

## **Policy and procedures for responding to allegations of misconduct in research**

### **1 Policy on Research Conduct**

This policy and procedures applies to all members of the University of London involved in research. This includes staff and fellows and consultants who are conducting research under its auspices.

### **2 Principles of Good Practice in the Conduct of Research**

2.1 The University's code of good practice in the conduct of research sets the following principles:

2.2 All those to whom the policy applies are expected to:

- maintain professional standards
- be familiar with guidance on best research practice, for example in relation to matters of policy, ethics, finance and safety
- observe legal and ethical requirements laid down by the School of Advanced Study or other properly appointed bodies involved in the research field
- recognise the importance of good leadership and co-operation in research groups
- take special account of the needs of young researchers
- document results and keep secure primary data
- question findings
- attribute honestly the contribution of others
- take steps to ensure the safety of all those associated with the research
- report any conflict of interest, actual or prospective, to the appropriate person.

### **3 Definition of Research Misconduct**

3.1 Research misconduct includes the following, whether deliberate, reckless or negligent:

- failure to obtain appropriate permission to conduct research
- deception in relation to research proposals
- unethical behaviour in the conduct of research, for example in relation to research subjects
- unauthorised use of information which was acquired confidentially
- deviation from good research practice, where this results in unreasonable risk of harm to others
- fabrication, falsification or corruption of research data
- distortion of research outcomes
- dishonest misinterpretation of results
- publication of data known or believed to be false or misleading
- plagiarism, or dishonest use of unacknowledged sources
- misquotation or misrepresentation of other authors
- inappropriate attribution of authorship
- fraud or other misuse of research funds or research equipment
- attempting, planning or conspiring to be involved in research misconduct
- inciting others to be involved in research misconduct
- collusion in or concealment of research misconduct by others.

3.2 It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretation or judgement in evaluating research methods or results, or misconduct (including gross misconduct) unrelated to research processes.

3.3 Fraud or other misuse of research funds or research equipment may be dealt with under separate financial regulations.

#### **4 Procedure for Investigation of Suspected Research Misconduct**

##### *Instigation of Proceedings*

4.1 The University of London has a responsibility to investigate allegations of research misconduct fully and expeditiously. It also has a responsibility to protect researchers from malicious, mischievous, or frivolous allegations.

4.2 All those to whom this policy applies should report any incident of misconduct, whether witnessed or suspected. Members of staff, fellows and research students are encouraged to raise concerns about suspected research misconduct in confidence with their Director, or the PVC (Research & Engagement). Those who raise concerns in good faith will not be penalised in any way for doing so. Allegations should normally be made in writing, accompanied by any available supporting evidence.

4.3 In the event that serious allegations are made, they will be referred to the PVC who may either initiate immediate action under the appropriate disciplinary procedures or, appoint an investigation committee to consider the allegations.

##### *Appointment of Investigation Committee*

4.4 An investigation committee will normally consist of three members: an external member (external to the department where the individual is employed or attached),, a member of staff from another institute and the PVC or his/her nominee, who shall chair the committee. At least one member should have expert knowledge of the area of research involved. The person(s) against whom the allegation is made (the respondent) and the person(s) making the allegation ('the complainant') shall be informed of the decision to appoint an investigation committee and shall be given the opportunity to comment on the proposed membership.

4.5 The investigation committee shall take all reasonable steps to preserve the anonymity of the respondent and the complainant, and to ensure that the investigation is undertaken as expeditiously as possible. The investigation committee may seek legal advice.

4.6 The Chair will define the scope of the investigation in written terms of reference to the investigation committee.

##### *Investigation Report*

4.7 The investigation committee will produce a report stating: the procedures under which the investigation was conducted; how information was obtained; the findings of the committee and the basis for these; a summary of the views of the respondent; and a description of any sanctions recommended by the committee.

4.8 The report shall be submitted to the Vice Chancellor. The investigation committee may also make recommendations to promote best practice in the conduct of research.

##### *Outcome and action*

4.9 On receipt of the report by the Vice Chancellor, and with his/her approval, the PVC shall proceed as follows:

- (a) In the event that the investigation committee has found no evidence of misconduct, the complaint shall be dismissed.
- (b) In the event that a complaint is upheld, but the offence found to be insufficiently serious to warrant formal disciplinary proceedings, the matter may be referred to the institute Director or other appropriate individual for resolution.
- (c) If the investigation has uncovered prima facie evidence of serious misconduct, then the matter shall be dealt with under the appropriate University disciplinary procedures.

4.10 If the investigation committee finds the allegation to have been malicious or mischievous in nature, the PVC shall consider whether disciplinary action should be taken against those making the allegation.

4.11 Where the research is funded in whole or part by an outside grant, such body shall be informed of the investigation and any referral under disciplinary regulations.

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