

The City University of New York's Institutional Plan to Meet the National Science Foundation's Educational Requirements for the Responsible Conduct of Research

Background

The responsible and ethical conduct of research is critical for excellence, as well as public trust, in science and engineering. Consequently, education in the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) is considered essential in the preparation of future scientists and engineers.

On January 4th, 2010, a new RCR training requirement became effective as a result of NSF's implementation of Section 7009 of the America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science (COMPETES) Act (42 U.S.C. 1862o-1). This section of the Act requires that "each institution that applies for financial assistance from the Foundation for science and engineering research or education describe in its grant proposal a plan to provide appropriate training and oversight in the responsible and ethical conduct of research to undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers participating in the proposed research project".

For more complete information see <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/E9-19930.htm> from which the above was taken.

When submitting new proposals to NSF, each CUNY Campus Office of Research Administration (ORA) will be certifying that all trainees (undergraduates, graduate students, or postdoctoral researchers) working on an NSF award for any amount of time will receive training in the Responsible Conduct in Research.

CUNY Plan for Responsible Conduct of Research Training

In order to meet this new NSF policy requirement, CUNY has instituted the following RCR training plan. This plan will be updated regularly as the University continues to refine the RCR course modules and provide University-wide and local workshops.

All students (graduate and undergraduate) and postdoctoral researchers at CUNY who are supported by sponsored projects, regardless of sponsor, must receive and participate in RCR training*. Such training should be appropriate for the career stage of the trainee and is available as follows:

A. On-line Modules.

All trainees must complete one of the RCR courses appropriate to their discipline through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). The courses may be accessed through the CUNY Research website:

<http://cuny.edu/research/research-conduct.html>. The available courses include:

- RCR in Biomedical research
- RCR in Social and Behavioral Science research
- RCR in Physical Science research
- RCR in Humanities research
- RCR in Engineering research

Each trainee must have completed the most appropriate on-line training module within six (6) weeks of being supported by, or performing research on a sponsored project. A certificate of completion should be printed and a copy must be provided to your Principal Investigator (PI)/Project Director (PD).

* Please note that individuals involved in studies of human or animal subjects are also required to complete specific training for certification in these areas as prescribed by federal regulatory requirements and CUNY policies for the Protection of Human Research Subjects, and local campus policies for Animal Care and Use, respectively, before they can participate in the research.

B. RCR Workshops – to be completed within twelve (12) months of on-line training.

I. Postdoctoral researchers

All postdoctoral researchers working at CUNY must attend an RCR training workshop designed for postdoctoral researchers. The postdoc office website provides information for the workshop schedule as well as access to previous presentations, <http://cuny.edu/research/postdoctoral-development-program.html>.

II. Undergraduate and Graduate Students

Local RCR training will be provided on the campuses for undergraduate and graduate students engaged in sponsored research. Such training will be organized by the campus Research Integrity Officer (RIO). A list of CUNY RIOs can be accessed at:

<http://cuny.edu/research/research-conduct/research-integrity-officers.html>.

C. Individual Training by Principal Investigator (PI)/Project Director (PD).

All student and postdoctoral researchers on sponsored projects must be provided continuing education in RCR topics specific to their research setting. Such training will be overseen by the PI/PD and will consist of interactive discussions during group meetings and/or one-on-one discussions on the topic between the PI/PD and the trainee. The PI/PD will maintain a record of

training sessions provided to each student or postdoctoral researcher. The records may be used for proof of training if requested by the campus ORA or NSF. PI/PDs may want to refresh their own RCR knowledge by taking an appropriate on-line RCR module as described above.

Principal Investigator's/Project Director's Responsibilities

CUNY Principal Investigators/Project Directors with sponsored research programs are responsible for certifying that students and postdoctoral fellows supported by their awards have completed the appropriate above-required RCR training. The PI/PD must be able to provide their campus ORA with the name of all trainees paid on any federal award for any period of time within the budget period listed on the award, a copy of the current CITI RCR completion certificate for each trainee, and the details (type, date, name of trainer) of any additional RCR training each trainee has received.

It should be noted that, as of now, there is no section in the NSF application for the PI/PD to write or insert RCR training information; however, training records are open to review by NSF or other auditing agencies at any time. Every PI/PD should be familiar with CUNY's institutional plan for RCR training.

Summary

In summary, all undergraduate students, graduate students and postdoctoral researchers who are performing research on a sponsored project must have completed the most appropriate on-line RCR training module within six (6) weeks of initiating research on the project. In addition, within the next twelve (12) months they must attend an RCR workshop. Finally, they will be exposed to issues related to the responsible conduct of research through one-on-one interactions with their PI/PD throughout the course of the research project.

Any questions regarding the University's plan on RCR training should be addressed to the University Research Office at:

oaaresearch@mail.cuny.edu.