III.C. PROCEDURES REGARDING MISCONDUCT IN RESEARCH FOR NON-FACULTY MEMBERS OF THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

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Introduction

The University relies on all members of its research community to establish and maintain the highest standards of ethical practice in academic work, including research. Misconduct in research is prohibited and represents a serious breach of both the rules of the University and the customs of scholarly communities.

The following procedures are applicable to non-faculty members of the University of Pennsylvania research community including students, postdoctoral fellows, and staff.

Research Misconduct Defined

Research misconduct is defined as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other serious deviation from accepted practices in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.

- Fabrication is making up data or results and recording or reporting them.
- Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
- Plagiarism is the appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, or results, or works without giving appropriate credit.
- Serious deviation from accepted practices includes but is not limited to stealing, destroying, or damaging the research property of others with the intent to alter the research record; and directing or encouraging others to engage in fabrication, falsification or plagiarism. As defined here, it is limited to activity related to the proposing, performing, or reviewing of research, or in the reporting of research results and does not include misconduct that occurs in the research setting but that does not affect the integrity of the research record, such as misallocation of funds, sexual harassment, and discrimination, which are covered by other University policies.

The research record is the record of data or results that embody the facts resulting from scientific inquiry, and includes, but is not limited to, research proposals, laboratory records, both physical and electronic, progress reports, abstracts, theses, oral presentations, internal reports, and journal articles.

Some forms of misconduct, such as failure to adhere to requirements for the protection of human subjects or to ensure the welfare of laboratory animals, are governed by specific federal regulations and are subject to the oversight of established University committees. However, violations involving failure to meet these requirements may also be covered under this policy or possibly by other University policies when so determined by the responsible committees or institutional officials.

Research misconduct does not include honest error or differences of opinion.

Findings of Research Misconduct

A finding of research misconduct requires that:

- There be a significant departure from accepted practices of the relevant research community; and
- The misconduct be committed intentionally, or knowingly, or recklessly; and
- The allegation be proven by a preponderance of evidence.

Jurisdiction and Applicable Process

There are a number of University policies and procedures for responding to allegations of misconduct by students, postdoctoral fellows, or staff. This policy is intended to be invoked only in instances where research misconduct (i.e. activity related to the proposing, performing, or reviewing of research, or in the reporting of research results and which therefore may have an impact on the integrity of the research record) is involved. Questions of jurisdiction and the applicability of the appropriate University procedure will be decided by the responsible administrative entity (such as the Office for Student Conduct, Office for Postdoctoral Programs, or the Office of Human Resources), in consultation with the Vice Provost for Research. Allegations of misconduct not involving the research process or the integrity of the research record will be resolved by the disciplinary process ordinarily applicable.

1. Inquiry

1.1 Allegations of research misconduct should be directed in the first instance to the Vice Provost for Research who, along with the responsible administrative entity, will determine jurisdiction and which process is applicable to resolve the allegation. If the Vice Provost determines that this process is properly invoked, the Vice Provost will forward the complaint—which must be in writing—to the Dean of the School where the research is being performed.

1.2 Upon receipt of a properly documented complaint, the Dean will inform the respondent of the nature of the charges, and will provide the respondent with a copy of these procedures. The Dean will also take steps to secure relevant documents, data and other materials.

The Dean will appoint one or more unbiased, impartial individuals with appropriate expertise who will conduct a preliminary inquiry to determine whether a full investigation is warranted.

1.3 The inquiry committee will gather information and determine whether there is sufficient, credible basis to warrant a formal investigation. The committee shall offer the respondent an opportunity to provide them with relevant information regarding the allegations. The committee will submit a written report of its assessment to the Dean and the respondent, and to the complainant where appropriate. The report should state what evidence was reviewed, summarize relevant interviews, and include the committee’s recommendation. This report will ordinarily be submitted within 30 calendar days of receipt of the written complaint by the Dean.

