

PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING ALLEGATIONS OF RESEARCH MISCONDUCT



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Approval Body: University Research Integrity: Ethics & Governance Committee (URIEGC)
Research Impact & Innovation Services (RIIC)
(The Policy on Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct is approved by Senate)

Procedure Owner: Research & Knowledge Exchange.

Author: Various

This procedure will be used with the '**Policy on Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct**' to investigate research misconduct cases. Any allegation of misappropriation or misuse of research funds and equipment can be raised under this procedure but would be addressed under the University's financial fraud investigation policy.

The University's Statute(s) take precedence over anything set out in this Procedure. The Vice Chancellor or their nominee has the right to suspend a member of staff and the right to suspend a student in accordance with the relevant Statute(s).

A. Procedure: The objective of the procedure outlined below is:

1. to ensure that any allegations of research misconduct brought to the University as the organisation employing the individual against whom allegations are made, or brought to the University in its capacity as the host or sponsor of research, are dealt with agreed standard practices adopted nationally by other Universities and research organisations and
2. to determine the truth of the allegations.

To note:

- Allegations brought against *Research Students* registered for a Professional Doctorate or as a staff member, on the **conduct of the research** will be dealt with under this procedure. Alleged misconduct in research relating specifically to the assessed element of a research degree, i.e., to a thesis which has been submitted for examination will be investigated under the University's examination regulations and academic misconduct processes, instead of under this procedure.

However, related concerns may be dealt with, under this procedure, especially if either the alleged breach of research integrity involves a published research output, or if the student's **Supervisor** is implicated in the alleged breach, or the student is also an employee of the university.

This procedure can also be used to determine any allegation brought against a **Visting Research Student** registered elsewhere, but conducting research at the University, an **Independent Contractor** or **Consultant**; a person with **Visiting** or **Emeritus Status**; and a **Member of Staff** on a **Joint Clinical** or **Honorary contract**.

The 'Named Person' in consultation with a Senior colleague(s) would determine the University policy and procedure to be followed for all such cases.

- The University would like to remind anyone wishing to raise a complaint to do so in accordance with the University 'Policy on Receiving Allegations of Research Misconduct' so that the procedure below could be followed. The University would request staff or external parties to make the institution aware of any serious issues of suspected research misconduct before anyone else, including online platforms, so that the institution may secure evidence.
- B. Scope:** This procedure is neither a disciplinary nor a legal procedure and must not be considered as such. However, if the investigation makes a finding of research misconduct, this procedure will form the 'investigation element' of the University's disciplinary process. Allegations of breaches of research integrity made to the University, included but not limited to allegations of research misconduct, can only be investigated via this Procedure. Where an allegation of potential research misconduct is raised under the University's Public Interest Disclosure (whistleblowing) Policy or equivalent, the allegation will be referred to this Procedure. When concerns are raised that include/relate to alleged bullying or harassment, the University's Policy on 'Dignity at Work and Study' would be followed along with the other disciplinary processes. Allegations of financial fraud or other misuses of research funds or research equipment can be raised under this policy but would be addressed under the University's financial fraud investigation policy.

C. Standards of operation:

(Developed from the UKRIO guidance on investigation breaches of research integrity Version No.: 1.0 Publication Date: 12/15/2025 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37672/UKRIO.2025.12.detailedprocedurebreachesofintegrity>)

- **Level:** Matters would be considered and dealt with at the most appropriate level. (For example, when a breach is assessed to be an honest error or a Questionable Research Practice that is of a non-severe or non-complex nature, the matter would normally be dealt within the Faculty & progress to the stage of resolution via informal measures; an alleged breach would only progress to the full investigation stage after an initial investigation determines that there is sufficient evidence to justify this.
- **Timescales:** Concerns raised would be addressed typically in the shortest possible timescale necessary to ensure a full and fair investigation. All suggestions on timescales mentioned at any stage in the procedure below are indicative. All stages of the operation of this procedure would be completed as soon as is practicable without compromising standards and principles. The aim of the procedure is a thorough and fair investigation of the matters raised, conducted in a timely and transparent manner, and with appropriate confidentiality. Any delays in timescales will be communicated to all parties, providing an estimated revised date of completion.
- **Counter concern:** If at any stage of this Procedure, the Complainant, Respondent or other person raises a complaint about the use or operation of the Procedure or any decision or action taken, or raises any other grievance, then the 'Named Person' will seek the advice

of People Services, Education Services and Faculty ADRII's, in confidence, to determine an appropriate course of action.

