



## Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research

***Course Title: Responsible Conduct of Research for Postdocs, Medical Research Fellows and Early Career Researchers (RCR)***

This course consists of ten in-person classroom sessions and corresponding online informational documents designed by the Emory University Ethics Center in collaboration with the Office of Postdoctoral and Mentored Trainee Education for postdoctoral fellows, medical fellows and faculty in biomedical research. The course was designed with the specific focus of fulfilling the NIH requirement ([NOT-OD-22-055](#)). **NIH requires all classes to be in-person**; thus, there are no virtual classes offered as an alternative. The course has been approved by the Emory University Office of Research Compliance & Regulatory Affairs, the Office of the Dean of the School of Medicine, and the Curriculum Committee of the School of Medicine. This course is offered fall and spring semesters every year (but not summer semesters).

- TOPICS:

1. Conflict of Interest– personal, professional, and financial – and conflict of commitment, in allocating time, effort, or other research resources
2. Policies regarding human subjects in research
3. Policies regarding live vertebrate animal subjects in research, and safe laboratory practices
4. Mentor/mentee responsibilities and relationships
5. Safe research environments (e.g., those that promote inclusion and are free of sexual, racial, ethnic, disability and other forms of discriminatory harassment)
6. Team science
7. Data acquisition and analysis; laboratory tools (g., tools for analyzing data and creating or working with digital images); recordkeeping practices, including methods such as electronic laboratory notebooks
8. Data science; secure and ethical data use; data confidentiality, management, sharing, and ownership
9. Research misconduct and policies for handling misconduct
10. Responsible authorship and publication

- COURSE CONTENT: The online documents on each of the 10 topics listed above contain foundational information and explanation of the concepts involved in each of the topics. The 10 topics are taught as 10 classes over 5 tandem sessions occurring every one to two weeks. Each

class is led by an expert faculty member who facilitates discussions on the most important principles of the respective topics and how to resolve the ethical dilemmas in the submitted case studies (see next item). In addition, the foundational information for each topic contains Emory University policies, federal laws and policies, and sample case studies with guide questions indicating the ethical principles needed for solution of the ethical dilemma in the case studies.

- **FOR THE POSTDOC SECTION:** After reading the foundation documents for the next tandem session, Postdocs are required to submit a personal or created case study (referred to as a "case/scenario") on their choice of one of the two topics to be covered. The case studies are due the evening before the next tandem session.
- **FOR THE FACULTY SECTION:** In place of the case studies described above for the postdoc section, Faculty are required to lead discussions with their lab members on 2 topics specified in the course syllabus after those topics have been covered in class. They will then write up summary reports for each discussion. The reports are due at the end of the course.
- **REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION:** Attendance of all classroom sessions, submission of all required assignments (either 5 case studies for Postdocs or 2 discussion summary reports for Faculty), and successfully passing the final quiz are mandatory for course certification.
- **ETHICS IN PRACTICE:** The formalized background information and classroom discussions are supported and further enhanced by the mentor in the daily conduct of research relevant to the project. At Emory University, the faculty have been trained in the responsible conduct of research and thus are able to convey these principles to trainees as they enter into positions as postdoctoral and research fellows. The training in and practice of the responsible conduct of research is an Emory University-wide expected norm. An array of faculty take part in leading the formal discussion sessions of the RCR course, which brings a richness of experience on the topic. The course is evaluated each term with registrants always highly rating the value of classroom discussions, shared experiences of the expert faculty, and background information documents.