

# Responsible Conduct of Research

## What is Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)?

As explained in the [UMass Amherst RCR Primer for Undergraduates Participating in Research](#), “Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) is not a method that can be followed; it is an overall philosophy of creating and maintaining an environment for research that conforms to the highest ethical principles, fosters intellectual honesty and integrity, and encourages scholarly and scientific advances of the highest quality. These concepts must be incorporated into every aspect of research and scholarly activity.”

## What impact do RCR policies have on you as an undergraduate student?

Researchers at all levels, from undergraduate students through tenured faculty, have a responsibility to conduct their research in a responsible and ethical manner. In addition there are official RCR policies and requirements for undergraduate students who engage in or support certain types of research. All undergraduate students who are engaged in research activities funded by National Science Foundation (NSF) grants must read and sign the [UMass Amherst RCR Primer for Undergraduates Participating in Research](#). The Principal Investigator must also sign and retain the Certificate of Completion included on the last page of the primer. At their discretion, faculty members may also require undergraduate students working on their projects to successfully complete [Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative \(CITI\)](#) modules about RCR and research ethics.

## How may it benefit you to be informed about RCR?

In addition to fulfilling your responsibility to conduct ethical research, gaining a more complete understanding of RCR can help you to:

- Write about your understanding of RCR in graduate school applications.
- Explain your knowledge of RCR to future employers across a wide range of fields. Remember that all industries utilize some form of research or assessment.
- Enhance your resume by completing Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) modules about RCR and research ethics. The CITI Program is a subscription service providing research ethics education to all members of the research community. UMass is a “CITI participating organization.” As a member of the UMass community with a “umass.edu” email address, you may register and complete the CITI Training modules online free of charge.

## What is an Institutional Review Board (IRB)?

As defined by the Office of Research and Engagement:

"The University of Massachusetts Amherst is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects of research conducted by, or under the supervision of, its faculty, staff and students. The Institution maintains an Institutional Review Board, a federally mandated committee, which reviews all sponsored research involving human subjects. Some unsponsored research is reviewed by local review boards"

The IRB's charge is to ensure that the risks accompanying the research never outweigh the value of human life. In its review of projects involving human subjects the IRB seeks to balance the risks to the subjects against the scientific knowledge to be gained and the potential benefits to the subjects and/or society, as well as ensure that all projects conform to the regulations and policies set forth by the DHHS and FDA as well as state regulations."

While research for course assignments may be exempt from individual review by the IRB, and undergraduate research assistants working on faculty member's research projects are typically covered under that faculty member's IRB review, it is still essential for all students engaged in research to be aware of processes that are being taken to ensure the safety and/or confidentiality of human subjects.

**For additional information and resources regarding responsible conduct of research, visit:**

- [UMass Policy on Responsible Conduct of Research and Scholarly Activities](#)
- [Training, Education, and Outreach resources](#) (UMass Amherst Office of Research and Engagement)

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