

# Royal Society Research Misconduct Policy for Host Organisations and Grant Holders

## 1. Purpose

The Royal Society's fundamental purpose is to recognise, promote and support excellence in science. This includes advocating for the excellent conduct of research, and for a culture of research that sustains and rewards this. The Society's Fellowship and all those that receive grants from the Society are expected to observe the highest standards of ethics and integrity in undertaking their research. Ethics and integrity are not an "optional extra" or a "regulatory burden" but an integral part of good research.

The following guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Society's [research integrity statement](#) that sets out key principles and behaviours of an ethical nature, with the Society's full expectations specified in the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#), and the [UK Research Integrity Office \(UKRIO\) Code of Practice for Research](#).

## Definitions

**Board** is responsible for Governance activities of the Royal Society, whose membership comprises the Officers of the Society- the President and four Vice Presidents.

**Code of Practice for Research** is an essential reference tool to support researchers and research organisations in the conduct of research of the highest quality and standards.

**Concordat to Support Research Integrity** is a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance.

**Host Organisation** means the UK University, institution, research council or other body at which some or all of the research funded by the award will be carried out or which employs one or all of the Award Holder(s), and which takes responsibility for the management of the research project and the accountability of funds provided.

**Research Misconduct** includes the fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research or in reporting results, misrepresentation, deliberate mismanagement or intentional mismanagement of data and/or primary materials, making up data or results and recording and reporting them, such that the research is not accurately represented in the public research record.

**Breach of Ethical Guidelines or Duty of Care** whether deliberately, recklessly or by gross negligence:

- Disclosing improperly the identity of individuals or groups involved in research without their consent, or other breach of confidentiality;
- Placing any of those involved in research in danger, whether as subjects, participants or associated individuals, without their prior consent, and without appropriate safeguards even with consent; this includes reputational danger where that can be anticipated;

- Not taking all reasonable care to ensure that the risks and dangers, the broad objectives and the sponsors of the research are known to participants or their legal representatives, to ensure appropriate informed consent is obtained properly, explicitly and transparently;
- Not observing legal and reasonable ethical requirements or obligations of care for animal subjects, human organs or tissue used in research, or for the protection of the environment;
- Improper conduct in peer review of research proposals or results (including manuscripts submitted for publication); this includes failure to disclose conflicts of interest; inadequate disclosure of clearly limited competence; misappropriation of the content of material; and breach of confidentiality or abuse of material provided in confidence for peer review purposes

**Improper dealing of Allegations of Misconduct** includes failure to address possible infringements including attempts to cover up misconduct or reprisals against whistleblowers, or failing to deal appropriately with malicious allegations of poor behaviour, which should be handled formally as breaches of good conduct.

## **2. Investigating and Reporting Allegations of Misconduct**

As per the Society's Terms and Conditions of Award (to be updated following approval of this policy), the Host Organisation must have formal written procedures for the handling of allegations of research misconduct. The Society considers it the responsibility of the Host Organisation to investigate and report all allegations of research misconduct and poor behaviour, and accepts that such investigations must be aligned to its internal human resources policies and disciplinary procedures.

Where an allegation of research misconduct is about someone funded by, or engaged with, the Society (including acting as a supervisor for a PDRA and postgraduate students or engaged with peer review activities), even if it is about work not connected with a grant from the Society, the case should be reported to the Society. The Society **should be** notified at the stage that it is decided to undertake an informal inquiry – ie that there is a reasonable case that research misconduct may have occurred.

## **3. Whistleblowing**

Whistleblowers should suffer no detriment for making allegations of misconduct in good faith. All individuals working in research should feel able to raise concerns about standards of research conduct and research organisations must have in place procedures for whistle-blowers, in line with The Public Interest Disclosure Act (1998) and associated legislation. In addition, individuals making an allegation in good faith must be protected and supported. Similarly all staff must be protected from malicious allegations.

Whistleblowing is designed to deal with allegations which the whistleblower reasonably believes to be true. Whistleblowing must be made in good faith, and not out of spite or for personal gain. If a false complaint is submitted in bad faith, your host organisation should seek to take appropriate disciplinary action against you.

Notification of allegations received by the Society through whistleblowing, will, in the first instance be directed to the nominated individual responsible for overseeing research integrity and misconduct matters within the appropriate Host Organisation.

## **4. Notification**

The Host Organisation is required to notify the Society when allegations of research misconduct or poor behaviour are being investigated. Notification should be addressed to the Director of Grants Programmes using the following address: [grantsoperations@royalsociety.org](mailto:grantsoperations@royalsociety.org)

The Society requires that the Host Organisation undertakes and provides the following information throughout the course of an allegation being investigated:

- Inform the Society of any allegations of research misconduct made against employees of the organisation who are funded by the Society (including PDRA's, PhD Students and visiting collaborators), or who have an application for funding under consideration, at the earliest opportunity.
- Provide a definition of the category of alleged research misconduct being investigated as detailed above, including details of the investigation process.
- The timescales within which the allegations will be investigated and handled.
- If a full investigation is to be conducted, details of the individual(s) must be provided, in confidence.
- The possible sanctions if the allegation is upheld.
- Details of how an appeal can be made by the complainant

#### **5. Termination of procedures**

If procedures are terminated at any stage (for example by the resignation of an individual) without the conclusion that the complaints should be dismissed, the Host Organisation should consider the seriousness of allegations outstanding, the strength of evidence supporting the allegations, and the implications for the future research career of the individual.

