



Research Integrity Report

2025



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Acknowledgement

The University of Melbourne acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded land on which we work, learn and live: the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong peoples (Burnley, Parkville, Southbank and Werribee campuses), the Yorta Yorta Nation (Dookie and Shepparton campuses), and the Dja Dja Wurrung people (Creswick campus). The University also acknowledges and is grateful to the Traditional Owners, Elders and Knowledge Holders of all Indigenous nations and clans who have been instrumental in our reconciliation journey.

We recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent, with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60,000 years. We also acknowledge their enduring cultural practices of caring for Country. We pay respect to Elders past, present and future, and acknowledge the importance of Indigenous knowledge in the Academy. As a community of researchers, teachers, professional staff and students we are privileged to work and learn every day with Indigenous colleagues and partners.

In making this Acknowledgment of Country we commit to respectful and responsible conduct towards all others according to the Traditional lores of this land, particularly at times of formal ceremony.

About this report

This report, issued by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), provides insight into research integrity activity and investigations at the University of Melbourne between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Data has been provided by the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity at the University of Melbourne.

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Foreword

The University of Melbourne’s inaugural report on research integrity demonstrates the unwavering commitment of our leaders, researchers and academic workforce to uphold the highest standards of research integrity across our institution.

This report is written with our communities across Victoria, Australia and the world in mind. We want to provide greater awareness, insight and understanding of the governance processes behind our world-class research. By sharing this information, we aim to empower the community to trust the rigorous processes behind evidence-based university research.

As outlined in our *Advancing Research 2030: Excellence for Impact* strategy, research excellence requires integrity, quality and openness. Ensuring these qualities in our research operations is required to maintain social license and public trust in our work. In an era where knowledge and experts are increasingly questioned, and determining accurate information is increasingly difficult, we are committed to providing transparent information about our research quality and integrity. Our society relies on research excellence, breakthroughs and innovation to solve the global challenges we are confronting, and the University of Melbourne is a world leader.

This report offers insights into our robust research integrity ecosystem, which has skilled people and partnership with the community as its defining features. It details how we support our researchers through education and training, manage and investigate potential breaches of research integrity, and continuously improve our research processes to address shortfalls and maintain trust. It demonstrates our proactive approach to addressing potential issues and how our internal mechanisms work.

At the University of Melbourne, we consider research integrity to be a collective responsibility. We rely on continuous input from within and outside our university community. We invite you to alert us to potential issues or concerns you may have. Your input is critical in helping us refine our practices and uphold the highest standards. We welcome your feedback as we continue to advance research excellence for impact with the utmost integrity.

Professor Mark Cassidy AM
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)



Report on a page

Research integrity in 2025 at the University of Melbourne – by the numbers:

13.8K+

academic and
professional staff

70+

research centres and institutes
across nine faculties

5800+

graduate researchers

15.9K+

research outputs

\$900M

research income*

11.6K+

active research agreements

14,823

completions of online training in
research integrity, animal welfare
and ethics

2232

research staff participated in
events related to research integrity

53

members of our Research Integrity
Advisor Network across all
University faculties

2498

instances of advice given
(centrally) on responsible research

45

people flagged potential
breaches with us

80

research integrity concerns
were reviewed

55

corrective actions were taken

2

panel investigations into possible
research misconduct commenced

Top three integrity issues

Authorship disputes (18%)

Plagiarism (14%)

Misrepresentation or
falsification of data (14%)

0

requests for procedural
fairness reviews

33%

of assessments completed
in six months

100%

completed in 12 months

Top three priorities for 2026

Responsible research
policies and training

AI risks in research

Indigenous research ethics

*2025 audited Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) and 2025 Research Block Grant

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Research integrity at the University of Melbourne

The Australian community expects research to be conducted responsibly, ethically and with integrity. Research integrity refers to all the factors that underpin good research practice and promote trust and confidence in the research process. In Australia, research integrity is governed by the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018* (the Code), which outlines principles of honesty, rigour, transparency, fairness, respect, recognition, accountability and responsible research practices to ensure research is conducted and reported with trustworthiness.

Research integrity involves shared responsibility between research institutions that have joint accountabilities for ensuring integrity and addressing breaches. This includes funding agencies like the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), which promote standards to guide researchers and institutions. The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) also plays a role by ensuring research training institutions promote ethical and responsible research practices.

At the University of Melbourne, we are committed to conducting research to the highest legal and ethical standards, with integrity and openness.

Our commitment to uphold confidence in our research

The University of Melbourne is a public institution that exists for the benefit of the community and is a beneficiary of significant public funding. Our commitment to openness and transparency is fundamental to maintaining public trust and confidence. Our approach balances academic freedom with responsibility, allowing staff and students to engage in curiosity-led research within a clear framework that safeguards ethical and integrity standards.

Our researchers collaborate on a global scale with other academic institutions, industry, community and government to advance knowledge and drive problem-solving. We view research integrity as a joint endeavour and work with research partners that uphold the same high standards and regard for research integrity.

Research integrity assurance

The University of Melbourne applies rigorous expectations and standards to ensure our research is accurate, open and accountable. Figure 1 outlines the areas that contribute to our research integrity assurance.

Responsible people

At the core of research integrity is the conduct of the researcher or graduate researcher. They have a personal accountability for conducting their research responsibly and ensuring their teams are informed and supported to act with integrity. Our nine faculties provide early-stage risk management and support through the oversight and guidance of faculty research committees, supervisors (of researchers and graduate researchers) and Deans, who have clear accountabilities and are responsible for escalating higher risk research.

Enabling environment

The University is obliged to set clear expectations and training to provide an enabling environment that supports trustworthy research and aims to ensure any identified breaches are dealt with efficiently and appropriately.

Our *Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy* (MPF1318), which underwent a scheduled review in 2025, sets out the standards of responsible research conduct required by the University of Melbourne. It facilitates compliance with the Code and supporting Guides, such as the *Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (2018).

Research Integrity Advisors and dedicated committees support compliance across the University.

University governance

The University’s governance framework includes committees, structures and processes that ensure the good operation and public accountability of our research integrity ecosystem. It includes the University’s Academic Board and risk committees.

