

University Policy 3.03.06**Research Misconduct****Policy Approval Date: August 12, 2011****Policy Effective Date: September 1, 2011****Revised Procedure Approval Date: June 30, 2025****Revised Procedure Effective Date: July 8, 2025****POLICY STATEMENT**

Capella University strives to promote a climate of honesty in research and is committed to fostering research that is both sound and ethical. Capella University expects that research will be conducted with integrity and individuals engaged in research will review this policy and otherwise make themselves aware of what constitutes ethical and responsible conduct in research. Capella University researchers, including employees, students, and others engaged in academic research as part of their employment or educational responsibilities, are expected to refrain from research misconduct. Research misconduct includes, but is not limited to falsification, fabrication, plagiarism, misappropriation, failure to maintain adequate research records, or other practices that deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the academic community for proposing, conducting, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.

Research supervisors and others in positions of responsibility for the conduct of research activity are expected to exercise adequate supervision of those under their direction to ensure the integrity of the research being conducted. Capella University employees and students share the responsibility to promptly report any suspected research misconduct. The university assumes primary responsibility for investigating and resolving allegations of research misconduct made against its employees or students.

The consequences of research misconduct may include but are not limited to non-acceptance of submitted coursework, failing grade on an assignment, lower grade in a course, failing grade in a course, written warning, loss of Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, suspension from the university, removal from the program, administrative withdrawal or dismissal from the university, or cancellation of previously awarded course credits or degrees.

The university recognizes the importance of open debate regarding correct methodologies and protocols and that honest errors are an inevitable part of the research process.

RATIONALE

The Office of Research Integrity (ORI) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services mandates that all institutions engaged in research funded by the Public Health Service have in place robust policies for mitigating and handling research misconduct. Although Capella is not mandated by law to implement such policies and procedures, best practices in research suggest the need for a research misconduct policy that is applicable to all researchers engaged in academic research at Capella University, whether students, faculty, or staff.

DEFINITIONS

Academic Research

Academic research is defined as research conducted by Capella University students as part of their doctoral project, or research conducted by Capella employees. It does not include that which has been designated solely as courseroom research. It can include both human subjects research or studies designated as “not human subjects research” by the Institutional Review Board.

Advanced Doctoral Phase

The advanced doctoral phase begins after a student has completed all didactic coursework and residencies. An advanced doctoral student’s requirements include any remaining courses in the comprehensive examination, dissertation, doctoral project, or doctoral capstone course sequence, and any additional program requirements as published in the *University Catalog*.

Allegation and Good Faith Allegation

An allegation includes any written or oral statement or other substantive indication of possible research misconduct. A good faith allegation, otherwise referred to as an allegation in good faith, is an allegation made with the honest belief that research misconduct may have occurred. An allegation is not in good faith if it is made with reckless disregard or willful ignorance of facts that would disprove the allegation.

Doctoral Project

A culminating program activity such as a dissertation, doctoral capstone, applied improvement project, or evidenced-based practice used to fulfill the requirements of the doctorate degree.

Fabrication

Fabrication is the illegitimate construction of data or results and recording or reporting them.

Falsification

Falsification of data, research procedures, or data analysis can range from selective reporting, such as purposeful omission of conflicting data with the intent to falsify conclusions, to changing data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.

Honest Errors

Honest errors are occasional mistakes or oversights that occur during the research process.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

An IRB is a committee established in accord with and for the purposes expressed in 45 CFR 46.

Investigation

Investigation is the formal examination and evaluation of all relevant facts to determine if an instance of research misconduct has occurred. If research misconduct is confirmed, the investigation should determine the seriousness of the offense and the extent of any adverse effects resulting from the misconduct.

Misappropriation

Misappropriation is the unauthorized use of another person's personal or intellectual property, as well as unauthorized use of another person's research ideas or proposals.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's ideas or work as one's own. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, copying verbatim or rephrasing ideas without properly acknowledging the source by author, date, and publication medium. Writers must paraphrase, summarize, or quote the ideas and words of others while simultaneously acknowledging the source.

Research Misconduct

Research misconduct includes but is not limited to falsification, fabrication, plagiarism, misappropriation, failure to maintain adequate research records, or other practices that deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the academic community for proposing, conducting, reviewing research, or in reporting research results. Research misconduct does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data. A finding of research misconduct requires all of the following:

- A significant departure from accepted practices of the relevant research community
- Misconduct committed intentionally, knowingly, recklessly, or negligently
- An allegation proven by a preponderance of the evidence

Research Record

A research record is any data, document, computer file, computer drive, or any other written or non-written account or object that reasonably may be expected to provide evidence or information regarding the proposed, conducted, or reported research that constitutes the subject of an allegation of research misconduct.

Retaliation

Retaliation is any adverse action taken by the university or an employee of the university in retribution for a good faith allegation of research misconduct.

Sanction

A sanction is a disciplinary consequence that may be issued by the research compliance team, university president (or designee), or the Board of Trustees to a student committing an act of research misconduct.

PROCEDURES

I. Application to Doctoral Students

This policy and these procedures apply to all allegations of plagiarism and/or other research misconduct involving academic research for students in the advanced doctoral phase.

