NSF RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH (RCR)
EDUCATION REQUIREMENT TRAINING PLAN

BACKGROUND

Section 7009 of the America COMPETES Act of 2007 (America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education and Science) directs the National Science Foundation (NSF) to require universities applying for research and education funding to certify that the institution has a plan in place to provide appropriate training and oversight in the responsible conduct of research (RCR) to undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers who will be supported by NSF funds. This certification is required for proposals submitted on or after January 4, 2010. While a written RCR training plan does not need to be included by an investigator as part of a proposal submitted to NSF, institutional plans are subject to review upon request by the NSF.

All members of the Georgia Southern University research community, including faculty, staff, and students, are expected to adhere to the highest ethical and professional standards as they pursue research and scholarly activities. Maintaining this standard requires the vigilance of all participants engaged in research and scholarly endeavors to comply with the legal, regulatory, and ethical requirements established by the University, regulatory agencies, funding sources and professional organizations. This includes adherence to Georgia Southern’s training plan for the RCR training required by NSF, as referenced within the NSF Grant Proposal Guide and Award and Administration Guide, and implemented under the America COMPETES Act.

In response to this mandate, Georgia Southern University’s Office of Research Compliance has implemented the following policy, which establishes minimum RCR training requirements.

RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT IN RESEARCH TRAINING PLAN

It is understood that RCR can be taught and learned in many ways and that standards can vary from discipline to discipline. To meet the NSF mandate, Georgia Southern offers a comprehensive RCR web-based training program through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). Objectives of RCR training are to encourage best practices in the conduct of research and scientific investigations and to foster an ability to recognize an ethical choice and the ability to make a principled decision.

Modules are tailored within four discipline-specific areas:

- Biomedical Research (e.g. Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy)
- Social and Behavioral Research (e.g. Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, Marketing)
- Physical Sciences (e.g. Geology, Chemistry, Physics)
- Arts and Humanities (e.g. English, History, Languages, Art, Music)
- Engineering (e.g. Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Computer Science)

Within these disciplines, the RCR curriculum provides core instruction on responsible conduct in research:

- General Research Ethics
- Authorship and Plagiarism
- Conflicts of Interest and Commitment
- Acquisition, Management, Sharing and Ownership of Data
- Research Misconduct
- Responsible Peer Review
- Collaborative Research
- Mentoring
Please note that these courses do not satisfy the University’s requirements for separate training for human subjects research or use of animals in teaching or research, and separate training and protocol approval processes are required.

Exemptions: Travel grants, including conference, symposium and workshop travel are exempt from the RCR training requirement. All other individuals who work on or are paid from NSF funds must complete RCR training.

The CITI RCR course may be accessed at [http://www.citiprogram.org](http://www.citiprogram.org). Users should register or log in and affiliate with Georgia Southern University; add a course or update their learner group; and complete modules specific to the discipline and funded project. Modules may be taken at the learner’s pace by logging out and returning at a later date.

The Office of Research Compliance is developing methods for supplementing the online courses with additional, on-demand training available to individuals and departmental settings. In addition, reference materials are available to assist mentors with training of students and postdoctoral fellows.

**RESPONSIBILITIES FOR RCR TRAINING PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

Responsibility for compliance with the NSF RCR mandate rests primarily with principal investigators. Training requirements are as follows:

**Principal Investigators, Co-Investigators and Senior Research Personnel**

- Principal investigators, co-investigators and senior personnel submitting proposals on or after January 4, 2010 are encouraged to complete training through the CITI RCR training course at the time of new proposal submission to NSF. CITI RCR training must be completed at award. NOTE: No new award accounts will be established without documentation of RCR training completion for all principal investigators, co-investigators and senior personnel included within an NSF proposal/award. No payments will be approved for researchers or students on an NSF award until CITI RCR training is complete and certification provided.
- Principal investigators, co-investigators and senior personnel on NSF projects awarded prior to January 4, 2010 are strongly encouraged to complete web based RCR training.
- Principal investigator shall identify undergraduates, graduate students, and post-doctoral associates to be hired on NSF-funded projects and ensure completion of RCR training before a hiring proposal can be approved.
- Principal investigators should engage in compacts with post-doctoral appointees that outline the commitments of both the principal investigator and the post-doctoral fellows relative to the post-doctoral fellow/mentor relationship.

**The Office of Research Compliance will:**

- Verify compliance with NSF RCR training requirements prior to award setup;
- Verify completion of RCR training for all undergraduates, graduate students, and post-doctoral associates prior to hiring;
- Build collaborations with departments and promote faculty involvement in the RCR training program;
- Provide methods for supplementing online CITI courses with additional in-person workshops, discipline specific training and individual mentoring, as applicable;
- Recommend policies and procedures that will promote RCR awareness and education campus-wide.
NSF VS. NIH REQUIREMENTS

RCR training requirements for NSF differ from that required by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), in that NSF requires that any student or postdoctoral researcher supported by NSF receive RCR training. NIH requires only those individuals receiving training grants to undergo documented RCR training. Additional resources and assistance concerning NIH requirements are available from the Office of Research Compliance.

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FURTHER ASSISTANCE

Contact the Office of Research Compliance for additional assistance:

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