We have processes for monitoring our research activities and scrutinising our partnerships and collaborations. These allow for deliberation on the ethics, opportunities and challenges of activities with elevated risk or sensitivity. Subject matter experts, including our dedicated Research Due Diligence team, help the University maintain high standards by reviewing research engagements where there is potential risk. Complex issues are escalated to the Research Due Diligence Advisory Group for careful consideration by academic experts.

Openness

Our commitments to openness and transparency allow our researchers to responsibly manage diverse research challenges while maintaining public trust. Through openness and engagement, we ensure that our research not only advances global knowledge but also adheres to the highest community standards. Our commitments include the University’s annual reporting, conflict of interest disclosures and our Openness Agreement on Animal Research and Teaching with the Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching.

Community engagement

Sharing our research, and how we do it, helps the community learn more about our research outcomes, our robust practices and how to contribute to our research ecosystem. Our community engagement includes encouraging the public to report concerns and get involved with a research ethics committee, as well as sharing our research outcomes in an accessible and accurate manner.

Figure 1: Domains of assurance in our research integrity ecosystem



Systems to ensure integrity

Continuous improvement underpins research integrity at the University of Melbourne (Figure 2). Education, policies, integrity investigations, corrective actions and institutional learnings are key components. These are most effective when part of a broader set of approaches to encourage responsible conduct.

Education, training and advice

All graduate researchers complete a mandatory Research Integrity Online Training program. This program was available for academic staff to complete on a voluntary basis in 2025. It will be mandatory for everyone who conducts or supports research, including both academic and professional staff, and honorary appointees in 2026. A dedicated Education and Engagement (E&E) team within the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (OREI) delivers training that promotes and strengthens our responsible research practices and culture. The Researcher Development Unit (RDU) is our research capability initiative, with programs that support researchers at all career stages, including graduate researchers. The RDU provides courses that reinforce responsible research conduct, including the Early Career Researcher Support Program and Graduate Researcher Supervisor Training.

The University has established a network of Research Integrity Advisors (RIAs) and had 53 active RIAs in 2025. The RIA Network is overseen by an appointed Chair and supported by OREI's E&E team. RIA representatives are trained University staff, based in each faculty, who advise researchers about the proper conduct of research and how to navigate University processes if they have any concerns.

Our researchers and graduate researchers may also have access to bespoke or discipline-specific research integrity sessions provided through their faculty, school or department.

Policies and processes

The University has policies, processes and guidance statements to ensure research conduct is ethical and responsible (included in the Appendices of this report). The University's policies, which can be found publicly in our Policy Library, implement our key requirements and responsibilities under the Code.

These are informed by other codes and standards, including the *AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research*, the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, and the *Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*.

Research integrity complaints process and outcomes

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) is the University's Responsible Executive Officer (REO) and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability) is the primary Designated Officer (DO). Under our *Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy* (MPF1318), the REO and DO are 'nominated decision makers' for management and investigation of potential breaches of the Code. They are supported by OREI, which works with other parts of the University to prevent and detect non-compliance with the Code and related regulations on responsible research.

Potential breaches of the Code, often referred to as research integrity complaints or concerns, are managed through a process aligned to the *Guide to managing and investigating potential breaches of the Code*. This process is described in policy MPF1318. We aim to manage complaints, assessments and investigations with fairness, timeliness and rigour. Part 2 of this report provides further details on this function.

We also collect data on research integrity trends and outcomes, communicating these back to our research community and faculty leadership to promote a culture of research integrity, reflective self-assessment and proactive compliance.

Continuous improvement

When a research integrity breach is identified, those responsible are required to take corrective actions. Relevant people (such as supervisors, examiners, academic leadership, research managers and policy managers) are informed about what happened, and how it happened. Sharing recommendations can lead to improvements to individual or faculty level processes, or to the University's overall research management and approval system, to ensure the scenario is not repeated.

Institutional learnings from research integrity matters in 2025 are discussed in Part 2 of this report.

The University has robust systems to ensure the integrity of our research. This includes a clear and accessible way for anyone, whether inside or outside the University, to alert our team to situations where integrity is being questioned. We want to be notified immediately when our research standards may have fallen short or a potential breach of the

Code has occurred. Testing our scholarly outcomes and practices, through the processes described in *Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy* (MPF1318), is part of a healthy and productive research culture. We monitor for trends and anomalies and use these to inform continuous improvement of our systems and processes.

Figure 2: Continuously improving our research integrity ecosystem



We encourage you to notify us of any concern about how our research is conducted

You can share your concerns about how our research was conducted. We can accept anonymous concerns or withhold your identity from being shared through the process of managing and investigating your concern if you prefer.

Submit your concern via the form on our website: research.unimelb.edu.au/strengths/ethics

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2025 in focus

Summary of outcomes: research integrity matters during 2025

This chart shows what happened with research integrity matters during 2025.

A complaint about research conduct may include multiple concerns. We treat every potential breach of the Code as a separate concern.

2024 ➡ 2025

15 complaints (with 29 concerns) were carried over as unresolved from 2024.

2025

45 new complaints (involving 84 concerns) were received by the University.

In total, 60 complaints (involving 113 concerns) were on our books in 2025.

What happened

80 concerns resolved



17 complaints (involving **27** concerns) were resolved at the **initial review and triage** stage

- 20 concerns were dismissed
- 5 concerns were referred to other University processes, such as human resources
- 2 concerns were referred to other institutions or entities (such as another university or a journal)



22 complaints (involving **53** concerns) were resolved at the **preliminary assessment** stage by the Designated Officer

- 22 concerns were dismissed because no breach could be established
- 31 potential breaches were identified, with 55 corrective actions taken

2026

33 not resolved



21 complaints (involving **33** concerns) were **unresolved** as of 31 December 2025 and carried over into 2026

This includes 2 **panel investigations** (involving 2 concerns), which both commenced in late 2025. We anticipate finalising both of these investigations in 2026.



