of the CITI training regarding the use of human subjects in research. Continual RCR training occurs through course instruction and faculty/student interactions.

Monitoring Compliance

The ORGC is the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) for certifying that the Institutional RCR Training Plan is in place. The ORGC receives notifications of completion of CITI training modules for affiliated personnel and maintains a record of such notifications.

RCR Program Assessment

This Institutional RCR Plan is intended to provide flexibility in content and delivery and to address the varying needs of the wide range of disciplines and career stages. It is a living document and as such subject to regular assessment and modification as the educational outcomes are evaluated and best practices continue to develop.