II. Research Misconduct Investigation Principles

Research misconduct investigations are guided by the following principles:

- A. Confidentiality should be maintained as much as possible.
- B. Any conflicts of interest, real or potential, must be minimized.

III. Reporting Research Misconduct Allegations

Any individual may report observed or suspected incidents of research misconduct to the university-designated research compliance team. Research misconduct allegations must be documented in writing. The research compliance team may document a written allegation based upon information received by any means.

The research compliance team will inform the IRB chair of the allegation. If the respondent is a university employee, the research compliance team will notify Human Resources. The university reserves the right to take interim administrative actions to protect the health and safety of research subjects, the interest of staff and colleagues, the integrity of research data and the research process, and university funds and equipment.

All research activities must cease pending the results of the research misconduct investigation. Students are not permitted to be registered for any future Capella course (including non-credit courses, residencies, etc.) during an investigation or appeal thereof.

IV. Academic Resources

- A. The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) and Academic Writer are tools to help students identify work that must be referenced, including their own published works, and determine how it must be cited.
- B. To avoid any instances that may be construed as plagiarism, students should consult the APA style guide to apply the proper citation format.
- C. However, where this policy and the APA style guide diverge, this policy will take precedence.

V. Resolution Process for Research Misconduct Allegations

A. Investigation and Resolution

1. Purpose

The purpose of the investigation and resolution processes are to assess whether the allegation constitutes a good faith allegation of research misconduct, to determine if research misconduct has occurred, and to determine proper sanctions and/or corrective actions. IRB protocol compliance is reviewed as part of the research misconduct investigation.

2. Notification of Respondent and Response

The research compliance team will notify the respondent of the allegation of research misconduct. The respondent will have seven calendar days to submit an initial response and any supporting materials.

3. Evaluation of Evidence

- a. The research compliance team may include Capella faculty or staff subject-matter experts as needed to assist with the investigation and determination of a case.
- b. The research compliance team will comprehensively evaluate relevant materials presented and facts as soon as practicable. The research compliance team may also interview other individuals as part of the investigation.
- c. The respondent will be given the opportunity to present their position to the team.

- d. The research compliance team will then prepare an investigation summary. The respondent will receive a copy of the investigation summary and will be allowed 14 calendar days to prepare written comments.
 - e. The investigation summary and the respondent's comments will be reviewed by the research compliance team.
 - f. The research compliance team will issue a written decision with corrective actions or sanctions as warranted.
4. Failure to Participate
- a. If a respondent refuses to participate in the investigation after 12 weeks from the date of notification, and if the research compliance team determines that the investigation can proceed with or without their participation, the investigation may proceed.
 - b. If a student or alumni respondent refuses to participate in the investigation after 12 weeks from the date of notification, and if the research compliance team determines that their participation is needed, the investigation will not proceed, and the student respondent may be administratively withdrawn. Should an administratively withdrawn respondent wish to return to Capella, they will be required to complete the investigation prior to resuming study.
5. Revoked Degrees (Alumni)
- a. Should degree revocation be recommended by the research compliance team, the research compliance team's written decision with corrective actions or sanctions will include a recommendation for degree revocation, to be considered by the president or designee.
 - b. The respondent will be allowed seven days to submit a response contesting the recommended corrective action.
 - c. The university president (or president's designee) will review the investigation summary, respondent's comments, recommendation from the research compliance team, and any further response from the respondent on the subject of recommended degree revocation and make a recommendation to the Capella University Board of Trustees regarding revocation of degree, if applicable.
 - d. The respondent will receive written notification of the Board of Trustees' final determination.
 - e. Board of Trustees' determinations are final and cannot be appealed.
- B. Appeal Process (Non-Alumni)
- 1. Respondents must appeal a determination via email to the research compliance team within seven calendar days of being sent notification of the determination. The appeal will be routed to the university president (or president's designee).
 - 2. Respondents must include an explanation of the extenuating circumstances surrounding the research misconduct and the impact the circumstances had on their actions.
 - 3. Respondents must address their plan for completing their project, academic success, and the correction of any research misconduct.
 - 4. Capella course registration is not permitted while an appeal is in process.
 - 5. The university president (or president's designee) will review the appeal and notify the respondent of the determination.

6. The president's decision is final. Matters that have been reviewed and have received a final determination under this policy are not eligible for further review under another policy.

VI. Retaliation

- A. Retaliation constitutes prohibited conduct under this policy.
- B. A claim of retaliation against a university employee will be handled separately under the appropriate University or Human Resources policy.

VII. Other Misconduct

Misconduct that occurs within courseroom research projects will be handled in accordance with university policy *3.01.01 Academic Integrity and Honesty* or other applicable university policies.

POLICY OWNERS

Academic Owner: Office of Research and Scholarship

Operations Owner: Office of Research and Scholarship

RELATED DOCUMENTS

University policy 3.01.01 Academic Integrity and Honesty

University Policy 3.03.02 Publication of Dissertations

University policy 3.03.05 Conflict of Interest in Research

University policy 4.02.02 Student Code of Conduct

The Common Rule (45 CFR 46)

The Belmont Report

Declaration of Helsinki

Nuremburg Code

REVISION HISTORY

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