1.4 If the report of the inquiry committee determines that a formal investigation is not warranted, the Dean may (i) drop the matter, or (ii) not initiate a formal investigation, but take such other action as the circumstances warrant, or (iii), in extraordinary circumstances,
nonetheless initiate a formal investigation. The Dean will inform the
concerned parties of the decision.

1.5 If the inquiry committee determines that a formal investigation
is warranted, the Dean will initiate a formal investigation as provided
in Section 2. The Provost (Vice Provost/designee) will inform the
appropriate government agency or source funding the research, in
writing, that a formal investigation has been initiated and will identify
the respondent to the agency or source (1).

2. Formal Investigation

2.1 To initiate a formal investigation, the Dean will appoint a formal
investigation committee of not less than two disinterested individuals
with sufficient expertise, one or more of whom may have served on the
preliminary inquiry committee.

2.2 Investigation. The formal investigation committee will be provided
with copies of the complaint, the report of the initial inquiry and any
other materials acquired during the preliminary inquiry. The formal
investigation committee will undertake a thorough examination of the
allegations, including, without limitation, a review of relevant research
data and proposals, publications, correspondence, and records of
communication in any form. Experts within or outside the University may
be consulted. The Committee shall have authority to investigate, pursue
document any related research misconduct by the respondent, even
if such misconduct was not covered by the initial complaint. Whenever
possible, interviews will be conducted with the complainant, as well as
with others having information regarding the allegations. The Committee
must allow the respondent an opportunity to be interviewed at this
formal investigation stage. When being interviewed by the committee
the respondent and the complainant may each be accompanied by an
adviser, who may be a lawyer but who may not participate directly in the
proceedings except when and as requested to do so by the committee.

2.3 Reporting the findings. Following its investigation, the formal
investigation committee will prepare and provide a written report of its
findings to the respondent, to the Dean, to the Provost, and, if appropriate,
to the complainant. The report will describe the allegations investigated,
how and from whom information was obtained, the findings and basis
of the findings, and will include texts or summaries of the interviews
conducted by the committee. The report will conclude with a clear
statement regarding which charges have been considered and what its
findings are with respect to each charge the committee considered. If the
committee finds that a violation of University policy in addition to or other
than research misconduct might have been committed, a description of
the possible violation will be included.

The committee will indicate whether each charge considered during
the course of its proceedings is unsubstantiated or substantiated by
a preponderance of evidence. If the matter involves a respondent who
would be subject to University sanctions for misconduct only if the
evidence met a clear and convincing standard, the Committee will make
an additional determination as to whether that standard has also been
met (2).

The final report will ordinarily be submitted within 90 days of the
appointment of the formal investigation committee. The respondent
will be permitted to make a written reply to the Dean with a copy to
the Provost, and Vice Provost for Research, within 15 calendar days of
submission of the report. The Dean may ask the committee to respond
in writing to any replies from the respondent. The Dean may also ask
the complainant to respond to the report if deemed appropriate. All such
responses and replies will be incorporated as appendices to the report of
the formal investigation committee.

3. Disposition of Final Report and Findings

3.1 The Dean will consider the final report and replies. Upon acceptance
of the report by the Dean, the Provost (Vice Provost/designee) will submit
a copy of the report containing the outcome of the investigation to the
appropriate government agency or source funding the research, if such
action is required by regulation or otherwise appropriate. The entire
formal investigation process should be completed within 120 calendar
days of its initiation, unless documented circumstances warrants a delay.

3.2 If the final report of the formal investigation committee finds
the charges of research misconduct against a respondent not to be
substantiated, the research misconduct proceeding is terminated and the
concerned parties will be informed. A finding that a charge of research
misconduct has not been substantiated shall not preclude the University
from taking other appropriate action against the respondent if the
respondent's behavior or actions violate another University policy or rule.

3.3 If the report of the formal investigation committee finds the charges
of research misconduct against a respondent to be substantiated, the
matter will then be referred to the responsible administrative entity within
the University to determine the appropriate University sanctions, if any, to
be imposed for the misconduct (3).