- **Appropriate support:** Where the Complainant, Respondent or other person (s) involved in the investigation have difficulties, due to a disability, at any stage of the procedure or other accessibility issues, they should discuss this with the 'Named Person' as soon as possible. Reasonable adjustments would be made to ensure they are able to participate fully.
- **Meetings:** All meetings convened under the procedure, the Complainant and the Respondent have the right to be accompanied to the meetings by a Trade Union representative or colleague who would be present in a supportive role. According to the University statutes and ordinances that individual does not have the right to represent the individual in a 'legal capacity' or speak on their behalf, unless the Complainant or the Respondent if unable to speak for themselves due to certain reasons.
- **Evidence-sharing:** Information gathered and reports generated by an investigation under this procedure may be used as evidence in subsequent investigations under this Procedure, where a related matter is raised, or by other Organisational processes (such as a disciplinary process). Some evidence may be required to be shared with relevant external organisations, such as funding bodies or regulators.
- **Confidential advice:** The 'Named Person' may identify suitable professional, administrative, and other support to assist them in carrying out any action under any stage of the Procedure. It is likely that the *Research Integrity Compliance Lead* would be involved at all stages. The 'Named Person' and the 'Research Integrity Compliance Lead' are free to seek confidential advice from persons with relevant expertise, both within the University and outside. To address technical aspects raised by a matter, they may also employ relevant expertise and use of tools or computer software for assessing different forms of misconduct such as plagiarism, data manipulation and fabrication. Those seeking advice will, so far as is possible, anonymise the information provided to make no information available which could lead to the identification of the Complainant, Respondent or other individuals involved in the case. Persons consulted will be subject to the same requirements of confidentiality as others involved in the process. Persons consulted could be experts in particular disciplines of research; experts in particular aspects of the conduct of research, such as members of research ethics committees, statisticians, editors of academic journals and/or equivalent persons from relevant areas of dissemination in research; and/or experts in addressing misconduct in research and poor practice; and/or representatives of University Departments like Governance & Legal Services, People Services, Education Services, Finance, Research & Knowledge Exchange, Health and Safety Office, Library Services, Information and Technology, and/or the Advisory Service of the UK Research Integrity Office; and/or other organisations supporting good research practice; and/or Legal advisers.
- **Record keeping:** Confidential records will be maintained on all aspects, and during all stages, of the Procedure and notes will be made of all meetings convened under the Procedure. The Named Person will retain all reports, correspondence, transcripts of

meetings and other documentation. The normal retention period for such records will be 6 years +1 (6 years after the last entry in a record, then followed by first review or destruction to be carried out in the additional current (+1) year). After the retention period, an anonymised summary information of investigations would be retained (e.g., like those required for the Research Integrity Annual Report) Records would only be retained beyond the normal retention period if their retention can be justified for statutory, regulatory, or legal reasons; and/or the research project to which the records relates is still ongoing; and/or the retention period of the research project to which the records relate are longer.

- **Witnesses:** Both the Complainant and Respondent can suggest witnesses to the 'Named person', who can, in consultation with the Chair of the panel (s) will decide whether such person (s) can be called and questioned as witnesses.

- **Conflicts of interest** – Any party involved in the matter in any way must report conflicts of interest to the 'Named Person'. If the 'Named Person' is the Complainant or the Respondent or is personally associated with the work to which the matter relates or has any other conflict of interest, they will instead refer the matter to their nominated alternate who will notify the Complainant accordingly. The nominated individual will then take on the role of the 'Named Person' with regards to the conduct of the procedure and would be responsible for fulfilling the duties allocated to that role by the procedure.

