

Ethical Concerns Processes – Revised January 2025

1. Refer to the [Research4Life Code of Conduct](#)
“This Code of Conduct is for everyone involved in delivering the work of Research4Life, at meetings, trainings, conferences, and in the exchange of information. It helps all partners to understand and comply with the guidance on behaviour that is expected of them in the areas of:
 - Integrity
 - Professionalism and accountability
 - Respect, equality, diversity
 - Avoidance of conflicts of interest and corruptionThis Code of Conduct applies to all those conducting work for Research4Life and is intended to act as guidance alongside employers’ codes of conduct.”
2. Incident reports should be submitted to the [Ethics Group email address](#).
3. Incident reports are reviewed and managed by the Research4Life Ethics Group, comprising of the current Chair of the Research4Life Executive Council, Vice-Chair and Past Chair and is supported administratively by the Chief Operations Officer.
4. Possible outcomes of investigations into incidents are:
 - a. Dismissal of the charges if not substantiated

If charges are substantiated

- b. verbal warning,
- c. written warning,
- d. suspension for between 6 months up to 3 years,
- e. dismissal from role,
- f. dismissal from role and blacklisted from future R4L activities
- g. dismissal with referral to employing organization

The above is without prejudice to adherence to national law of where the incident took place including but not limited to referral to law enforcement

5. Should an appeal to a decision by the Ethics Group be made, the appeal is reviewed and managed by the Research4Life Appeals Board, comprising of at least two of the Past Chairs of the Research4Life Executive Council and one of the Past Chairs of the User Group - none of which will be currently serving on the Ethics Group.

Ethics Group - Review of Incidents

1. Incident reports should be submitted to the Ethics Group.
2. Information related to the incident should include as many details as possible, in order to assist the Ethics Group in assessing the situation and in making an appropriate decision to ensure an inclusive, respectful and safe environment for everyone.
3. The Ethics Group reviews the information provided and conducts any necessary follow-up to clarify the details, potentially including interviews of those involved in the incident.

4. The Ethics Group comes to a majority decision concerning the outcome of the investigation and informs the individual(s) involved accordingly.
5. The work of the Ethics Group is conducted with care for confidentiality and privacy of all those involved in the incident
6. In cases where the individual(s) accused of a violation of the Code of Conduct is engaged with Research4Life via appointment from an organization with which Research4Life has a contractual arrangement, the Ethics Group will conduct a preliminary investigation to determine validity of a potential case before referring their findings to the relevant organization for action. In such a case, suspension of Research4Life activities for the involved individual(s) is the only option available while awaiting outcome of any investigation by the relevant organization
7. A summary of the investigation process and findings will be prepared for the files of the Ethics Group.

Appeal Board process:

The two parties are the Appellant and Research4Life Ethics Group.

In order for an appeal to be launched, the decision must already be finalized (not pending or in process) and be a decision made by Research4Life Ethics Group (decisions by other organizations can only be appealed to those organizations). Appeals are only considered if they have not proceeded through a prior appeals process. Appeals must be launched within six months from the date of the communication of the final decision in question.

All communication should be done via written submission to the Research4Life ethics appeal email address. Only exception for an oral “argument” would be at the request of the Appellant.

- (1) Appeal – submitted by Appellant
 - a. This statement should include “what” (specific reference to the decision in question that is being appealed); “situation” (a description of what happened and relevant context; “rules” (which rules/contract have not been followed in forming the decision);
 - b. Appellant will be explicitly informed that any allegations should be substantiated by evidence.
- (2) Response – submitted by Research4Life Ethics Group
 - a. Should cover and respond to the Appellant’s points, refuting disputed facts/providing counter facts, citing relevant rules/contracts, etc.
- (3) Rejoinder – submitted by Appellant (optional)
 - a. Addressing any points made by Response not already covered by the Appeal
- (4) Sub-Rejoinder – submitted by Research4Life (optional)
 - a. Addressing any new allegations made in the rejoinder.

6. The Appeal Board reviews and manages all received submissions is supported administratively by the STM Research4Life partner representative.

A summary of the chronology of the facts and ruling are prepared by the Appeals Board for the Appellant and the Research4Life Ethics Group.

The Appeal Board makes a ruling to grant or deny the appeal to the decision made by the Ethics Group. This ruling is then communicated to the Appellant and the Research4Life Ethics Group for the appropriate actions.

Record security and retention:

Note: all background documents and relevant files will be maintained in a secure file site accessible only to members and administrative support of Ethics Group and Appeals Board. Documents will be retained for a period of at least five years.