Complaints made by:

- External (24%)
- Anonymous (20%)
- Academic (35%)
- Professional (18%)
- Students (3%)



Top concerns raised:

- Authorship practices (18%)
- Plagiarism (14%)
- Falsification/fabrication of data (14%)
- Breach of ethics approval (11%)
- Research without ethics approval or permit (11%)
- Conflict of interest (8%)



Key actions taken:

- Two investigations into possible research misconduct commenced
- Four corrections to the public record about research affiliations or findings
- 29 requests for academic counselling or further training
- 22 targeted requirements for researchers or faculties to remedy the breach and prevent recurrence

A key initiative in 2025: refreshing our Research Integrity Online Training for greater impact

The University's Research Integrity Online Training (RIOT) course is an essential tool for ensuring the promotion of responsible research conduct. The course sets out responsibilities under the Code, University policies, best practices and supports that are available. In 2025, the University reviewed and revitalised our RIOT course, resulting in an updated, customised and engaging new program. While RIOT is already mandatory for graduate researchers and available to all staff, from 2026 it will be required training for all staff, students and honoraries who are engaged in or support research at the University.

How did we address research integrity in 2025?

The University is committed to taking action to strengthen responsible research practices and to uphold community trust in our research activity. The following sections describe our process of managing research integrity complaints in 2025, the number and types of complaints received and the actions we took. We also summarise the types of queries and requests for advice received by the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (OREI) and our Research Integrity Advisor (RIA) Network.

The three-stage investigation process for managing complaints is shown in Figure 3. If at any point a complaint or concern is found not to breach the Code, it is dismissed and, where appropriate, referred elsewhere. The process follows this sequence:

1. Initial review and triage
2. Preliminary assessment
3. Panel investigation

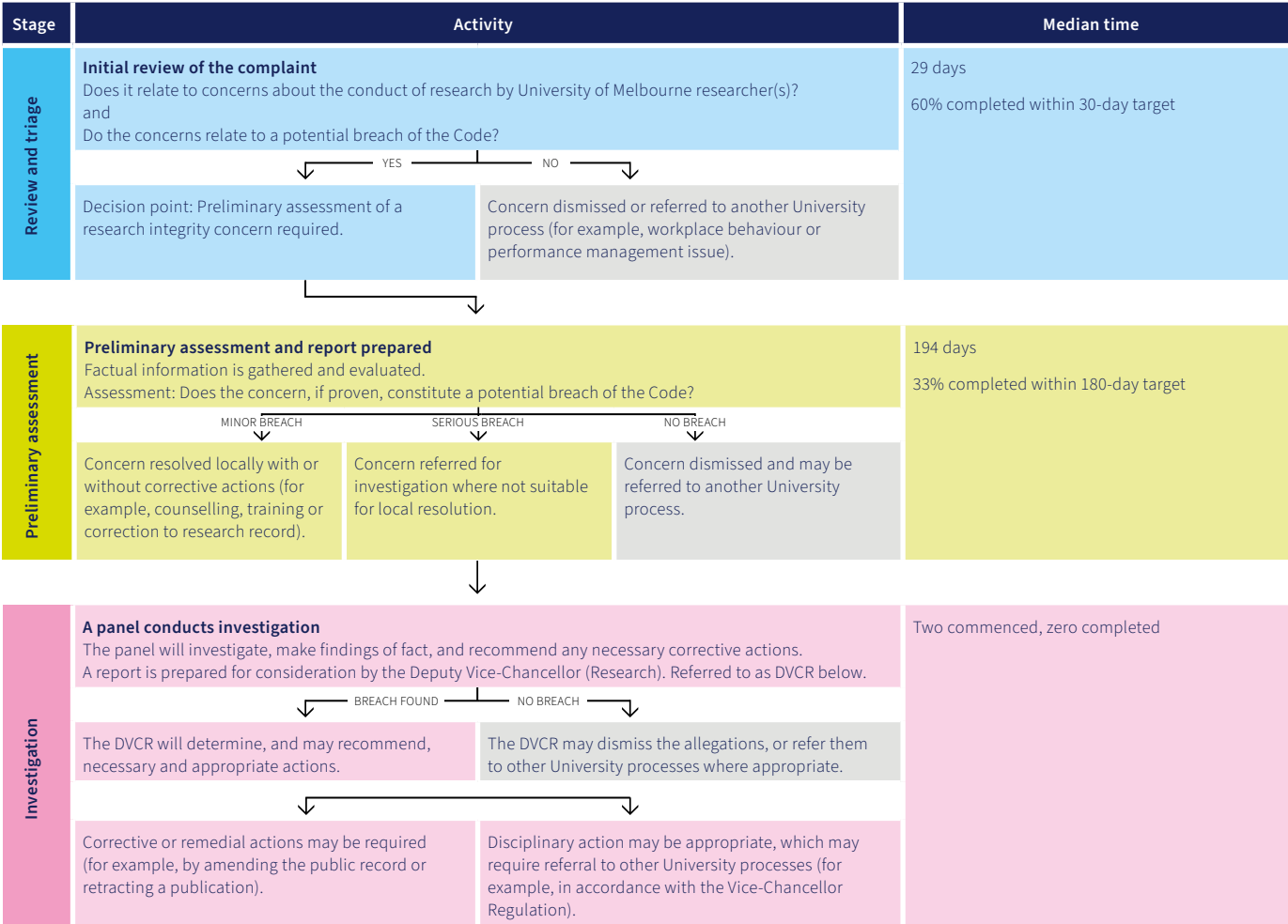
When the University conducts a preliminary assessment and identifies evidence of a potential breach of a less serious nature, we take educative and corrective actions. This is through our Designated Officer (DO) under the Code. Where the preliminary evidence suggests the breach is serious, including where research misconduct may have occurred, a panel investigation is established. Research misconduct refers to a serious breach of the Code, which is also intentional, reckless or negligent.

Investigation panel members are appointed by the DO based on the expertise and experience required, relative to the nature of the potential breach(es), to make findings of fact. Investigation panel members may be internal or external to the University and must be independent from the alleged issues.

Under the Code, it is the University's responsibility to manage and investigate complaints or concerns about potential breaches in a manner that is timely, effective and in accordance with procedural fairness. We are committed to resolving research integrity matters in this manner.

As demonstrated in Figure 3, we did not finalise our review and assessment of all cases, taken as an average, as quickly as we aimed to. We recognise the importance of continuous improvement and we are actively working to enhance our processes to reduce the time it takes to resolve a research integrity matter.