- **Completion of an investigation:** The University will follow this procedure through to its natural end point as far as possible even in the event that any individual(s) concerned leaves or has left the University, either before the operation of this procedure is concluded or before the concern(s) of research misconduct was made; or the Complainant (s) withdraws the concern raised at any stage; or the Respondent(s) admits the alleged breach in full or in part; or the Respondent(s) admits other forms of misconduct, whether research or otherwise; and/or Complainant (s) and/or the Respondent(s) withdraws from the Procedure.

After an investigation into a concern when a Respondent is not a current member of staff/ student of the university (such as former staff or students, visiting staff, those on honorary contracts and students from other institutions conducting research on the Organisation's premises), the 'Named Person' will determine the nature of any further action to be taken in relation to the investigation and its outcome.

Similarly, after an investigation when a Respondent is deceased, the 'Named Person' will determine the nature of any further action to be taken in relation to the investigation and its outcome.

D. Reviewing a concern:

The UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) recommends organisations to use local 'research integrity champions' to address internal queries on questionable research practices. At Swansea University, the Faculty Research Integrity: Ethics & Governance Leads and the Faculty Associate Deans of Research, Impact & Innovation (ADRII's) serve as the 'Research Integrity Champions' and can act as the initial contact for staff wishing to informally discuss matters of questionable research practice or suspected research misconduct prior to considering raising them as a formal allegation.

The purpose of this stage is to review the concern/complaint that has been raised and determine whether the matter falls under the institutional procedure for investigating potential research integrity breaches both in terms of the matter raised and the individuals identified and determine the most appropriate process to investigate or address it. Any complaint received at the email addresses: researchintegrity@swansea.ac.uk or researchmisconduct@swansea.ac.uk would be 'pre-screened' by the 'Named Contact' or a delegated Senior Academic with assistance from the Research Integrity Compliance Lead to determine whether the complaint should be considered within the University Policy of Receiving Allegations of Research Misconduct or should be referred to any other University Policy (e.g., Dignity at Work & Study or Whistleblowing)

The 'Pre-Screening' process may involve a meeting with the Complaint and their colleague/representative to determine facts and arrive at a conclusion on the next steps. If conducted, the pre-screening process, would be an independent process not related to the 'Policy & Procedure of Receiving and Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct'.

The pre-screening process is independent of the 'Preliminary stage' (F) described in the procedure section below that is operationalized on receipt of a formal allegation/complaint.

Any **formal** allegations of 'misconduct in academic research' should ideally be submitted to the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) in writing, with supporting documentary evidence, or by email to researchmisconduct@swansea.ac.uk.

The process of screening and investigation may take a long time. To stay anonymous, a complainant is requested to use an email address that they will continue to have access to in case they change institution or employer. (E.g., Proton Mail or Private-Mail)

E. Receiving Formal allegations: Any formal allegation received by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) will be initially assessed to determine:

1. whether it requires urgent and immediate action to prevent further risk or harm to staff or student participants or other persons or any suffering to animals or has any negative environmental consequences; or
2. whether the complaint relates to the University or should be directed to another organisation, external body or regulator; or
3. whether the allegation falls within the scope of the research misconduct process or if another internal procedure, for example the disciplinary procedure needs to be used; or
4. whether any immediate action needs to be taken, based on the concerns outlined in the allegation (i.e. to protect participants, or secure funds or evidence)

The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) will also take all reasonable steps to secure the necessary evidence, consider potential risks and take steps to remove or minimise any risk. Risks may relate to the health, safety and security of employees, research participants, or other persons, the welfare of animals or negative environmental consequences. Immediate action would be taken to ensure that any such potential or actual danger, illegal activity or risk is prevented/eliminated. If necessary, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) may in consultation with the Director of People Services take the decision to suspend the Respondent on full pay pending the outcome of the

Screening/Formal investigation. In taking such actions, it would be made clear to all parties that the actions taken were not to be regarded as disciplinary and do not in themselves indicate that the allegation is true by the University. The suspension period will be kept to a minimum and will be regularly reviewed but not normally exceed 10 days.