Where serious unresolved concerns about misconduct remain, the Host Organisation should seek to proceed with the investigation or hearing to conclusion. Where the outcome of the investigation leads to allegations being upheld, the Host Organisation may (without prejudice) pass any details of the investigation to a future employer or "bona fide" enquirer about the career of the individual at the Host Organisation, which may also be passed to any appropriate regulatory or professional supervisory body

Where allegations have not been upheld against an individual, and an investigation has exonerated the individual of all allegations made against them, the Host Organisation should not pass any details of an investigation to a future employer or "bona fide" enquirer about the career of the individual at the Host Organisation.

#### **6. The Role of the Society**

Upon notification of allegations of research misconduct by the Host Organisation, the Society will acknowledge receipt of the notification and request that any missing information detailed under section 4 above, is provided by the Host Organisation either at the point of notification or throughout the course of the investigation proceedings.

Following completion of the investigation, the Host Organisation should notify the Society, and provide details of the outcome of the investigation. Where allegations have been upheld, the Society will undertake the following:

- Review the nature of the case and who should be informed internally, which may include the Grants Committee, Audit Committee, Director of Publishing and Board where necessary.
- Review which awards/applications (including publications to Royal Society journals) are affected and what action, if any, should be taken to them.
- Review whether the Host Organisation should be informed, particularly if the notification of the allegation was not initially reported by the Host Organisation, and who within the Host Organisation to contact. (A list of contacts is available in the STC Research Integrity Report)

- Determine the next steps to be undertaken, including sanctions, should allegations be upheld, and the timeframe for imposing appropriate actions.

Should allegations be upheld by the Host Organisation, the Society will consider specific sanctions, and act depending on the severity of the case and with regard to the actions the Host Organisation has already taken. Should an unreported allegation of misconduct be discovered, the Society will take appropriate action, which may include specific sanctions against the Host Organisation.

Information sent to the Society will be held in confidence, but may be disclosed to relevant statutory bodies if this has not been done by the Host Organisation, and the seriousness of the allegations warrant such disclosure. Moreover, if more than one Organisation is involved the Society reserves the right to inform the other Organisation(s), with the aim of ensuring that the investigation meets the requirements of all Organisations concerned.

In exceptional circumstances, or where the Society believes that an investigation is inadequate, the Society retains the right to conduct an independent investigation into the allegations, and will notify the Host Organisation of its findings and any sanctions to be applied

The Society will monitor the number of instances of research misconduct investigated by an Organisation through its grant audit programme.

It should be noted that the Society is not an appeal body for individual cases. Nor is it able to provide expertise to organisations in conducting investigations. However, consideration should be given to reporting appeals to the Board if appropriate.

## **7. Sanctions**

The sanctions to be implemented by the Society, should be agreed by the Board in the first instance, with input from other relevant Committee's and Governing bodies as appropriate.

### **Organisations**

The Host Organisation must have in place a clear sanctions policy against an individual in instances where an allegation is upheld, and must inform the Society of sanctions put in place in cases involving individuals in receipt of funding from the Society.

If an organisation fails to comply with its obligations, such that when investigating individual cases:

- The investigation into an allegation is prejudiced, suspended or not completed and/or
- It does not correctly follow its own procedures for investigation of the allegation,

The Society reserve(s) the right to revoke awards and/or reject existing applications.

If an organisation fails to comply with its obligations, such that:

- It is not complying with the principles and expectations outlined in this policy and/or
- It persistently fails correctly to follow its own procedures for investigation of allegations; and/or
- Persistent research misconduct has been committed by individuals from that institution applying for, or in receipt of, funding from the Society.

The Society reserve the right, in addition to imposing any sanctions in respect of specific cases, to suspend any further applications from that Organisation.

## **Individuals**

If, as a result of any internal investigation(s) carried out by an Organisation, court proceedings, disciplinary proceedings, or other proceedings heard by a competent tribunal, the individual is found to have committed an act of research misconduct, either in an application (including supporting documentation), or in carrying out the research, the Society reserves the right to:

- Reject any application under consideration on which the individual is a named applicant or researcher; and/or
- Withdraw any funding which the organisation is receiving from the Society in connection with research being carried out by the individual(s); and/or
- Prevent the individual(s) from submitting any further applications for funding to the Society, for any period of time, including indefinitely; and/or
- Reclaim from the institution any and all money awarded by the Society for projects involving that individual(s).

The above principles would also apply for individuals who have submitted a manuscript for publication in Royal Society journals or have published in Royal Society journals.

If, following any investigations, the individual(s) is found not to have committed an act of research misconduct, or the allegation is withdrawn, the organisation must protect the interests of the individual, and make the outcome clear to all who have been involved. If the allegation was made publicly, the institution must make public the outcome of the investigation.

Investigators should also make clear whether or not they believe the allegation was made in good faith. If it was, the interests of the complainant must also be protected, in keeping with the Public Interest Disclosure Act (1998). If the investigators suspect that the allegation was malicious this would constitute misconduct and should be dealt with according to the relevant procedures.