

# Peer Review Policy

## Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) Peer review is an essential component of responsible research practice as it provides critical evaluation of research planning, execution and reporting. La Trobe researchers are encouraged to embrace the benefits of impartial and independent assessment of their research by others working in a similar or related research area, and to participate as a responsible reviewer of other research activities.

(2) Peer review makes a valuable contribution to the integrity of research and plays an essential role in credible research evaluation and reporting. La Trobe is committed to ensuring that responsible peer review processes are established and that all researchers have the capacity to engage in peer review as part of their professional obligations to their field.

(3) This Procedure outlines the responsibilities of researchers in the peer review process consistent with the standards of the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research \(2018\)](#) and the Singapore Statement (2010).

## Section 2 - Scope

(4) Applies to:

- a. all research activities;
- b. all University staff and students involved in research.

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

(5) La Trobe University is committed to ensuring that:

- a. peer review involves fair, timely, honest, transparent and impartial assessment processes;
- b. all researchers have the capacity to contribute to and benefit from the peer review process.

(6) All La Trobe staff and students involved in research are required to respect and apply the requirements for peer review as set out in the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research \(2018\)](#), the Singapore Statement (2010) and those of State and Federal codes.

(7) Researchers have a duty to responsibly contribute to the peer review process and refrain from misusing the process to benefit their individual or a third party's self-interests.

(8) Researchers in receipt of peer-reviewed, publically funded projects have an obligation to act as peer reviewers whenever possible.

(9) Students involved in research are not to participate in peer review of work produced by their supervisor.

# Section 4 - Procedures

## Part A - Peer Review Process

(10) La Trobe expects all researchers to participate in, and submit their research for, peer review wherever possible.

## Part B - Responsibility of Researchers

(11) Researchers in receipt of public funding should be willing to participate in a peer review process. For ARC and NHMRC grants, peer review forms the basis of decision-making in the recommendation of applications for funding.

(12) Researchers have a responsibility to ensure that:

- a. they maintain confidentiality at all times of the content and outcomes of a peer review process and the handling of any papers they are given for review;
- b. they provide proper consideration to novel and contentious research;
- c. they responsibly contribute to research to ensure high public confidence;
- d. they disclose to the appropriate authority - funding bodies, publishers or editors, Heads of Schools - all conflicts of interest when reviewing another researcher's work;
- e. they ensure the peer review process is conducted fairly, impartially and in a timely manner;
- f. where the researcher is a supervising researcher, they provide the necessary skills to trainee researchers so that trainees also understand their obligation to participate in the peer review process;
- g. they refrain from supporting flawed research and permitting personal prejudice from influencing the peer review process;
- h. they do not obtain an unfair advantage by acquiring privileged information through peer review;
- i. the peer review process is not used to benefit an individual or a third party's self-interests;
- j. they do not seek to influence the peer review process or outcomes for their own work while it is being reviewed.

## Part C - Peer Reviewers

(13) Peer reviewers will be independent of the research under review. Peer reviewers can include experienced researchers in a general or related research area.

(14) Researchers cannot be peer reviewers for a particular research project or proposal if:

- a. the research project or proposal falls outside their area of expertise;
- b. they are unable to separate and prevent their personal prejudices, predispositions and beliefs from influencing their ability to participate in the peer review process in an impartial manner;
- c. they are a member of the research team or project;
- d. they are a project supervisor of a research project to be undertaken by a student of the University as part of their course of study;
- e. they have a personal or familial relationship with the relevant researcher or research team;
- f. they are a business partner or have a financial or any pecuniary interest in the research project;
- g. they have any other influences which might reasonably be considered to affect their judgment of the research project.

## Part D - Timely Review of Research Outputs

(15) Peer reviews should be conducted in a timely manner and within the confirmed and negotiated time frame.

## Part E - Peer Review Process Compromised - Actions Available to Researchers

(16) Where the peer review process has been conducted contrary to this Policy, researchers can exercise the following actions against each peer reviewer:

- a. contact the authority assigning the peer reviewers and inform it of the peer reviewers' actions;
- b. seek to have their research withdrawn and resubmitted for peer review.

## Section 5 - Definitions

(17) For the purpose of this Policy and Procedure:

- a. Australian Research Council (ARC): A Commonwealth entity involved in the provision of Government support for research under its National Competitive Grants Programme.
- b. National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC): A funding body that supports research in the health and medical sector and is involved in the development and provision of advice in the conduct of health and medical research.
- c. Peer review: Impartial and independent scholarly assessment and review of research outputs by individuals working in the same or related research area.
- d. Peer reviewer: A researcher who engages in peer review of another researchers' outputs that falls within the peer reviewer's area or related area of expertise.
- e. Researcher: Someone who conducts an organised and systematic study of a given subject, field or problem and undertakes to discover facts or principles. For the purpose of this procedure, a researcher is any La Trobe staff or students conducting research.
- f. Staff: All employees of the University or affiliated enterprises with which the University has a formal agreement and includes casual employees, clinical staff and unpaid members of the University such as Honorary and Adjunct appointments, all of which are registered on the HR system.

## Section 6 - Stakeholders

Responsibility for implementation - Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement).

Responsibility for monitoring implementation and compliance - College Provosts; Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors (Research); Pro Vice-Chancellor (Graduate and Global Research); Executive Director, Research Office.

## Status and Details

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