4. Other Actions and Procedures

4.1 The Dean in consultation with the Provost will, during the course
of the inquiry or formal investigation, take administrative action, as
appropriate to protect the welfare of animal or human subjects.

4.2 At any time during the inquiry or formal investigation, the Dean
and Provost will immediately notify the relevant funding agency(ies)
if public health or safety is at risk; if agency resources or interests
are threatened; if research activities should be suspended; if there is
reasonable indication of possible violations of civil or criminal law; if
Federal action is required to protect the interests of those involved in the
investigation; if the University believes the inquiry or formal investigation
may be made public prematurely so that appropriate steps can be taken
to safeguard evidence and protect the rights of those involved; or if the
research community or public should be informed.

4.3 If the final report of the formal investigation committee finds charges
have been substantiated, the Provost or Dean will take appropriate steps
to correct any misrepresentations resulting from the misconduct. If,
at any time during the inquiry or investigatory stages, the respondent
admits to the alleged misconduct, the Dean will take the necessary
steps to complete the inquiry in order to correct the scientific record.
If misrepresented results have been submitted for publication, already
published, or otherwise disseminated into the public domain, appropriate
journals and other sponsors will be notified. In addition, collaborators,
and other affected individuals, organizations, institutions, and sponsors
will be informed.

4.4 Complete records of all relevant documentation on cases treated
under the provisions of this policy will be preserved by the offices of
the Dean and the Provost in a manner consistent with the Protocols for
the University Archives and Record Center. In cases adjudicated under
Section 3, records will be preserved for a minimum of ten years following
completion of all proceedings. Records of cases which are dropped
will be preserved for at least three years following the initial inquiry.
When students are involved in these procedures, the confidentiality
provisions applicable to educational records will govern the disclosure of
the records.

4.5 The University may act under these procedures irrespective of
possible civil or criminal claims arising out of the same or other events.
The Dean, in consultation with the Provost and the General Counsel, will
determine whether the University will proceed against a respondent who
also faces related charges in a civil or criminal tribunal. If the University
defers proceedings, it may subsequently proceed irrespective of the time
provisions set forth in these procedures.

Endnotes

1. The decision to initiate a formal investigation must be reported to
the Office of Research Integrity, Department of Health and Human
Services, if the research has been supported by a grant from DHHS,
according to DHHS regulations.

2. There is a discrepancy between University regulations, which use
the standard of "clear and convincing" evidence, and regulations
of the Office of Research Integrity, which use the lower standard
of "preponderance of evidence". Therefore, if there is a finding of
fault, the inquiry must explicitly state whether the higher University
standard is met, to inform the University administrative entity which
is responsible for determining possible sanctions.

3. The intent of this policy is that the appropriate administrative entity
will take responsibility for determining and implementing sanctions.

For instance, if the respondent is an undergraduate student any
disciplinary sanctions will be determined by the Office of Student
Conduct (OSC) in accordance with its amended Charter procedures
dealing with research misconduct findings. In order to determine
sanctions, the findings and accompanying documents should
be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct. Upon review of
all findings, including all submissions by the respondent etc., the
Office of Student Conduct will propose appropriate sanctions to
the respondent. The respondent would then have an opportunity to
accept, reject or propose alternative sanctions. If either the original
sanction or an alternative sanction is accepted and agreed upon, the
OSC then has primary responsibility for implementing and monitoring
sanctions. If the respondent rejects the sanction, the respondent may
appeal the nature and severity of the sanction only to the Disciplinary
Appellate Officer within the Student Disciplinary System. If the
decision of the appellate officer is to uphold the proposed sanction,
the sanction will be imposed, with no further levels of review.

Likewise, if the respondent is a graduate student, postdoctoral fellow,
or staff member, the responsible administrative entity would consider
the information and determine sanctions.