

Process for Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct

The Research Integrity Officer assesses research misconduct complaints and initiates the research misconduct process, if necessary. The Research Integrity Officer fulfills the institution's obligation in assuring compliance with the regulations of our federal funding partners.

	Process Step	Description
1.	Receipt of Allegation	Research misconduct allegations should be made confidentially to the RIO. Allegations may be made anonymously by a complainant but must be made in good faith. The complainant should be prepared to cooperate with the inquiry and if warranted the investigation. The RIO and all parties are to assure confidentiality to the greatest extent possible throughout the process.
2.	Assessment	The RIO is charged with assessing allegations of research misconduct to determine if they fall within the definition of research misconduct are covered by law, regulations, or research sponsor policy, and warrant an inquiry on the basis that the allegation is sufficiently credible and specific so that the potential evidence of research misconduct may be identified.
3.	Inquiry	<p>If the allegation falls within the definition of research misconduct and is sufficiently credible and specific, an inquiry must be initiated. An inquiry is conducted by an appointed Inquiry Officer appointed by the Deciding Official. As a matter of good practice, a complainant should be interviewed at the inquiry stage.</p> <p>The purpose of the inquiry is to conduct an initial review of the available evidence to determine whether to conduct an investigation. An inquiry does not require a full review of all the evidence related to the allegation.</p> <p>The scope of the inquiry is not required to and does not normally include deciding whether misconduct occurred,</p>

		<p>determining who committed the research misconduct or conducting exhaustive interviews and analyses. The outcome of the Inquiry Officer will result in a written report of its findings to the Deciding Official with a recommendation to either proceed with an investigation or with no further action based on applicable policy.</p> <p>An inquiry should be completed within 60 days of initiation.</p>
4.	Investigation	<p>An investigation is initiated if the Inquiry Officer finds it warranted and the Deciding Official, after being presented with the Inquiry Officer’s report, concurs with the Inquiry Officer’s findings. Any finding that an investigation is warranted must be made in writing by the Deciding Official. The Investigation Committee will consist of a minimum of three individuals.</p> <p>The purpose of the investigation is to develop a factual record by exploring the allegations in detail and examining the evidence in depth, leading to recommended findings on whether research misconduct has been committed, by whom, and to what extent. The investigation will also determine whether there are additional instances of possible research misconduct that would justify broadening the scope beyond the initial allegations.</p> <p>An investigation should be completed within 120 days of initiation.</p>
5.	Decision	<p>The final investigation report, including any respondents’ comments, are provided to the Deciding Official who will determine in writing: (1) whether the institution accepts the investigation report, its findings, and the recommended institutional actions; and (2) the appropriate institutional actions in response to accepted findings of research misconduct if applicable.</p> <p>If the Deciding Official’s determination varies from the findings of the investigation committee, the Deciding Official, as part of his/her written determination, explain in detail the basis for rendering a decision different from the findings of the investigation committee. The Deciding Official may instead return the report to the investigation committee with a request for further fact-finding or analysis.</p> <p>When a final decision on the case has been reached, the Research Integrity Officer will normally notify both the respondent and the complainant in writing.</p>