

Research Ethics Policy

1. Aim and Scope

SOAS, University of London is a research-led institution, committed to meeting international standards in research and research-led teaching in all of the School's disciplines.

SOAS and its researchers are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards and to foster values of honesty, rigour, openness, care and respect (for a detailed description of SOAS commitments, see Annex 1). To meet these aims, SOAS will offer its research community:

- An extensive framework for research ethics, comprising clear policies, practices and procedures to support researchers;
- Suitable learning, training, and mentoring opportunities to support the development of its researchers;
- Robust management systems to ensure that policies relating to research integrity are implemented, that potential concerns are identified at an early stage, and that mechanisms to support researchers in need of assistance are provided;
- The awareness among researchers that high standards are expected of them.

This policy expresses SOAS's commitment to ethical standards by setting out the general ethical principles which SOAS requires its researchers to follow and by listing in detail the obligations of SOAS and SOAS researchers (Annex 1). This policy also defines what is meant by research misconduct if research has failed to meet the School's ethical standards. The terms of implementation of this policy are to be found in the *Procedure for the Ethical Review of SOAS Research Projects, Policy for the Investigation of Allegations of Research Misconduct and Using Personal Data in Research: Code of Practice for SOAS Staff and Students*.¹

This policy applies equally to SOAS staff and SOAS students, including distance-learning students conducting research at any level, and to any other person, regardless of their status, engaged in research under the auspices of SOAS, or on behalf of, or in association with, SOAS (for example, independent contractors, consultants, visiting members of staff, staff from other institutions, emeritus staff, and staff on honorary appointments). Research conducted collaboratively with other institutions or non-SOAS researchers is covered by this policy to the extent that it involves a contribution from a researcher acting under the auspices of the School. This policy does not apply to research conducted by individuals in a private capacity.

This policy is based on, and is consistent with, *The Concordat to Support Research Integrity*² and is aligned with the work of the UK Research Integrity Office and Research Councils UK.

¹ *Procedure for the Ethical Review of SOAS Research Projects*: <http://www.soas.ac.uk/researchoffice/ethics/>; *SOAS Policy for the Investigation of Allegations of Research Misconduct*: <http://www.soas.ac.uk/researchoffice/ethics/>; *Using Personal Data in Research: Code of Practice for SOAS Staff and Students*: <http://www.soas.ac.uk/infocomp/dpa/dparesearch>.

² Universities UK, July 2012:

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2012/TheConcordatToSupportResearchIntegrity.pdf>

2. Status

This version of *SOAS Research Ethics Policy* was approved by the Research & Enterprise Committee on 18/02/2015. It supersedes its previous version, dated 2009, and will be updated as necessary to take account of developments in these standards.

3. Definitions

Research Integrity: the definition of research integrity currently used in UK higher education draws on a number of existing values:³

- **Honesty** in all aspects of research includes the presentation of research goals, intentions and findings; reporting on research methods and procedures; methods of gathering data; using and acknowledging the work of other researchers; and conveying valid interpretations and making justifiable claims based on research findings.
- **Rigour**, in line with prevailing disciplinary norms and standards in: performing research and using appropriate methods; adhering to an agreed protocol where appropriate; drawing interpretations and conclusions for the research; and communicating the results.
- **Transparency and open communication** in: declaring conflicts of interest; the reporting of research data collection methods; the analysis and interpretation of data; making research findings widely available, which includes sharing negative results as appropriate; and presenting the work to other researchers and to the general public.
- **Care and respect** for all participants in and subjects of research, including humans, animals, the environment and cultural objects. Those engaged with research must also show care and respect for the stewardship of research and scholarship for future generations.

Research: Drawing on the UK funding bodies' definition used in the Research Excellence Framework, as described in the *Assessment framework and guidance on submissions* (2011), 'research' is defined as, 'a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared ... It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction.'