Figure 3: Flowchart of research integrity complaint management and resolution times in 2025



Wellbeing throughout the research integrity process

We understand that participating in a research integrity review process can be difficult and stressful. This is relevant for a person alerting us to a concern, a researcher responding to those concerns, or for someone who is assisting in the matter (for example, as a witness or by providing information).

Our *Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy* (MPF1318) explicitly sets out protections for people against victimisation and other detrimental action. This policy applies to people raising concerns and to the subject of a research integrity investigation process.

In 2025, the Research Integrity Investigations team worked closely with our Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) team to ensure clear and accessible information was provided about support available throughout the research integrity review process. This included access to CAPS and services provided by our Employee Assistance Program, information about other external support services for mental health emergencies, and information about the role of a nominated support person.

What were we asked to investigate?

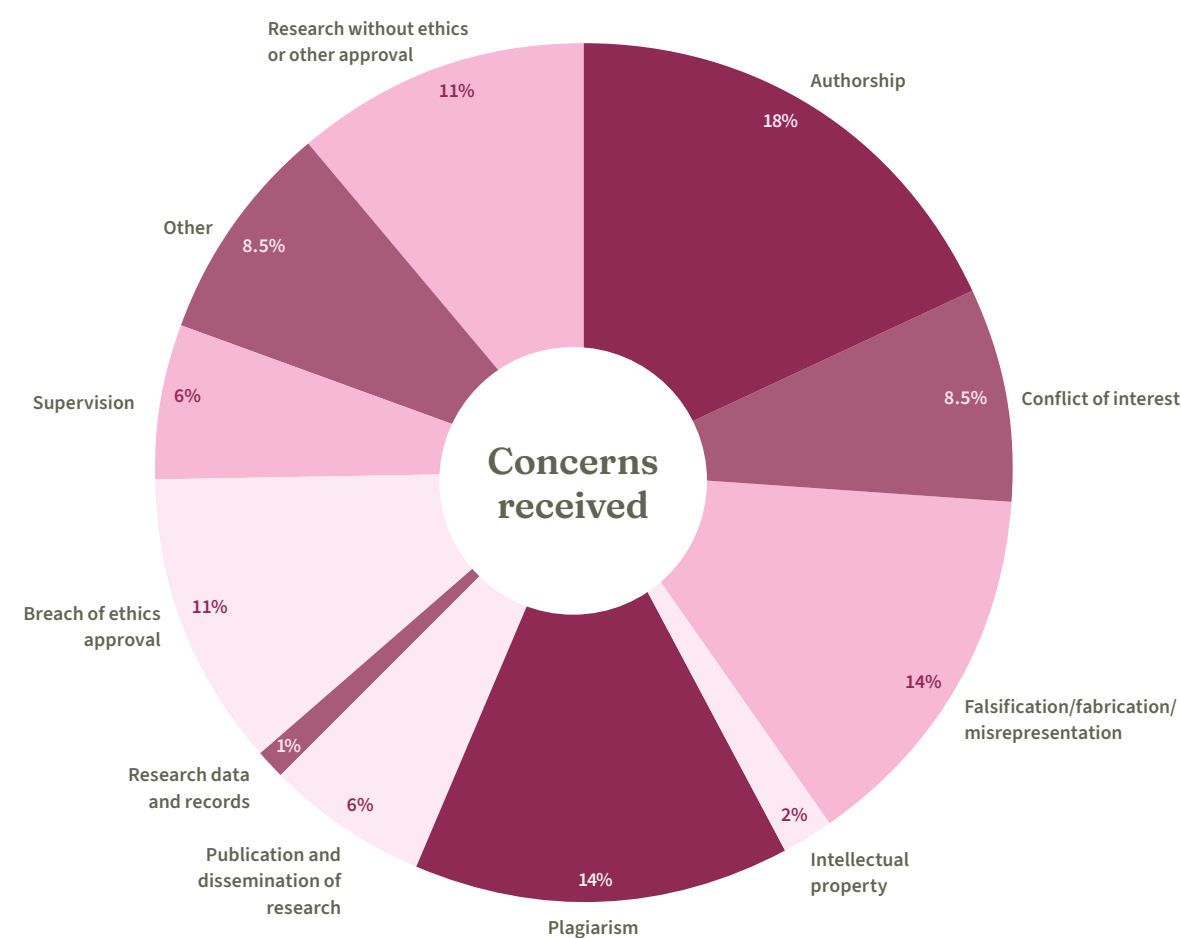
In 2025, the University received 45 new research integrity complaints, 26 of which proceeded to detailed review in the preliminary assessment stage. A total of 84 new concerns were raised with us in 2025.

Some of the complaints raised concerns about more than one potential breach of the Code. We treat every alleged breach of the Code as a separate concern and consider them individually. Additionally, 15 complaints from 2024 were carried into 2025, including 12 in preliminary assessment.

In 2025, the top themes across the research integrity concerns raised with us were (see Figure 4):

- Authorship practices (18 per cent)
- Plagiarism (14 per cent)
- Falsification/fabrication of data (14 per cent)
- Breach of ethics approval (11 per cent)
- Research without ethics approval or permit (11 per cent)
- Conflict of interest (8.5 per cent)

Figure 4: Concerns received about potential breaches of the Code by theme in 2025



Outcomes and actions

In 2025, the University completed 22 preliminary assessments that covered 53 different concerns. Fifty-eight per cent of these concerns (31 concerns) were assessed as being a potential breach of the Code. Forty-two per cent (22 concerns) were dismissed as no potential breach was found on the evidence provided. Two complaints (with four concerns) were identified during the preliminary assessment as potential serious breaches of the Code and were referred to panel investigations. These panel processes, which will be carried over to 2026 due to the timing of their commencement and complexity, will identify if research misconduct has occurred (defined as serious breaches of the Code which are also intentional, reckless or negligent).

