



Principles of responsible research

Section 1: *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*

Institutions should demonstrate a strong research culture underpinned by honesty, integrity, respect for research participants and the environment, good stewardship of public resources, appropriate acknowledgement of the role of others in the research, and responsible communication of research results. In this context, researchers must maintain high standards of responsible research. For supervisors this includes providing appropriate induction, training and mentoring of 'research trainees' (1.1 & 1.3 NHMRC et al 2007).

Scenario

A Senior Lecturer, Dr Ambitious plans to apply for promotion in 12 months' time. He has an excellent publishing record but has not been interested in supervising research students because he believes this will distract him from his own research. He now recognises that this is a serious gap in his CV. Dr Ambitious approaches the Research Coordinator at his university and happily accepts five new PhD students. Two of the students have recently arrived in Australia and speak English as an Additional Language. Dr Ambitious meets the students as a group and advises them to 'go to the university's research website and enroll in any courses you need'. He then tells them that he will meet with them 'whenever you are ready'. Six months goes by with no further meetings, and Dr Ambitious receives an automatically generated email, reminding him that his students are due to submit and defend their research proposals.

Points for discussion:

1. Has Dr Ambitious adhered to the principles of responsible research?
2. Do you have advice for how he should have approached his supervisory role?
3. What responsibility does the university have for ensuring that Dr Ambitious is adequately fulfilling his role as a supervisor?
4. What ramifications do you think Dr Ambitious' actions will have on his students' progression?

National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and Universities Australia.2007. *Revision of the Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice: Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, Canberra: Australian Government.

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