Researcher: Following the UK Research Integrity Office *Code of Practice for Research* (2009), 'researchers' are defined as any people who conduct research, including but not limited to: employee; independent contractors or consultants; students; visiting or emeritus members of staff; or members of staff on an honorary appointment.

Research misconduct: Behaviour or actions that fall short of the standards of ethics, research and scholarship required to ensure that the integrity of research is upheld. See section 7 below.

³ *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*, p. 11.

4. Relationship with Professional Codes and Standards

Where these exist, SOAS researchers are expected to follow the ethical standards or codes of practice issued by relevant professional bodies that are specific to their academic discipline or area. In the unlikely event of conflict between professional standards and this policy (or SOAS's ethical procedures), SOAS's policy should be followed. See Annex 2 for a list of professional bodies and associations.

5. Principles of Research Integrity

SOAS believes that ethical research must be guided by the following five principles, which are found in the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*.⁴

- 1) Maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research;
- 2) Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards;
- 3) Supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers;
- 4) Using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise;
- 5) Working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.

The *Concordat* defines a set of core values, which apply to any research and is not exhaustive. Additional values and principles may be relevant in specific contexts.

6. Collaborative Research⁵

When research is conducted collaboratively, particularly within inter-disciplinary or international partnerships, there must be clear and explicit agreement about the standards and frameworks that will apply.

In international collaborations, partners should agree to conduct their research according to the same high standards of research integrity as expected in the UK, and to investigate any suspected deviation from these standards. In particular, alleged research misconduct must be brought to the immediate attention of the project leader(s) and of the senior responsible officer in the university or institute (employer) in order for it to be investigated according to the policies and procedures of the partner with the primary responsibility to do so, while respecting the laws and sovereignty of the States of all participating parties.

⁴ <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2012/TheConcordatToSupportResearchIntegrity.pdf>

⁵ This section is based on the *European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*, European Research Foundation & ALLEA, March 2011: http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/Public_documents/Publications/Code_Conduct_ResearchIntegrity.pdf; and the *Montreal Statement on Research Integrity in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations*: http://www.wcri2013.org/Montreal_Statement_e.shtml

In formal, large scale, and often externally-funded international research projects there may be questions as to which country should conduct the investigation if allegations of misconduct are raised and what is to happen when the relevant national policies are at odds with each other. The Coordinating Committee of the OECD Global Science Forum recommends the establishment of an agreement for collaborative research that addresses the promotion of responsible conduct in research and describes the procedures for the investigation of allegations of research misconduct within the project.

The OECD Global Science Forum Committee has produced boiler-plate text for International Agreements, which should be embodied in the contracts that establish the collaborative project. This is to be found in Annex 3, as are the responsibilities of individual and institutional partners in cross-boundary research collaborations.

7. Research Misconduct

Research misconduct can take many forms that include but are not limited to:

- **fabrication:** making up results or other outputs (e.g. artefacts) and presenting them as if they were real
- **falsification:** manipulating research processes or changing or omitting data without good cause
- **plagiarism:** using other people's material without giving proper credit
- **failure to meet ethical, legal and professional obligations:** for example, failure to declare competing interests; misrepresentation of involvement or authorship; misrepresentation of interests; breach of confidentiality; lack of informed consent; misuse of personal data; and abuse of research subjects or materials
- **improper dealing with allegations of misconduct:** failing to address possible infringements such as attempts to cover up misconduct or reprisals against whistleblowers

Although SOAS recognises that, while the responsibility for ensuring that no misconduct occurs rests above all with individual researchers, it bears the primary responsibility for investigating allegations of research misconduct (see Annex 1, SOAS commitments). SOAS undertakes to have procedures that deal effectively and fairly with research misconduct, and to ensure that anyone investigating such allegations has the knowledge, skills, experience and authority to do so. SOAS is also responsible for taking appropriate steps to remedy any situations arising from an investigation. This can include: imposing sanctions, correcting the research record, and reporting to regulatory and statutory bodies, research participants, funders or other professional bodies as circumstances, as contractual obligations and statutory requirements dictate. SOAS will be mindful that minor infractions, where there is no evident intention to deceive, may often be addressed informally through mentoring, education and guidance.