The University took decisive corrective actions where breaches or potential breaches of the Code were identified in 2025. These actions included:

- Corrections to the public record to rectify inaccurate researcher affiliations with the University of Melbourne
- Twenty-nine requests to researchers to engage in further counselling and training on research integrity responsibilities under the Code, which included reflective practice conversations with senior academic leadership
- Twenty-two other corrective actions, including:
 - Wider audits of a researcher's projects where breaches of ethics had been identified
 - Requirement of acknowledgment of the use of AI in a paper or thesis
 - Requirement for a new data management plan and audit of access to that data by staff and students
 - Request for detailed advice from the University's legal unit regarding privacy considerations and protections in relation to a breach of data management responsibilities
 - Requirement that researchers destroy the data in question, with a prohibition of any further public dissemination and/or removal of the data from drafts and papers
 - Requirement for an escalation pathway to more senior researchers be established for ethics management within a research team

- Confirmation of research grant eligibility and provision of same assurance to a research funder
- Prohibition on further analysis or use of research content generated with AI outside of ethics approval.

Procedural fairness reviews

In 2025, the University did not receive any requests for a review of procedural fairness in a research integrity matter. This process, when triggered, requires the University's Review Officer appointed under the *Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy* (MPF1318) to assess whether the rights, interests and expectations of anyone affected by a decision were given a fair and reasonable opportunity to be heard, that any decision makers were impartial and free from bias, and that any decisions were based on reliable, relevant and sufficient evidence.

A request for review can also be made to the Australian Research Integrity Committee (ARIC). Applicants do not need to go through an internal procedural fairness review before going to the ARIC. ARIC is the national body jointly established by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) to undertake reviews of institutional processes used to manage and investigate potential breaches of the Code. In 2025, no requests were made or finalised by ARIC in relation to the management and investigation of research integrity complaints by the University of Melbourne.

What were people asking for advice about?

In 2025, the University's Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (OREI) received about 2500 requests for advice to ensure research practices met the requirements of the Code. Of these queries, 146 specifically related to research integrity and compliance matters. The remaining queries largely related to human research (including clinical trials and ethics), with other topics including animal care and use, biorisk management, conflicts of interest, defence security and international safeguards.

A key initiative in 2025: expanding peer education and advice on research integrity

The University has a peer network of 53 trained Research Integrity Advisors (RIAs) who provide advice and guidance to researchers about the responsible conduct of research. RIAs help researchers who want to report a possible concern or complaint to navigate University processes. In 2025, members of the RIA Network led or participated in 24 training events across the University, including faculty-based workshops and meetings, and increased their advisory activities. The RIA Network is supported by a dedicated Education and Engagement team in OREI.

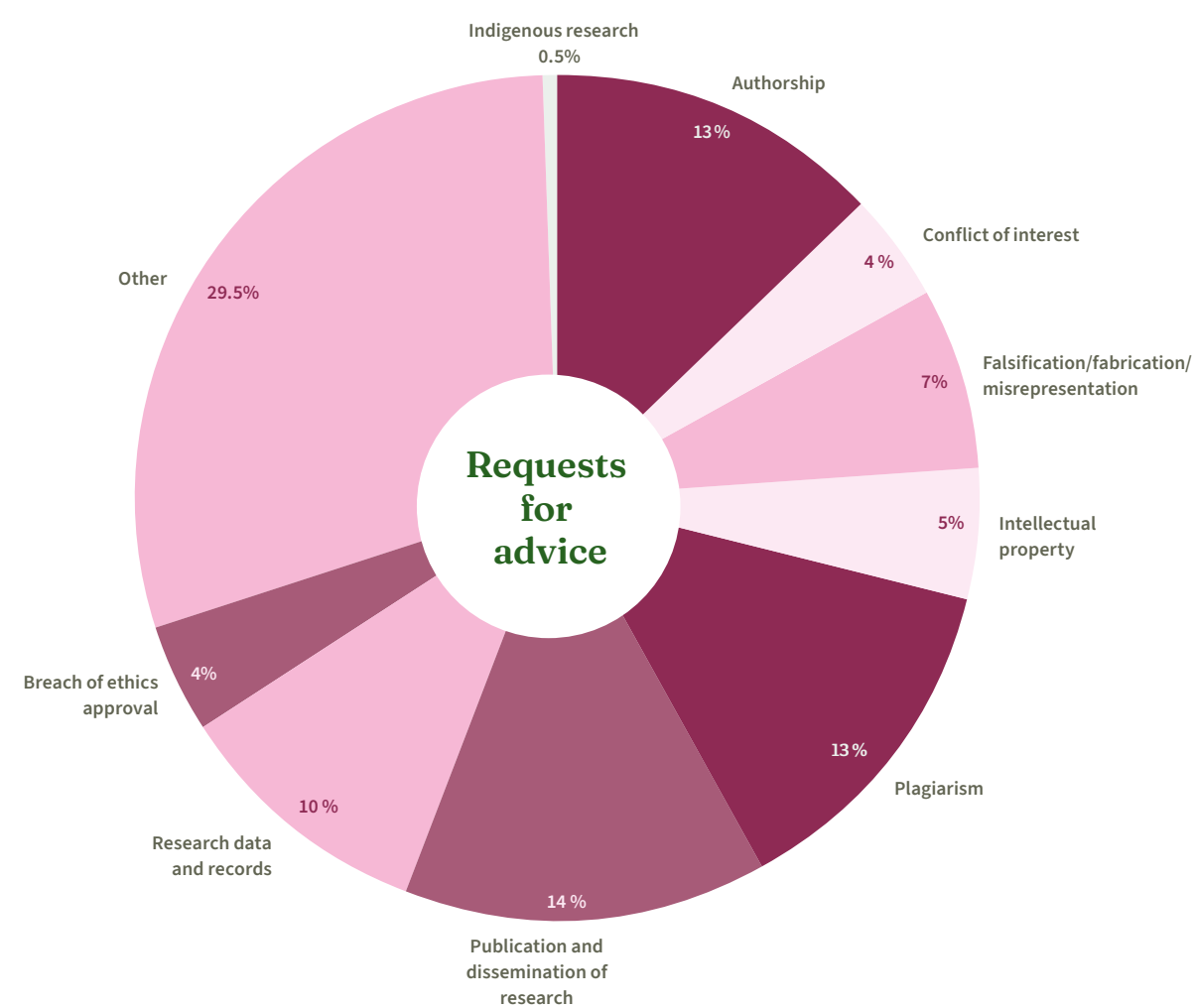
In 2025, 146 queries (as per Figure 5) related to research integrity and compliance:

- Publication and dissemination of research – including references, citation and declarations of non-authorship contributions (14 per cent)
- Plagiarism (13 per cent)
- Authorship practices (13 per cent)
- Research data and records (10 per cent)
- Falsification or misrepresentation of research (7 per cent)

The remaining enquiries for advice and assistance were about ethics approvals, review and incident management processes, conflicts of interest, Indigenous research, intellectual property or other.

