

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Standard Operating Procedures		
Date of Preparation: 09/29/2020 Updated: 10/02/2026	TITLE: <i>Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research Institutional Plan - NSF</i>	Page 1 of 4

Objective

The objective of this document is to outline how UTC adheres to the NSF RECR requirements.

Rationale and Requirements

As noted by the National Academies of Science in a 2017 report, detrimental research practices and scientific misconduct continue to erode public trust in science. Through the National Science Foundation and other agencies, the federal government seeks to improve the quality of scientific research and education and better equip future researchers for effective and ethical stewardship of federal funding.

As per NSF PAPPG 24-1 (effective May 2024), RECR involves not only a responsibility to generate and disseminate knowledge with rigor and integrity, but also a responsibility to:

- conduct peer review with the highest ethical standards;
- diligently protect proprietary information and intellectual property from inappropriate disclosure; and
- treat students and colleagues fairly and with respect.

In January 2010, Congress passed the America COMPETES Act with the goal of focusing public attention on the importance of ethical training in engineering and science (42 U.S.C. 1862o-1).

In response, NSF mandated that recipients of NSF awards supporting research and education must meet specific requirements related to the Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research. Per NSF PAPPG 24-1 (effective May 2024), these institutional requirements include:

- An institution must have a plan in place to ensure that faculty, senior personnel, undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers who will be supported by NSF to conduct research will receive effective RECR training
- NSF's RECR requirement applies to the breadth of research disciplines that the Foundation funds. The training provided should be effective and must be appropriately tailored to the specific needs and circumstances at each institution;
- An institution must designate one or more persons to ensure compliance with the NSF RECR training requirement;
- An institution must verify that supported researchers receive the appropriate RECR training.

Key Updates to NSF RECR Requirements

Effective July 31, 2023; NSF PAPPG 23-1: All NSF-funded institutions must provide appropriate training and oversight in RECR to faculty and other senior personnel, which is in addition to the previously required undergraduate students, graduate students and postdoctoral researchers. Training content must now include mentor training and mentorship.

Effective December 2, 2025; NSF PAPPG 24-1; NSF Important Notice 149 (November 2025): All NSF-funded institutions must ensure their RECR programs address research security to raise awareness of potential research security threats, federal export control, disclosure and reporting requirements.

Applicability

NSF RECR requirements apply to all faculty, senior personnel, undergraduates, graduates, and postdoctoral researchers who receive salary or stipend support from NSF to conduct research. As per NSF PAPPG 24-1 (effective May 2024) this requirement also applies in the following situations:

NSF-supported scholarships, tuition remission, and stipend support: Students who receive only scholarship or stipend support to enroll in an academic program through NSF-funded programs such as S-STEM and Noyce are not necessarily required to receive RECR training. However, students must complete RECR training if they receive NSF scholarship or stipend support to engage in research, or *if conducting research is included in their academic program* (e.g., as part of a research methods course or capstone project).

Graduate fellowship awards: Institutions that host graduate fellows to conduct research will be required to ensure that the fellows have received RECR training.

Subawards: The RECR training requirement flows down to all sub-awardees, at any tier and including international organizations. The proposing institution must ensure that RECR requirements are appropriately addressed in the subaward instrument.

Award Transfers: For NSF awards transferred from one institution to another, the new institution becomes responsible for ensuring the training requirements are met for the appropriate individuals at its institution.

Exceptions: The RECR requirements do not apply to NSF awards that fund equipment purchases, conferences/symposia/workshops, travel, or educational activities that do not include research.

Supplemental awards: If supplemental awards are made in connection with a parent award that does not require RECR training, and the supplemental awards include funding to support trainees who will be conducting research during the period of support, RECR training requirements will apply.

UTC Institutional RECR Training Plan Components

The UTC Institutional RECR Training Plan includes required core education specific to a trainee's educational level (i.e., undergraduate, graduate student, postdoctoral researcher, faculty/senior personnel). Required components of RECR compliance include UTC-developed training as well as online research ethics courses offered through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program. UTC-developed trainings are offered periodically in an in-person format by the Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and are also accessible online. Researchers are encouraged to contact ORI if in-person instruction is desired. The required RECR training modules applicable to trainees by level of education are noted in the table below.

RECR Core Training and Education Components by Trainee Education Level				
Training/Education Component	Undergrads	Graduate Students	Postdocs	Faculty/ Senior Personnel
CITI Responsible Conduct of Research Course: Discipline-Specific	•	•	•	•
CITI RCR Advanced Topics Course		•	•	•
UT Policy RE0001 – Policy and Procedures on Responsible Conduct in Research and Scholarly Activities		•	•	•

Training/education components in bold and highlighted in the table above should be completed before the researcher begins receiving support from NSF. All other RECR core training and education components should be completed within 60 days from the date NSF support begins for the researcher.

Principal investigators may opt to supplement core training with additional project- or discipline-specific RECR training as appropriate. Principal investigators are encouraged to work with ORI staff to identify and/or develop discipline-specific RECR training and education resources.

Ensuring Compliance with the Institutional RECR Plan

Principal Investigator (PI) responsibilities. The PI of each NSF award subject to the RECR training requirement is responsible for:

- Completing the required RECR training within the applicable timeframe.
- Ensuring that all supported personnel complete the required RECR training within the applicable timeframe.
- Providing the Office of Research Integrity with a list of senior personnel/trainees at each educational level (as applicable) who will be supported by NSF funds and require RECR instruction.
- Updating the list of senior personnel/trainees if NSF support is provided to new individuals during the project.
- Indicating the date that NSF support will begin for everyone.
- Identifying any additional RECR training to be provided beyond the core components, and the timetable for delivery.

Senior Personnel/Trainee responsibilities. Senior Personnel, undergraduates, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers who will be conducting research in any context while receiving NSF support are responsible for:

- Completing mandatory RECR training and education within the applicable timeframe.
- Completing supplemental RECR training as assigned by the PI or Compliance Officer.
- Notifying the PI and Compliance Officer that required training has been completed per the RCR Instructions for Researchers document.

Compliance Officer responsibilities. The Compliance Officer or a designee is responsible for:

- Verifying that all faculty, senior personnel, and trainees have satisfactorily completed mandatory RECR training.
- Maintaining records of RECR training completion for each project funded by NSF that is subject to the RECR training requirement.
- Notifying PIs, senior personnel, and trainees when RECR training requirements have not been completed within an appropriate timeframe.

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References and Links

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2017. *Fostering Integrity in Research*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/21896>.

NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG 24-1), Chapter IX, Section B — Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research: <https://www.nsf.gov/policies/pappg/24-1/ch-9-recipient-standards>

NSF Important Notice 149 — Research Security Training Certification (November 2025):
<https://www.nsf.gov/notices/important/important-notice-no-149-updates-nsf-research-security/in149>

National Science Foundation. RCR Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):
<https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/rcr/rcrfaqs.jsp>

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative: <https://about.citiprogram.org/>

UTC Office of Research Integrity: <https://www.utc.edu/research/research-integrity>

National Academies of Sciences, Office of Inspector General 2017. OIG Review of Institutions' Implementation of NSF's Responsible Conduct of Research Requirements: <https://oig.nsf.gov/home/group/reports-publications/page/all-reports?selectedReport=561&viewReport=true>