With regard to research misconduct (*Concordat*, pp. 18-19), SOAS researchers will:

- 1) Act in good faith with regard to allegations of research misconduct, whether in making allegations or in being required to participate in an investigation.

2) Handle potential instances of research misconduct in an appropriate manner; this includes reporting misconduct to employers, funders and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies as circumstances require

SOAS will:

1) Have clear, well-articulated and confidential mechanisms for reporting allegations of research misconduct;

2) Have robust, transparent and fair processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct that reflect best practice;

3) Ensure that all researchers are made aware of the relevant contacts and procedures for making allegations;

4) Act with no detriment to whistleblowers making allegations of misconduct in good faith;

5) Provide information on investigations of research misconduct to funders of research and professional and/or statutory bodies as required by their conditions of grant and other legal, professional and statutory obligations;

6) Provide appropriate information to professional and/or statutory bodies;

7) Either provide a named point of contact, or else recognise an appropriate nominated third party, to act as confidential liaison for whistleblowers or any other person wishing to raise concerns about the integrity of research being conducted under SOAS auspices.

Annex 1

1. SOAS Commitments

The five core principles of research integrity, as defined in section five, entail specific responsibilities for both SOAS and its researchers. SOAS responsibilities are as follows:

- 1) Implementing the *Concordat* within their research environment and collaborating with researchers, funders of research and other employers of researchers to maintain a research environment that develops good research practice and nurtures a culture of research integrity, as described in commitments 2 to 5;
- 2) Supporting researchers to understand and act according to expected standards, values and behaviours, and defending them when they live up to these expectations in difficult circumstances;
- 3) Having clear policies, practices and procedures to support researchers, and providing clear ethical approval procedure available to all researchers;
- 4) Making sure that all researchers are aware of and understand policies and processes relating to ethical approval; in short, SOAS will promote awareness among researchers of the standards and behaviours that are expected of them;
- 5) Supporting researchers to reflect best practice in relation to ethical, legal and professional requirements;
- 6) Having appropriate arrangements in place through which researchers can access advice and guidance on ethical, legal and professional obligations and standards;
- 7) Offering suitable learning, training and mentoring opportunities to support the development of researchers;
- 8) Putting in place robust management systems to ensure that policies relating to research, research integrity and researcher behaviour are implemented;
- 9) Putting in place systems within the research environment that both identify potential concerns at an early stage and provide mechanisms for support to researchers in need of assistance;
- 10) Working towards reflecting recognised best practice in systems, processes and practices;
- 11) Tasking a senior member of staff, namely the Pro-Director (Research & Enterprise), with the assistance of the Associate Deans for Research and the Research Office, to oversee research integrity and to act as first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity;
- 12) The Research Ethics Panel will present a short annual statement to SOAS Governing Body in July every year that has been endorsed by the Research Ethics Panel in April and the Research & Enterprise Committee in May. This statement will also be sent for information to Academic Board.

That statement will:

a) provide a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues (for example postgraduate and researcher training, or process reviews);

b) provide assurances that the processes in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organization;

c) provide a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken. To improve accountability and to provide assurances that measures being taken continue to support consistently high standards of research integrity, this statement will be made publicly available on SOAS website.

13) Regularly reviewing its policies and procedures on research integrity

2. SOAS Researchers' Commitments

In order to abide by the five core principles of research integrity, SOAS researchers will:⁶

1) Understand the expected standards of rigour and integrity relevant to their research and discipline. Researchers are obliged to take responsibility for the trustworthiness of their research.

2) Maintain the highest standards of rigour and integrity in their outputs at all times.

3) Ensure that all research is subject to active and appropriate consideration of ethical issues.

4) Compliance: Comply with ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards as required by statutory and regulatory authorities, and by employers, funders and other relevant stakeholders.