Most people seeking advice on research integrity matters were University staff (80 per cent). The remaining requests were received from students, including Masters and PhD students (19 per cent) and people from outside the University, such as research participants (1 per cent).

Figure 5: Requests for research integrity advice and topics of queries in 2025



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What did we learn in 2025?

Research integrity processes within the University give us valuable feedback on our strengths and areas of risk, enabling the continuous improvement of our research integrity capability, training and environment. The following examples describe research integrity themes and issues highlighted through cases in 2025, and the steps we took to strengthen research integrity in those areas. Some of these issues emerged in only one or several cases. However, the University takes any potential breach seriously and responds proactively to educate staff, apply learnings or change our systems to avoid it happening again.

Reinforcing responsible authorship practices

The Code requires that authorship of research outputs must be attributed to those who made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to the research. In early 2025, concerns about authorship were a leading theme in research integrity enquiries and concerns, continuing a trend from the previous year. In response, the University has increased targeted education, outreach and communications to ensure our researchers are aware of the relevant principles under the Code and the University's *Authorship Policy* (MPF1181).

We found many of these concerns related to graduate research candidates and their supervisory team or other academic staff. This demonstrated the importance of effective training for researchers at all career stages and quality supervisory guidance about record keeping, authorship agreements and acknowledgement of scholarly contribution.

The Associate Deans (Research) in faculties were actively engaged in strengthening authorship practices, with faculty outreach sessions provided throughout the year. The principles and requirements of responsible authorship were also incorporated into orientation, professional development for graduate researchers and supervisor training. The content of the outreach sessions was reinforced through staff and supervisor newsletters, faculty and school communications and in various workshops offered by the Researcher Development Unit (RDU). Over the course of 2025, complaints about authorship were a smaller proportion of the total complaints received.

Uplifting supervisors' oversight of research integrity

Inadequate research supervision was an issue in several integrity complaints investigated by the University in 2025. This emerged in scenarios involving self-plagiarism, inappropriate use of digital assistance tools, failure to properly obtain and amend ethics approvals, and failure to conduct trial procedures in accordance with ethics approval. In some of these cases, the supervisor or team of supervisors understood researcher responsibilities but had not done enough to actively ensure the graduate researcher did too. In others, the research supervisor's own knowledge of the Code and relevant policies and guidelines was incomplete or out of date.

Where the actions of research supervisors and co-authors contributed to a potential breach identified in an integrity assessment, the supervisors were required by the Designated Officer to take corrective or educative actions (along with the graduate researcher) to prevent future recurrence within their research team. More broadly, the University strengthened its emphasis on research integrity in our Supervisor Registration and Supervisor Refresher training, which is delivered regularly by the RDU and within the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (OREI)'s workshops. Additionally, the roles and responsibilities of supervisors were clarified and strengthened in the 2025 review of the University's *Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy* (MPF1318).

Concerns about data use emerging in complex cases

In 2025, there were several complex cases involving concerns about data fabrication, data falsification or poor data management. Contributing factors to these breaches included researchers' failure to have an established data management plan, leading to unauthorised release of the data, or more deliberate misrepresentations of the data. In all these scenarios, the University assessed the concerns closely under the Code and ensured corrective actions were taken. Key information on each case was shared with relevant stakeholders, which could include the human research ethics team, supervisors, Associate Deans (Research), Dean of the faculty and relevant external parties. Where necessary, papers were retracted and the public record corrected.

Engaging with research ethics committees

Some integrity concerns in 2025 centred on researchers not being adequately aware of when their research required ethics approval or how to engage with an ethics committee in response to unanticipated changes in their research program. Some research teams did not appear to know the required steps and timelines for requesting an amendment to a prior ethics approval due to changes in a research project, or advising of adverse or unexpected events.

In 2025, the University undertook a major review of the way our human research ethics review and approval processes are undertaken and supported. Improvements included introducing a mandatory compliance check for all human research ethics applications and a streamlined risk-based assessment of applications by experienced academic reviewers. The University also commissioned two new staff e-learning modules on human ethics, which will be available to research staff in 2026.

Research ethics and integrity in the creative arts disciplines

An issue in 2025 concerned research practices and ethics approvals when performers or collaborators are involved in research as part of a creative or artistic endeavour. In the arts, there is often a close collaboration and long-term creative partnership between researchers who are arts practitioners and the subjects of an artform, with potentially blurred lines between people in these roles. In this context, the University found there was a lack of awareness of human research ethics requirements in some cases.

This issue led research leaders in the relevant faculties to review how research training is provided to their graduate researchers and staff members who work and research in the creative arts. One faculty ran several targeted research integrity refresher sessions to support all staff to better understand their obligations, with strong staff engagement and learning outcomes. We also worked to uplift the capability of the Research Integrity Advisor Network to advise about ethics processes and applications relating to creative industries, informed by real questions coming from our practitioners and researchers.



Set design student in the Melbourne Arts Precinct.

Our priorities for 2026

Implementing our refreshed policies on ethics and integrity

As part of our regular policy update cycle, the University developed and implemented three new policies in 2025 that are essential to responsible research. These policies are:

- The new *Human Research Ethics and Safeguards Policy* (MPF1385), which sets out how researchers must comply with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2025). It includes clearer roles, definitions and responsibilities for researchers, ethics reviewers and the institution.
- The new *Biorisk Management Policy* (MPF1384), which sets out the roles and responsibilities of University staff using hazardous or regulated biological materials.
- The new *Animal Care and Use Policy* (MPF1383), which outlines how researchers at the University must meet the national standards for the care and use of animals in research. It covers procedures, roles and responsibilities of key staff. The new policy also clarifies high-risk animal procedures the University does not support.

We also commenced a comprehensive review of the *Research Integrity and Conduct Policy* (MPF1318). We consulted widely on a revised *Responsible Conduct of Research Policy*, and developed an accompanying *Procedure on Managing Potential Breaches of the Code*, which we expect to be implemented in 2026.