F. Preliminary Stage:

Upon receipt of a **formal allegation** of misconduct in research, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) will acknowledge receipt by email, advising the Complainant of the procedure to be followed. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) will then inform the Respondent of the substance of the allegation in writing with a copy of the actual complaint/allegation and invite them to respond. The 'Respondent' will be provided a copy of the allegation (to be redacted only if necessary or requested), along with a copy of the University Policy and Procedure to be followed. The Respondent shall confirm receipt and provide a response in writing **within 5 working days** of receipt or such longer period as may be agreed by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise).

If the allegations are made against more than one Respondent, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) will inform all parties separately, without divulging any information on the identity of the other 'Respondents'. On undertaking a preliminary screening of the allegation, if the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) is satisfied with the Respondent's response and/or decides that the allegations are mistaken, frivolous, vexatious and/or malicious, the allegations will then be dismissed. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation) will record their justification for that decision in writing, and inform the Complainant, Respondent and any other parties who had been informed initially. The Complainant would be given an opportunity to respond if they believe that they have been misunderstood or key evidence overlooked.

The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) may, at their discretion, delegate the initial or preliminary screening of the allegation to any other senior academic staff. The Pro Vice Chancellor or their designate would also explore with both parties the options of a 'Mediation'

If an allegation falls outside the definitions of 'research misconduct', the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) will communicate to the Complainant in writing:

1. the reason why the allegations cannot be investigated using the University procedure.
2. which process for dealing with the complaint might be appropriate for handling the allegations (if any); and
3. to whom the allegations should be reported.
4. If the allegations were found to be frivolous, vexatious and/or malicious, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) will consider recommending to the People Services Department (for university staff) that action be taken under the disciplinary procedures against the Complainant and will take appropriate steps to support the reputation of the Respondent and the research project (s).
5. Any frivolous, vexatious and/or malicious allegations/complaints from external parties may be referred to the University Legal Services for further action.
6. Those making allegations in good faith will not be penalised, and would be provided with support, including training if they are employees of the University.

The University will aim to complete the Preliminary stage within 10-15 working days from the receipt of the allegations.

G. Screening stage:

1. If during the preliminary screening of the allegation by the PVC (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designated individual, the allegation cannot be entirely discounted then a '**screening panel**' would be set up to determine whether there is prima facie evidence of misconduct in research.
2. The purpose of the screening is to gather evidence and information and determine whether an allegation or apparent instance of misconduct warrants a formal investigation.
3. Apart from the Chair of the panel, the screening panel would consist of at least two individuals who do not have any conflict of interest with the case and have appropriate expertise to evaluate the scientific issues.
4. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate, will notify in writing, as soon as reasonably practicable, the Respondent, the Respondent's Head of School, and the Complainant, the details of the Screening process, reminding both the Respondent and the Complainant of their obligation to co-operate in the Screening, and to observe confidentiality.
5. No action is required of the Head of School in respect of the screening, and their role is in Duty of Care for the Respondent.
6. The Respondent would be requested to confirm receipt of the notification in writing and submit any documentary evidence for the screening panel to defend their case.
7. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) will notify the Respondent of the proposed committee membership in writing as soon as reasonably practicable. The Respondent will be given **5 working days** to submit any objection to the persons appointed to the committee.
8. If the Respondent submits a written objection to any of the persons appointed to the Committee, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate, may decide to replace the person with another qualified substitute.
9. If a decision not to substitute the member is taken, then the reason will be communicated to the Respondent in writing.
10. The Screening panel will only review submitted evidence (as documents and paperwork) and will not interview the Complainant, the Respondent, or any witnesses. The Screening Panel will specifically limit its scope to that of evaluating the facts only to determine whether there is sufficient evidence of misconduct in research to warrant an investigation.
11. To perform its functions, the Screening Committee should review the submission and supporting evidence provided by the Complainant and review the evidence and supporting documentation provided by the Respondent.
12. The Screening panel would normally aim to complete its work within **30 days** of being convened. If for any reason, the screening panel is unable to complete its work within the specified time, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate may take the decision to extend the time limit and inform both the Respondent and Complainant the reasons for the extension.
13. The Screening panel must determine whether the allegations are sufficiently serious and have sufficient substance to justify a formal investigation or whether they may be addressed through education/training or through some other non-disciplinary approach.