5) Training: Take a proactive role in their personal development by participating in appropriate training. This includes training on changing ethical, legal and professional obligations and standards. Researchers should be aware of and adhere to regulations and policies related to research.

6) Research Methods: Researchers should employ appropriate research methods, base conclusions on critical analysis of the evidence and report findings and interpretations fully and objectively, including where these may be negative.

7) Research Records: Researchers should keep clear, accurate records of all research.

8) Authorship: Researchers should take responsibility for their contributions to all publications, funding applications, reports and other representations of their research. Lists of authors should include all those and only those who meet applicable authorship criteria.

⁶ In addition to the *Concordat*, see *Singapore Statement on Research Integrity*:

http://www.singaporestatement.org/downloads/singapore%20statement_A4size.pdf

9) Publication Acknowledgement: Researchers should acknowledge in publications the names and roles of those who made significant contributions to the research (but do not meet authorship criteria), including writers, funders, sponsors, and others.

10) Peer Review: Researchers should provide fair, prompt and rigorous evaluations and respect confidentiality when reviewing others' work.

11) Conflict of Interest: Researchers should disclose financial and other conflicts of interest that could compromise the trustworthiness of their work in research proposals, publications and public communications as well as in all review activities.

12) Reporting Irresponsible Research Practices: Researchers should report to the appropriate authorities any suspected research misconduct, including fabrication, falsification or plagiarism, and other irresponsible research practices that undermine the trustworthiness of research, such as carelessness, improperly ordering authors, failing to report conflicting data, or the use of misleading analytical methods.

Annex 2

Professional Codes and Standards

SOAS, University of London

January 2015

Context

SOAS has revised its policies and procedures on research ethics following the publication of a number of relevant key documents recently. Among these documents is the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* (2012) which emphasises the importance of professional associations for disseminating best practice, as well as the need for the researchers to comply with professional frameworks. It states: “In line with the principles expressed in the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* (2008), researchers ‘share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning’. This will include recognition of changing ethical, legal and professional obligations” (p. 13). SOAS like other research organization must have: “appropriate arrangements in place through which researchers can access advice and guidance on ethical, legal and professional obligations and standards” (p. 14).

Some departments and centres at SOAS already have strong links with one or more professional associations and refer to their ethical code of practice. The *Research Integrity Working Group* thinks it would be beneficial to all departments, centres and individual academics to adopt the code of conduct of one or more professional associations. This does not imply an obligation for individual academics to become members of these associations but that the departmental website would provide a link to their code of practice for the guidance of staff and students. Doing so would help SOAS to comply with the requirement of the *Concordat* to make professional obligations and standards accessible to its researchers.

Below, the *Research Integrity Working Group* has collated the professional associations currently referenced by academic members of staff in the departments and centres of SOAS. It is proposed that this table be updated as more departments and centres adopt one or more codes of conduct to be displayed as links on departmental websites (as well as on the ethics pages of the Research Office webpages).

Professional associations currently referred to by academic members of staff

Department/Centre	Associations	Ethical Guidance	Webpage
Anthropology (R. Fardon)	Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA) American Anthropological Association (AAA) Royal Anthropological Institute	X X X	http://www.theasa.org/ http://www.aaanet.org/ https://www.therai.org.uk/about-the-rai/ethical-policy
History of Art & Archaeology (A. Contadini and S. McCausland)	College Art Association (CAA) Societe Europeenne pour l’etude des civilisations de l’Himalaya et de l’Asie Centrale (SEECHAC) The International Association for Ladakh Studies (IALS) International Association of Buddhist Studies (IABS) Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA) The UK Museums Association International Council of Museums (ICOM) The Islamic Manuscripts Association (TIMA) Historians of Islamic Art Association (HIA) Museum of London	X X X X X	http://www.collegeart.org/ http://seechac.org/asso/accueil http://ladakhstudies.org/ http://iabsinfo.net/ http://www.theasa.org/ http://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics http://icom.museum/professional-standards/code-of-ethics/ http://www.islamicmanuscript.org/home.aspx http://www.historiansofislamicart.org/ http://archive.museumoflondon.org.uk/Centre-for-Human-

