



Responsible Research and Innovation Policy

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Purpose

Cranfield University is a research-intensive institution with world-class expertise, facilities and partnerships. To retain our reputation for research excellence, it is essential that all research conducted at the University is held to the highest standards of integrity. This includes a commitment not only to legal and ethical compliance, but also to broader social responsibility, inclusivity, sustainability, and long-term societal benefit. Responsible Research & Innovation (RRI) provides a framework for anticipating the impacts of research, engaging stakeholders, and ensuring that innovation aligns with public values.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All staff, students, and visiting researchers conducting research under the auspices of the University.
- All research disciplines, including STEM and social sciences.
- All stages of the research lifecycle—from idea development and funding applications to dissemination and post-project evaluation.

Responsible Research and Innovation goes beyond traditional ethical review by requiring a wider and continuous assessment of how research may affect society. This includes considering environmental consequences, anticipating whether the research or its outcomes might trigger negative responses from stakeholders or the public, and reflecting on possible long-term or downstream uses of the work.

Ethical review evaluates whether a research project poses any immediate risks, looking at how the research process—as well as its direct outputs and outcomes—might affect anyone involved or impacted, including participants, organisations, and the researchers themselves. It considers potential physical, psychological, privacy, legal, social/economic, vulnerable groups, public health, and reputational harm. All researchers at Cranfield must comply with the University [Research Ethics Policy](#) in addition to this RRI Policy.

Policy Statement

The University is committed to embedding Responsible Research & Innovation across all research activities.

Researchers must follow the AREA Framework for RRI:

- **Anticipate** potential consequences, risks, and benefits of their work.
- **Reflect** on their assumptions, practices, and potential societal impacts.
- **Engage** openly with relevant communities, stakeholders, and the public.
- **Act** to ensure research processes and outcomes are ethically sound, socially beneficial, environmentally sustainable, and inclusive.

Anticipation

Researchers must proactively consider:

- Possible intended and unintended consequences of research outcomes
- Environmental, social, cultural, and economic implications
- Risks to individuals, communities, ecosystems, or society

Reflection

Researchers must reflect on:

- Their assumptions, methods, disciplinary norms, and potential biases
- The ethical and societal context of their work
- How power dynamics shape research decisions and impacts

Engagement & Inclusivity

Researchers should engage with:

- Relevant stakeholders (e.g., industry, policymakers, community groups)
- Users or beneficiaries of research
- Public groups who may be impacted

Engagement should be meaningful, iterative, and integrated throughout the research process.

Adapting and Acting

Researchers should be prepared to:

- Adapt research goals or methods in light of stakeholder input or emerging evidence
- Mitigate risks or change course if negative impacts are identified
- Document and communicate changes clearly.

Key Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of Researchers to:

- Integrate RRI principles into research design, methodology, stakeholder engagement, and dissemination.
- Document RRI considerations in funding bids and project reports.
- Adapt project plans when new insights or concerns arise.
- Seek advice and training if they are unclear how to apply RRI principles and the AREA Framework to their research.

It is the responsibility of Line Managers and Supervisors to:

- Foster a culture of shared responsibility and reflective practice within teams.
- Ensure team members have appropriate knowledge and resources to implement RRI.

It is the responsibility of the University to:

- Provide training, resources, and support for RRI implementation.
- Ensure that RRI is integrated into institutional research governance and assessment processes.

Monitoring Compliance

Oversight and compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Cranfield University Ethics and Integrity Committee (CUREIC) who will:

- Periodically review RRI practices and update this policy.
- Promote shared learning across faculties and research centres.

The University Research Committee formally approves all Research-related policies, subject to annual review.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Related documents

[UKRI Framework for Responsible Research and Innovation \(AREA\)](#)

All policies below are accessed via the Learning, teaching and research section of the website.

[Research Ethics Policy](#)

[Research Integrity Policy](#)

Further guidance

Questions related to this policy should be directed to Research-Integrity@cranfield.ac.uk

Document control

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