The conclusions and recommendations should be set out in the written report.

14. A report from the screening panel would be made available to the Respondent and the Complainant for factual accuracy, and only in circumstances, where the report includes errors of fact will the screening panel modify the report.
15. Any comments from the Complainant or Respondent must be submitted to the Screening panel within **10 working days** of receipt of the report. Any comments submitted from either the Respondent or Complainant will be attached as an addendum to the report.
16. Where the allegations are considered mistaken, frivolous, vexatious and/or malicious, they will be dismissed and appropriate measures taken to protect the reputation of the Respondent and relevant research projects.
17. Measures may include recommending to the appropriate authorities that action would be taken under the University's disciplinary procedures if the complaint was made by a member of University staff.
18. Where the allegations have some substance, but due to a lack of clear intent to deceive or due to their relatively minor nature, the matter will be addressed through the University's competency, training and education or other non-disciplinary process, rather than through a formal investigation for a University employee.
19. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate would ensure that a programme of training or supervision is established in conjunction with the Respondent and his/her line manager.
20. When the screening panel considers that the allegations are sufficiently serious and have sufficient substance to warrant recommending a Formal investigation, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate would take immediate steps to set up a Formal investigation.
21. The Complainant and Respondent will be informed in writing of the outcome of the Screening process within 5 working days of the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) making their decision.
22. Where appropriate, and for awareness only, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate, would inform the appropriate Senior staff within the University (Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Director of People Services) and any other partner organisation with which either the Respondent/and or Complainant has an honorary contract of the decision to progress the matter to a formal investigation.

Once initiated, the procedure will progress to the natural endpoint irrespective of:

- whether the Complainant has withdrawn the allegation;
- the Respondent admitting or having admitted the alleged misconduct, in full or in part and/or
- the Respondent or the Complainant resigning, or having already resigned, his/her post.

H. Formal Investigation:

The purpose of the Formal investigation is to examine and evaluate all relevant facts and determine whether misconduct in research has been committed, and if so, the seriousness of the misconduct and the responsible person.

1. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate, would notify the Respondent and the Complainant in writing, the decision to proceed to a formal

investigation and the obligation to co-operate in the formal investigation along with maintaining confidentiality.

2. The Respondent must confirm in writing, the receipt of notification.
3. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate, will then convene a formal investigation panel consisting of **at least 3 persons**, who have not previously been involved with appropriate knowledge/experience to evaluate the scientific issues and with knowledge of the investigating procedures.
4. If necessary, a member external to the University, or a member of the University Council would be invited to either Chair the panel or be a member.
5. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate will notify the Respondent of the proposed investigation panel membership in writing as soon as is reasonably practicable.
6. The Respondent will be given **5 working days** to submit an objection to the persons appointed to the Investigation committee.
7. If the Respondent submits a written objection to any of the persons appointed to the investigation panel, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) may decide to replace the person with a more qualified substitute. If the decision not to replace the panel member is taken, then the Respondent will be notified in writing with the reason.
8. The date of the investigation panel to be officially appointed will be either
 - After the 5 working days if the Respondent has not submitted a written objection or
 - The date on which the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate responds to the Respondent's objections.
9. Those on the investigation panel should not have any 'conflicts of interest' with the Respondent or the case in question, and they must have the necessary expertise to examine the evidence, interview the witness and to conduct the investigation.
10. The investigation panel would examine all evidence and documentation collected during the screening panel's investigation (e.g. relevant research data materials, proposals, publications, correspondence, memoranda and notes of telephone calls) following the original allegation and investigate further as required.
11. During the Formal investigation, the investigation panel will interview the Respondent, the Complainant and all other individuals who might have information regarding key aspects of the allegations. The Respondent will be able to name any relevant witnesses.
12. The Respondent will have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or represented by a recognised trade union representative to the meetings. Individuals accompanying the Respondent are doing so to provide support and are not allowed to provide their views or comments on the case.
13. The investigation panel will review all evidence and documentation to conclude whether the allegations of misconduct in research are **upheld in full, upheld in part or not upheld**.
14. The standard of proof to be used by the Investigation panel will be that of **'on the balance of probabilities.'**
15. The Investigation Panel may conclude that allegations are not upheld for reasons of being mistaken, frivolous, vexatious or malicious.
16. During the investigation, should new evidence come to light regarding further, distinct instances of misconduct in research by the Respondent, unconnected to the allegations under investigation or of misconduct in research by another person/persons, then the investigation panel would submit the new allegations to the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate to be considered under the initial steps in the

procedure.