	American Anthropological Association American Association of Applied Linguistics	X	http://www.aaanet.org/ http://www.aaal.org/
Near & Middle East	American Oriental Society BRISMES American Schools of Oriental Research Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society Association for Israel Studies British Association for Near Eastern Archaeology British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara British Institute of Persian Studies British Institute for the Study of Iraq Middle East Studies Association Royal Asiatic Society Royal Society of Asian Affairs The Iran Society Ottoman & Turkish Studies Association	X	http://www.umich.edu/~aos/ http://www.brismes.ac.uk/ http://www.asor.org/ http://aias.org.uk/ http://aisisraelstudies.org/ http://banealcane.org/banea/ http://biaa.ac.uk/ http://bips.ac.uk/ http://www.bisi.ac.uk/ http://www.mesa.arizona.edu/ http://www.royalasiaticsociety.org/site/ http://rsaa.org.uk/ http://www.iransociety.org/ http://www.h-net.org/~thetsa/
South Asia	British Association of South Asian Studies		http://www.basas.org.uk/
South East Asia	Association for South East Asian Studies – UK [ASEASUK]		http://aseasuk.org.uk/3/
Postcolonial Studies	Postcolonial Studies Association		http://www.postcolonialstudiesassociation.co.uk/
Film Studies			
Translation Studies			
Development Studies	Development Studies Association International Association of Feminist Economists Royal Anthropological Institute American Anthropological Association British International Studies Association Political Studies Association African Studies Association UK African Studies Association USA Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies Royal Geographical Society Academy of Social Sciences Association of Social Anthropologists	? X X X X X X X X X	http://www.devstud.org.uk/index.html http://www.iaffe.org/ https://www.therai.org.uk/ http://www.aaanet.org/ http://www.bisa.ac.uk/ http://www.psa.ac.uk/ http://www.asauk.net/ http://www.africanstudies.org/ http://www.aegis-eu.org/ http://www.rgs.org/HomePage.htm http://acss.org.uk/ http://www.theasa.org/
Economics (B. Fine, D. Johnston, C. Bramall)	Development Studies Association Association for Heterodox Economics International Initiative for Promoting Political Economy Royal African Society African Studies Association UK International Association of Feminist Economists	? X X X X	http://www.devstud.org.uk/index.html http://hetecon.net/ http://iippe.org/wp/ http://www.royalafricansociety.org/ http://asauk.net/ http://www.iaffe.org/
DeFiMS (C. Driver)	Too interdisciplinary to belong to one association: economics, finance, development studies, organisational behaviour, innovation studies, regional studies, management science, law, sociology, accountancy		
Law (L. Welchman and P. Koehler)	Society of Legal Scholars Bar Council/ Bar Standards Board Law Society	X X	http://www.legalscholars.ac.uk/ http://www.barcouncil.org.uk/ and https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/ http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/
Politics & IR (S. Hopgood, F. Berenskoetter)	International Studies Association (US) American Political Science Association (US) Political Studies Association (UK) British International Studies Association (UK) European Consortium for Political Research (currently UK)	X X X	http://www.isanet.org/ http://www.apsanet.org/ http://www.psa.ac.uk/ http://www.bisa.ac.uk/ http://www.ecpr.eu/
Gender Studies (N. Al-Ali)	Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA)	X	http://www.theasa.org/
CeDEP (L. Smith)	Association of Agricultural Economists Development Studies Association Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) Tropical Agriculture Association Institute of Agricultural Engineers Institution of Civil Engineers (specifically associate society the Irrigation and Water Forum)	? X X X X X	http://www.iaae-agecon.org/ http://www.devstud.org.uk/index.html http://www.iema.net/ http://www.ciwem.org/ http://www.taa.org.uk/ http://www.iagre.org/ http://www.ice.org.uk/

Annex 3

Collaborative and/or international research

a) International Agreements

The OECD Global Science Forum Committee has produced a boiler-plate text for International Agreements, which should be embodied in the contracts that establish the collaborative project.

