



**Scientific Integrity Policy  
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## **I. Purpose**

This document establishes a policy for assuring the integrity of the scientific activities supported by the Department of Education.

## **II. Authority**

- a. 5 U.S.C. § 301 allows the head of an executive department to prescribe regulations for the conduct of its employees.
- b. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, 5 C.F.R. § 2635 and Conflict of Interest, 18 U.S.C. § 208, and related rulings by the Office of Government Ethics.
- c. Federal Policy on Research Misconduct (Dec. 6, 2000), 65 Fed. Reg. 76,260 (Dec. 6, 2000).
- d. Presidential Memo to Heads of the Executive Departments and Agencies (March 9, 2009), available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Memorandum-for-the-Heads-of-Executive-Departments-and-Agencies-3-9-09/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Memorandum-for-the-Heads-of-Executive-Departments-and-Agencies-3-9-09/)
- e. Office of Science and Technology Policy Memorandum on Scientific Integrity (Dec., 17, 2010), available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/scientific-integrity-memo-12172010.pdf>.

## **III. Scientific Integrity Policy**

### **A. Policy Application**

All ED employees and contractors are expected to follow this policy when engaging in, supervising, managing, or influencing scientific activities, communicating information about ED scientific activities, or using scientific information in making Department policy, management, or regulatory decisions.

### **B. Promoting a Culture of Scientific Integrity at ED**

1. In order to ensure that scientific activities conducted and supported by ED are of the highest quality and integrity, and can be trusted by the public and contribute to sound decision-making, ED believes that it is vital to maintain a culture of scientific integrity. ED does not employ government scientists to conduct intramural research on behalf of the federal government (one exception is that ED staff do perform and publish descriptive analyses of data collected by the Department). ED collects data, performs and publishes descriptive analyses of data, and funds education research, development, statistics, and evaluation through awards to institutions and organizations capable of carrying out such work (including colleges, universities, non-profit research institutions, and for-

profit firms). This work is overseen by employees with scientific training who are committed to scientific integrity.

2. ED selects candidates for scientific positions based primarily on their scientific and technological knowledge, credentials, and experience.
3. When data and research is used to support ED policy decisions, that data and research will have undergone independent peer review by qualified experts, where feasible and appropriate, and consistent with law.
4. ED is committed to the proposition that Department awards and analyses should be made and conducted objectively. To support the integrity of its award processes, ED has established policies and procedures to prevent conflict of interest in the review of both grants and contracts. These requirements are found in the Department's Handbook for Discretionary Grants, the Institute of Education Sciences' peer review procedures for grants and reports, and the procurement rules set out in the Education Department Acquisition Regulations.
5. Department grant and contract awardees are required to have research misconduct policies in place that adequately define research misconduct, set standards for a finding of misconduct, and include fair and timely procedures for responding to allegations of research misconduct.
6. ED employees responsible for monitoring grants and contracts are trained to report activities that may compromise scientific integrity including conflicts of interest, research misconduct, gross waste of resources, abuse of authority, or danger to public safety. Under this scientific integrity policy, ED will continue to comply with the requirements of the Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989 (WPA), Public Law 101-12, and its expanded protections enacted by Public Law 103-424. ED shall also continue to comply with the Secretary's Policy Statement on the NO FEAR Act, dated September 7, 2011. (<http://connected/index.cfm?cid=073839f8-d280-93d4-7f98-18f74be1bb20#policies>).
7. In no circumstances should political appointees at ED seek to suppress or alter scientific or technical findings of Department scientific staff or awardees.
8. To facilitate the free flow of scientific and technological information, all ED grantees and contractors are encouraged to make public the findings of their research. ED grantees are encouraged to submit their findings to peer reviewed journals, and reports developed by the Department and its' contractors are peer reviewed prior to publication on the Department's website.
9. When ED communicates scientific and technological findings, the Department will include a clear explication of underlying assumptions, and accurate contextualization of uncertainties.

10. When ED establishes Committees pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) that are tasked with giving scientific advice, ED in conjunction with and consistent with the General Services Administration guidance will:
  - (a) Ensure that the recruitment process for new FACA members is transparent by announcing FACA member vacancies widely with an invitation for the public to recommend individuals for consideration,
  - (b) Make widely available to the public the professional biographical information (including current and past professional affiliations, and qualifications for serving) for appointed committee members, subject to legal considerations,
  - (c) Ensure that the selection of members to serve on a scientific or technical FACA is based on expertise, knowledge, and contribution to the relevant subject area (other considerations may include availability to serve, diversity of FACA composition, balance of views, and ability to work effectively on a FACA),
  - (d) Make all conflict-of-interest waivers granted to committee members publicly available, except where prohibited by law, and
  - (e) Except where explicitly stated in a prior agreement between the Department and a FACA, treat all reports, recommendations, and products produced by FACAs as solely the findings of the FACAs rather than of ED, and thus, not subject to Department revision.

#### C. Public Communication

1. In response to media interview requests to the Department about ED's scientific work, ED will offer knowledgeable spokespersons who can, in an objective and nonpartisan fashion, describe and explain the issues to the media and the American people.
2. ED scientists may freely speak to the media and the public about scientific and technical matters based on their official work, after coordinating with their immediate supervisor and public affairs officer. This includes communication in person, by phone, or through email. Social media communications are governed by the Department's policy on the use of social media.
3. In no circumstances will public affairs officers ask or direct ED scientists to alter scientific findings.
4. The Director of the Institute of Education Sciences has statutory authority to publish reports without approval from the Secretary or any other office of the Department. IES scientists (and contractors upon request) may discuss the scientific findings contained in these reports after coordinating with supervisors, and public affairs staff as appropriate.
5. Extramural researchers will be required to post their findings presented in peer-reviewed reports or journal articles on publicly available websites such as the

Department's Education Resources Information Center. Data collected by the Department is made available in public version on the ED website and confidential data to be used in research can be obtained through restricted-use licensing with NCES.

D. ED Scientists' Role in Developing and Disseminating Research

1. ED scientists are encouraged to publish data and findings in ways that contribute to the most effective dissemination of ED science and that best enhance ED's reputation for reliable science, including online in open formats and through peer-reviewed, professional, or scholarly journals. Except for IES reports, which may be published according to the terms of the Education Sciences Reform Act, development and dissemination of scientific and technical products must be consistent with ED policies and procedures related to peer review, the Open Government Directive (Office of Management and Budget, 2009), ED's information quality guidelines, and other legislative and policy mandates.
2. ED scientists are encouraged, consistent with Federal ethics laws and regulations, to engage with their peers in academia, industry, government, and non-governmental organizations through presenting their work at scientific meetings, serving on editorial boards and on scientific and technological expert review panels, and actively participating in professional societies and national/international scientific advisory and science assessment bodies.
3. ED allows ED scientists to receive honors and awards for their research with the goal of minimizing, to the extent practicable, disparities in the potential for private-sector and public-sector scientists to accrue the professional benefits of such honors or awards.
4. ED supports the election or appointment of its scientists to fellowships or positions in professional organizations, including as officers and on governing boards, subject to applicable ethics requirements and Department policy.
5. ED is committed to ensuring its staff is up to date on the most recent advances in research, development, and evaluation in the field of education. To this end, ED permits and encourages its scientists and managers of scientific activities to pursue educational activities related to ED's goal such as taking short courses, attending professional conferences, and serving as journal reviewers or conference discussants.
6. To ensure that ED employees understand their rights and responsibilities, ED will provide annual scientific integrity and ethics training to all personnel, including supervisors and managers, responsible for the oversight of scientific research.