17. The investigation panel will be appointed within 30 working days of the submission of the screening panel's report for recommending a formal investigation
18. The investigation panel will not work to a deadline or timetable but would aim to achieve completion of the investigation as quickly as possible without compromising the principles of the procedure.
19. If the investigation takes a long time, the Chair of the panel would provide regular monthly updates to the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate, who should provide appropriate information on the progress to the interested parties.
20. Written notes will be made of the proceedings; these are not meant to be verbatim but will be an accurate reflection of the points discussed, will form the official record, and will be included as part of the investigation report.
21. On completion of the investigation, a draft report would be provided by the panel to the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate for forwarding to the Respondent and the Complainant for factual accuracy.
22. All parties (Respondent & Complainant) would be given 5 working days to send a response to the report
23. Only when the report contains errors of fact and matters that have a bearing on the facts as indicated by the Respondent and/or the Complainant, and accepted by the Investigation Panel, should the Chair modify the report.
24. If the report is not modified, then comments would be attached as an addendum.
25. The investigation panel should then produce a final report summarising the conduct of the investigation, stating their decision on the allegations of misconduct in research, making recommendations and addressing any procedural matters that have been brought to light during the investigation.
26. The panel recommendations may include further action including retraction/correction of articles/papers and actions to inform or protect participants and patients, and where required reporting to regulators, funders, partner bodies or professional bodies.
27. If all or any part of the allegations are upheld, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise), the Director of People Services and another Senior Staff member (Registrar/Chief Operating Officer or Dean of the Faculty) should decide whether the matter should be referred to the University's disciplinary process or for other formal actions.
28. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate would inform the Respondent and the Complainant (or their representatives) in writing of the conclusion of the formal investigation.
29. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate would also inform the Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Dean of the Faculty and Head of School of the individual concerned, and any other relevant personnel within the University along with any partner organisations, funding bodies and or regulatory or professional bodies.
30. Should the allegations proceed to the University's disciplinary procedure, the report of the investigation panel would form the basis of the evidence that the Disciplinary Panel receives. Actions which may be implemented by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate in Consultation with the Director of People Services may comprise one or more of the following:
 - Removal from a particular project
 - Final written warning

- Special monitoring of future work
- Requirements to undertake specified training
- Removal of eligibility for pay progression for one year
- Withdrawal of funding for programme
- Down-banding of appointment
- Recommendation of termination of employment (To be undertaken in accordance with University Ordinances)

I. Appeals:

Where the formal investigation panel finds that the allegations have been substantiated in whole or in part, but the nature of misconduct is such that it should be disposed of informally, for example, through an informal warning, the Respondent may appeal against the decision on one or more of the following grounds:

- (a) that the allegation of misconduct was not heard in accordance with the above procedures; and/or
- (b) that fresh evidence has become available which was not or could not have been made formally available to the panel before.

The intention to appeal against any decision should be made in writing by the Respondent to the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate within 28 days of the date of the notification of the panel's decision.

The Respondent's letter should include a written statement stating clearly the basis for appeal.