We, the parties, agree:

- to conduct our research according to the standards of research integrity, as defined in the (specify the national codes of conduct and disciplinary or national ethical guidelines that apply);
- that any suspected deviation from these standards, in particular alleged research misconduct, will be brought to the immediate attention of (all designated contact point(s)) and investigated according to the policies and procedures of (to be filled in with the body with primary responsibility), while respecting the laws and sovereignty of the States of all participating parties;
- to cooperate in and support any such investigations; and
- to accept (subject to any appeal process) the conclusions of any such investigation and to take appropriate actions

b) Responsibilities of Individual and Institutional Partners in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations

Overall Collaborative Responsibilities

1. *Integrity*: Collaborating partners should take responsibility for the trustworthiness of the collaborative research.
2. *Trust*: The behaviour of all collaborating partners should be worthy of the trust of all other partners. Responsibility for establishing and maintaining this level of trust lies with all collaborating partners.
3. *Purpose*: Collaborative research should be initiated and conducted for purposes that advance knowledge to the benefit of humankind.
4. *Goals*: Collaborating partners should agree at the outset on the goals of the research. Changes in goals should be negotiated and agreed to by all partners.

Responsibilities in Establishing and Managing the Collaboration

5. *Communication*: Collaborating partners should communicate with each other as frequently and openly as necessary to foster full, mutual understanding of the research.
6. *Agreements*: Agreements that govern collaborative research should be understood and ratified by all collaborating partners. Agreements that unduly or unnecessarily restrict dissemination of data, findings or other research products should be avoided.

7. *Compliance with Laws, Policies and Regulations:* The collaboration as a whole should be in compliance with all laws, policies and regulations to which it is subject. Collaborating partners should promptly determine how to address conflicting laws, policies or regulations that apply to the research.

8. *Costs and Rewards:* The costs and rewards of collaborative research should be distributed fairly among collaborating partners.

9. *Transparency:* Collaborative research should be conducted and its results disseminated transparently and honestly, with as much openness as possible under existing agreements. Sources of funding should be fully and openly declared.

10. *Resource Management:* Collaborating partners should use human, animal, financial and other resources appropriately.

11. *Monitoring:* Collaborating partners should monitor the progress of research projects to foster the integrity and the timely completion and dissemination of the work.

Responsibilities in Collaborative Relationships

12. *Roles and Responsibilities:* Collaborating partners should come to mutual understandings about their roles and responsibilities in the planning, conduct and dissemination of research projects. Such understandings should be renegotiated when roles or responsibilities change.

13. *Customary Practices and Assumptions:* Collaborating partners should openly discuss their customary practices and assumptions related to the research. Diversity of perspectives, expertise and methods, and differences in customary practices, standards and assumptions that may compromise the integrity of the research should be addressed openly.

14. *Conflict:* Collaborating partners should seek prompt resolution of conflicts, disagreements and misunderstandings, at the individual or institutional level, as necessary.

15. *Authority of Representation:* Collaborating partners should come to agreement on who has authority to speak on behalf of the collaboration.

16. *Recognition of All Partners:* The contributions of all partners in research collaborations, especially junior partners, should receive full and appropriate recognition.

Responsibilities for Outcomes of Collaborative Research

17. *Data, Intellectual Property and Research Records:* Collaborating partners should come to agreement, at the outset and later as needed, on the use, management, sharing and ownership of data, intellectual property, and research records.

18. *Publication:* Collaborating partners should come to agreement, at the outset and later as needed, on how publication and other dissemination decisions will be made.

19. *Authorship and Acknowledgement:* Collaborating partners should come to agreement, at the outset and later as needed, on standards for authorship and acknowledgement of joint research products. Publications and other products should state the contributions of all contributing parties.

20. *Accountability:* Collaborating partners should be accountable to each other, to funders and to other stakeholders in the accomplishment of the research.