Education and awareness activities in 2026 will focus on sharing the updated content and practical requirements of these refreshed policies with our researchers, staff and students. This will be through workshops, research networks and online training in research integrity and human research ethics.

Responding to challenges of AI use in research

Used responsibly, artificial intelligence (AI) can enhance efficiency and provide new ways of tackling long-standing problems. The fast adoption of AI tools in research, particularly generative AI, has driven higher demand for appropriate training. In 2025, while the University was developing our internal guidance, education and tools, this demand was met by a combination of external training providers and an internal information campaign on the responsible use of AI. This approach was endorsed by the Convenor of the University's AI in Research Community of Practice and built on our [statement on responsible use of digital assistance tools in research](#). This initiative encouraged researchers

to verify AI usage requirements from publishers, partners, funders and University policies before making use of AI platforms and tools. Information on the responsible use of AI was the focus of sessions run by Student and Scholarly Services, which were attended by more than 500 graduate researchers in 2025.

In 2026, we will continue to build an institutional approach that equips researchers to use AI ethically in their research, with an emphasis on strengthening staff education and testing the appropriateness of AI platforms for research. This will enable people to maximise the benefits and opportunities of AI across research and education, while managing and anticipating the risks inherent in these technologies.

Reducing time to resolve integrity cases

Timeliness of case resolution is a fundamental principle of procedural fairness and is important for the wellbeing of both complainants and respondent researchers. There were fewer concerns raised with the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (OREI) in 2025 about relatively uncomplicated integrity issues (such as authorship), which indicates improvement in researchers' understanding of responsibilities.

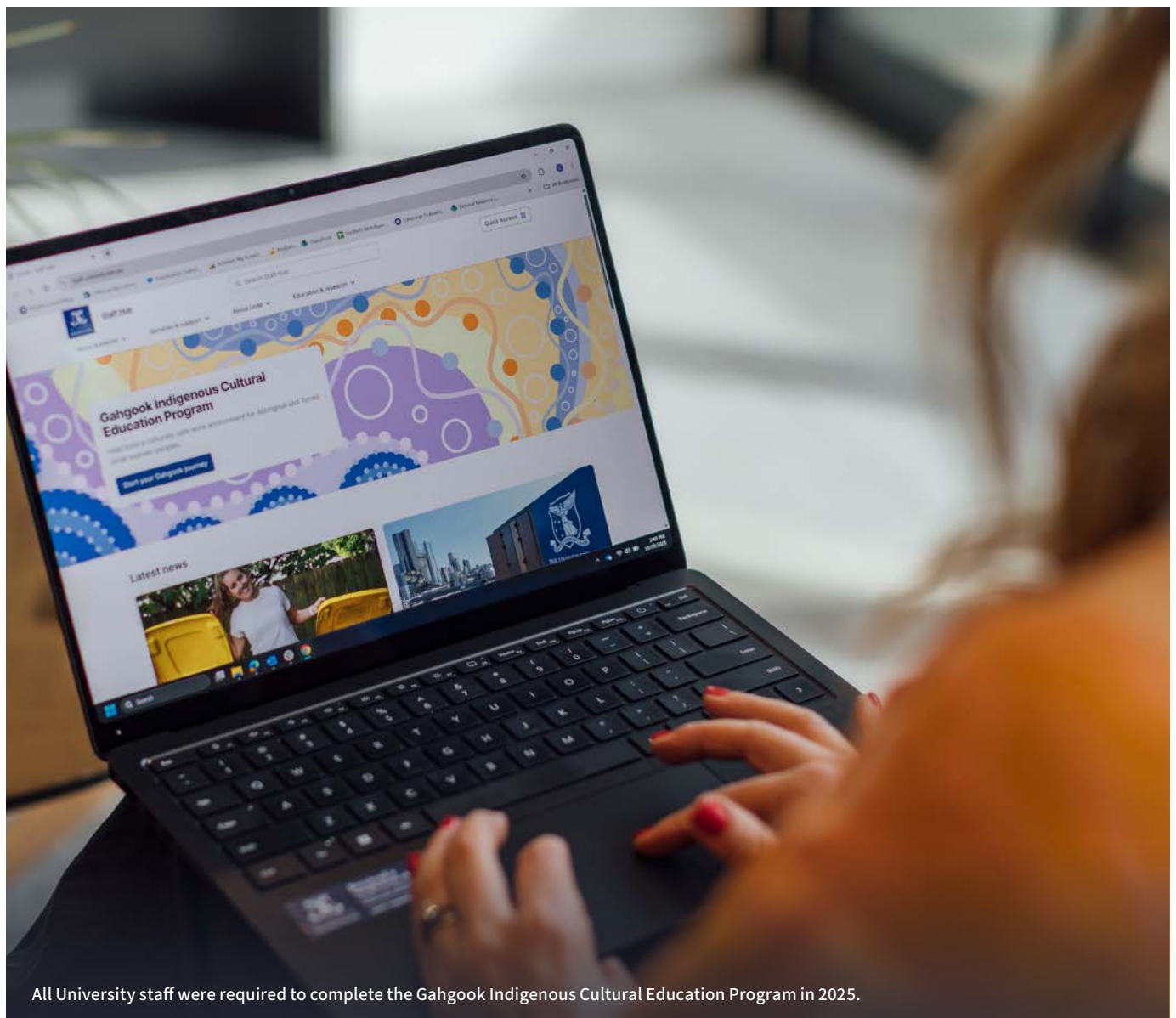
However, there was an increase in the complexity of complaints made in 2025. This complexity, combined with unanticipated resourcing issues, led to an increase of 79 days (from 115 to 194 days) year-on-year in the median time taken for concerns to be resolved at the preliminary assessment stage. In addition to resourcing issues, this timeframe increase was due to complex matters requiring independent expert analysis and matters being paused to enable parallel workplace investigations.

In 2026, our priority will be to reduce the time we take to resolve research integrity cases in general. This will be supported by a refreshed research integrity policy and procedures that will enable more responsive and flexible assessment or investigation processes. We anticipate more timely resolution of preliminary assessments by reviewing our case management processes to ensure the initial evidence-gathering actions are risk based and proportionate. We will also escalate decision points for our Designated Officer to request a panel investigation, when the early evidence indicates an alleged breach of the Code may be serious in nature. Further resourcing of OREI in 2026 will also result in lower individual caseloads for investigation officers and deliver improved resolution times.

