

## NFER Research Integrity Statement

NFER's mission is to improve outcomes for future generations everywhere and to support positive change in education. As a not-for-profit education research organisation and registered charity, we do this by generating new insights, research, and assessments for use nationally and internationally.

At NFER, we are committed to ensuring that all research undertaken by our organisation is completed with the highest possible levels of integrity. We regard ethical issues as central and relevant to all aspects of our work. Our research is underpinned by the belief that we have an obligation to the wider research community, research participants and society, to uphold professional standards in relation to quality, integrity, and honesty in the way we go about our work.

### What do we mean by research integrity at NFER?

NFER supports the approach to research integrity set out in the UK's national policy statement on research integrity: [The Concordat to Support Research Integrity \(2019\)](#), in which *honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, care and respect, and accountability* are identified as the core elements of integrity. The Concordat's five commitments – namely: *1. upholding 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, timely, robust, and fair processes to handle allegations of research misconduct when they arise; and 5. working together to strengthen the integrity of research* – are embedded within NFER's principles and working practices.

### How do we demonstrate and uphold research integrity at NFER?

NFER's [Code of Practice](#) (updated 2022) is a public document that presents the principles and practices underlying all the assessment, evaluation, information, research, delivery, and educational resources development work carried out by NFER in the UK and internationally. It provides guiding principles relating to research ethics, caring for research participants, data protection and information security. All staff, including research associates are required to adhere to the Code of Practice and are supported to do so. It also sets the standards expected of any partners or sub- contractors with whom the NFER works.

The Code of Practice is supplemented by the Code of Practice Implementation Guidelines (updated 2021), which contains detailed, practical guidance for applying the Code of Practice in research work.

Our Child Protection Protocol (updated 2019), provides more information about what to do if there are concerns about a research participant's safety.

The Code of Practice Committee at NFER oversees the Code of Practice. It is responsible for providing advice on Code of Practice issues and ensuring that Code of Practice documentation is kept up to date and in line with any changes to legislation. The Committee meets twice a year to consider the overall content of the Code of Practice and its related documents. Interim meetings are called when needed to discuss urgent issues. The Committee also manages a fast-track review process for staff preparing proposals or conducting work. Committee members involved in a proposal or piece of work being considered by the Committee are excluded from having a decision-making role in these cases. NFER's Director of Research ([l.duff@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:l.duff@nfer.ac.uk)) oversees NFER's research integrity work.

From the outset of all work at NFER, there is a requirement for researchers to apply the Code of Practice. As part of each project set-up process, research teams are required to complete a Code of Practice Checklist, which includes a series of statements covering ethics, data protection, data security and the care of research participants. If 'no' is selected for any of these statements, the team must complete a Code of Practice Impact Assessment (updated 2021) and escalate it to the Code of Practice Committee.

In line with the UKRI Concordat, we safeguard the impartiality of our research to maintain trust in our insights. NFER is an independent research organisation that strives to ensure that research is disseminated accurately for the benefit of the public, and that our findings are free from political and commercial interference. We aim to use straightforward accessible language; and ensure a clear line of sight between the research, its findings and any conclusions drawn. We are transparent about our methods, including publishing study plans and protocols where required, declaring potential competing interests, and providing clear easy to understand information. We work hard to ensure that research outputs are purpose-appropriate, and that young people and children benefit from research outcomes.

In line with the Code of Practice, NFER requires all researchers to conduct themselves, at all times, in a professional and ethical manner. NFER take any allegation of research misconduct seriously. In the first instance, anyone making an allegation of research misconduct against an employee of NFER should follow the [complaints procedure on NFER's website](#). This contains contact details for the Complaints Officer, who will coordinate the complaints process. Should any allegations of research misconduct arise, NFER has a formal Disciplinary Policy, with associated procedures and guidance, which would be applied. NFER will maintain a register of any disciplinary actions taken regarding researchers not acting with research integrity.

NFER is committed to ensuring that all researchers are supported and encouraged to develop their learning and skills within a culture that promotes and upholds research integrity. This includes training, learning and development activities in key areas. For example, NFER provides guidance and annual training for all staff on research integrity. A culture of openness and honesty is scaffolded with an anti-bullying policy and whistle blowing policy. In addition, Code of Practice Committee members are actively involved in supporting researchers' understanding of updates to Code of Practice documentation (e.g. by giving presentations with Q&A sessions about the updated Code of Practice Implementation Guidelines at department and team meetings).

## **How do we work together to strengthen research integrity at NFER?**

NFER regards research integrity as a matter of active, ongoing importance. Whilst we demonstrate and uphold research integrity through our principles and current working practices, we actively seek ways to strengthen, update and improve our culture of integrity. Through a process of continuous review and feedback, the Code of Practice Committee works collaboratively within NFER to identify areas that may benefit from extra support or input, and implement any necessary plans. As part of our commitment to reviewing and strengthening our policies and practices, and in line with the recommendations set out in the Concordat, in the future we plan to produce an annual report on activities relating to research integrity.