Appointment of an appeals panel:

The purpose of the appeals panel is to consider/review the appeal submitted by the Respondent against the decision and/or sanctions resulting from completion of the investigation into an allegation of misconduct in research. **The outcome of the appeal panel is final, and the Respondent has no further right of internal appeal against the decision and/or sanctions.**

1. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate will convene an appeals panel, normally within 15 working days of the receipt of an appeal by the Respondent.
2. The appeal panel will consist of **3 or more** members, none of whom should be a member of the Screening or Investigation panel. The panel may include external members.
3. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate will notify the Respondent of the proposed appeal panel membership in writing as soon as reasonably practicable.
4. The Respondent will have 5 working days to submit any objection to the panel membership.
5. If the Respondent submits a written objection to any of the appeal panel members, then the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate may decide to replace the person with a qualified substitute.
6. If the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) or their designate decides not to replace the panel membership, then the decision with the reasons will be communicated to the Respondent in writing and will be added to the final report as an addendum.
7. The purpose of the appeal panel would be to review the evidence and determine whether

- the decision and any other sanction (s) applied was fair and reasonable in all the circumstances and to determine whether the procedure was followed correctly.
8. The Respondent will be invited to attend a meeting to give oral evidence. The Respondent may submit any relevant additional supplementary material in support of their appeal.
 9. The Respondent will have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or a trade union member.
 10. A report from the appeals panel should be submitted to the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Enterprise) within **20 working days** of the panel convening.
 11. The Appeal panel will also recommend, as appropriate, whether professional bodies or regulators, research funders/sponsors and other interested parties including collaborators should be notified of the outcome of the case. Where a distortion or inaccuracy in the published research record is found, all necessary steps should be taken to notify all relevant parties and to correct the published record.

- **Cross institutional research misconduct investigations**

On receipt of an allegation that crosses institutional boundaries, the University will:

- endeavour to ensure that the allegations are considered fully, proportionately and fairly.
- Contact the party institutions.
- Contact relevant funders and other third parties who may need to be notified (e.g. regulators, hospital trusts) to inform them of an allegation/investigation.
- Maintain respectful co-operation and communication between all institutions involved.
- Be open and transparent while ensuring that legal obligations and duty of care to staff are maintained.
- Avoid unnecessary duplication
- Be supportive and enable each institution to meet their responsibilities in respect of reviewing misconduct allegations, as well as the responsibilities they bear as an employer to any individual against whom allegations are being considered.
- Ensure that all individuals involved, affected institutions and relevant research funders are kept apprised of progress as required.
- Where a single institutional process is to be followed, agree what involvement the other institutions will have in the process (e.g. providing observers or panel members, approving Terms of Reference of any formal investigation panel, agree a lead institution with clear lines of responsibility for and within each institution including contact points)
- Agree clear lines of communication between institutions during and after the review process both for those involved and those affected (e.g. funders, journals and any third parties)
- Agree timescales regarding the investigation process as well as agreed points of communication as stated above, including informing the relevant institutions and individuals of any need to extend timelines.

The references below include further information:

- Montreal Statement on Research Integrity in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations
[Montreal Statement – WCRIF - The World Conferences on Research Integrity Foundation](#)
- Russell Group Statement of Cooperation in Respect of Cross-Institutional Research

Misconduct Concerns – <https://russellgroup.ac.uk/media/5708/russell-group-research-integrity-forum-statement-of-cooperation-may-2018.pdf>

Duty of care Statement:

The University acknowledges that the research misconduct processes can be lengthy and stressful for staff. The University People Services and Occupational Health Departments can provide necessary support for individuals undergoing such processes. Staff are encouraged to contact their Faculty People Services Business partner for assistance in the first instance, if they are experiencing stress because of the processes or have any other concerns. The Head of School of the individuals concerned would be informed of the ongoing process to assist with any additional support requirements.

Approval history & Amendments:

Policy & Procedure: approved by the University Research Integrity: Ethics & Governance sub-committee (URIEGSC): Feb 2020

Policy & Procedure: approved by the University Committee for Research & Innovation Strategy (CRIS): Feb 2020

Policy Approved by Senate: July 2015 and June 2020.

Procedure revised: April 2022. Duty of Care statement added.

Procedure revised: Oct 2025. Update includes addition of Research Integrity Champions or Faculty Associate Deans for Research (ADRII's) to act as first point of contact for internal queries on questionable research practices.

Procedure revised: May 2026. Updates include 'Standards of Operation', 'Pre-Screening' prior to receipt of formal allegation, references for cross institutional research misconduct investigations.

Research Misconduct

Process flow chart for dealing with Formal allegations