Building a framework for ethical Indigenous research

The *AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research* sets out how responsible and ethical Indigenous research requires meaningful recognition and respect for Indigenous self-determination and leadership. This is demonstrated by the presence of collaboration, informed consent, accountability in data management and reporting, reciprocity, sustainability and cultural capability. An internal review of our ethical capability in 2025, jointly sponsored by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), showed the need to strengthen our specialist reviews, resources and processes to match the growth of Indigenous research projects and the University's aspirations in Indigenous research.

Aligned with our *Indigenous Research Framework 2023–2027* and Indigenous strategy *Murmuk Djerring*, the University will continue building cultural capability across people, policies and practices to support our researchers to meet the *AIATSIS Code* principles. In 2025, all University staff were required to complete the Gahgook Indigenous Cultural Education Program, which strengthens cultural understanding, celebrates Indigenous contributions and equips staff with the tools to support respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In 2026, we aim to progress a framework for clear, accountable and coordinated institutional processes and resources to support ethical Indigenous research.



All University staff were required to complete the Gahgook Indigenous Cultural Education Program in 2025.

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Appendices

Definitions

This list provides definitions of common terms appearing in this report in alphabetical order.

Term	Definition
Appeal	An appeal is a formal request to review the way the University managed and investigated a research integrity complaint or concern. Appeals can only be made on procedural fairness grounds. These can be made internally (for example, through University appeal processes) or externally to the Australian Research Integrity Committee (ARIC).
Breach	A breach is a failure to meet the principles and responsibilities of the <i>Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research</i> (the Code). This may refer to a single breach or multiple breaches. Breaches of the Code occur on a spectrum, from minor (less serious) to major (more serious). Major breaches would require investigation while potential minor breaches may be addressed by the Designated Officer (DO) at the preliminary assessment stage. There are some matters related to research administration which, if unintentional, can be rectified at the local level without the need for formal assessment and investigation.
Complaint	A complaint is a referral to a research institution of research actions or conduct that is suspected to have breached the Code. When a complaint is made, the alleged conduct may involve multiple distinct departures from the principles and responsibilities of the Code. Each issue is treated as a separate research integrity concern.
Concern	A concern is a distinct action or issue within conduct that is suspected to be a breach of the Code. A complaint about research may raise multiple concerns that relate to different principles in the Code. For the purposes of assessment and investigation, each issue is classified as an individual concern, enabling each potential breach of the Code to be examined independently.
Designated Officer (DO)	A senior professional or academic institutional officer (or officers) appointed to receive complaints about the conduct of research or potential breaches of the Code and to oversee their management and investigation where required. This is the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability) at the University of Melbourne.
Initial review	The first review undertaken by the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (OREI) which determines if a complaint can be considered under the <i>Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research</i> (the Code), and if it is within the University's jurisdiction to consider. Outcomes of initial reviews include dismissal, referral of the matter, or progression to preliminary assessment.
Investigation	After a preliminary assessment, if the matter is deemed to be a potential serious breach of the <i>Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research</i> (the Code), the DO appoints an expert Investigation Panel. This is comprised of internal and external academics who have expertise in the relevant area and do not have any conflicts of interest with either the complainant or respondent. Working with and supported by the Research Integrity team, the Panel gathers and assesses information, usually speaks directly with the people involved in the matter, and prepares a report on the outcomes of its investigations and recommendations. The report is provided to the Responsible Executive Officer, which is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research). Outcomes of investigations can include dismissal of the matter, educative and corrective actions, or disciplinary actions.

Term	Definition
Matter	A matter is a generic term used to describe all the things the Research Integrity team may deal with. This includes complaints, concerns, requests for advice, appeals and remedial actions required.
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (OREI)	The Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (OREI) is a specialist unit within the University of Melbourne that prevents, detects and manages non-compliance with national codes and regulations on responsible research. OREI manages internal reviews, inspections, audits and investigations and provides proactive education and training to support responsible research practices at the University.
Preliminary assessment	If after an initial review a matter is deemed to represent a potential breach of the <i>Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research</i> (the Code), it may progress to a preliminary assessment. This is a full assessment prepared by the Research Integrity team in the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (OREI) and involves information gathering and preparation of a report with a recommended action provided to the Designated Officer. Outcomes from a preliminary assessment can include dismissal of a matter, educative and/or corrective actions or notification about the breach to the relevant research funding agency (such as the ARC, NHMRC or other). When a potential serious breach of the Code is identified and more information is required, it can be referred for progression to an investigation.
Research Integrity Advisor (RIA)	Research Integrity Advisors (RIAs) are academics based in faculties who can provide advice to researchers regarding concerns they may have about the conduct of research and the University processes for managing concerns or complaints about research conduct. RIAs do not have an investigative or determinative role in dealing with research integrity issues.
Research misconduct	Research misconduct refers to a serious breach of the <i>Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research</i> (the Code), which is also intentional, reckless or negligent.
Responsible Executive Officer (REO)	A senior officer in an institution who has final responsibility for receiving reports of the outcomes of processes of assessment or investigation of potential or found breaches of the Code and deciding on the course of action to be taken. At the University of Melbourne, this is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).

University of Melbourne policies, statements and guidance relating to research integrity (as at 2025)

- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Policy* (MPF1289)
- *Academic Freedom of Expression Policy* (MPF1224)
- *Authorship Policy* (MPF1267)
- *Animal Care and Use Policy* (MPF1383)
- *Biorisk Management Policy* (MPF1384)
- *Graduate Research Training Policy* (MPF1321)
- *Human Research Ethics and Safeguards Policy* (MPF1385)
- *Information Security Policy* (MPF1270)
- *Intellectual Property Policy* (MPF1320)
- *Managing Conflicts of Interest Policy* (MPF1366)
- *Research Data Management Policy* (MPF1242)
- *Research Funding, Costing and Pricing Policy* (MPF1347)
- *Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy* (MPF1318)
- *Risk Management Policy* (MPF1194)
- **Charter for Research with Indigenous Knowledge Holders**
- **Statement on responsible use of digital assistance tools in research**
- **Policy Library – Policies for Researchers**

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