

Research Integrity Assurance Procedures

1. Scope of the Procedures

The Procedures assures the University's compliance with its Research Integrity Policy.

1.1 Purpose of the Procedures

The Procedures assure the University's compliance with its Research Integrity Policy.

1.2 What is covered by the Procedures

The Procedures apply to all research undertaken by those covered by the Research Integrity Policy and these Procedures.

1.3 Who is covered by the Procedures

All those who conduct research as employees, students, independent contractors, consultants, visiting or emeritus members of staff or as members of staff on a joint clinical or honorary contract, irrespective of the sources of their funding, their area of research, their experience as researchers, whether they are lone scholars or members of a research team or where the research is to be conducted. These Procedures does apply to allegations of plagiarism related to course assessment for students.

These Procedures not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

2. Owner

Research Committee has approved the Procedures, the Pro Vice Chancellor Research is the Executive sponsor and the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor Research Integrity is the officer responsible for the Procedures. Any questions about the operation of the Procedures or any concerns that the Procedures have has not been followed should be referred in the first instance to the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor Research Integrity.

3. Detailed Procedures Statement

The detailed Procedures are divided into sections that relate to specific stage of the process:

Section 4: What is Research Misconduct and what is a Breach of Research Integrity?

Section 5: How to raise a concern

Section 6: Researcher review

Section 7: Investigation

Section 8: Determination of a Breach of Research Integrity

Section 9: Determination of Research Misconduct

Section 10: Definitions

4. What is Research Misconduct and what is a Breach of Research Integrity?

- 4.1 Research Misconduct is a Breach of Research Integrity that results in serious consequences, such as false information on the public record, or adverse effects on research participants, animals, the environment or the University's reputation.
- 4.2 A Breach of Research Integrity includes Interference, Misappropriation, Misrepresentation, Protocol Breach or any other non-compliance with the Concordat, the Guidance, the University's Ethics Framework and / or relevant University Policy but does not include Poor Research Practice.
- 4.3 All relevant definitions are included in Section 10.

5. How to raise a concern

- 5.1 Notwithstanding the University's Whistleblowing Policy, all employees and students, including those holding honorary contracts, are required to report, and individuals authorised to work in University premises have a responsibility to report to the University any concerns about misconduct in research whether this has been witnessed or for which there are reasonable grounds for suspicion. Failure by a member of staff or student to report research misconduct may constitute concealment of misconduct in research.

- 5.2 Subject to paragraph 5.3, Suspected Research Misconduct or Breaches of Research Integrity should be reported in writing to:

Pro Vice Chancellor Research
Main Building
Aston University
Aston Triangle
B4 7ET

research_governance@aston.ac.uk

- 5.3 Suspected Research Misconduct or Breaches of Research Integrity relating to the Pro Vice Chancellor Research should be reported in writing to Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
- 5.4 Concerns should be reported in good faith and accompanied by supporting evidence that substantiates the concerns.
- 5.5 Concerns about Research Misconduct or Breaches of Research Integrity can only be investigated through this process. Where concerns of Research Misconduct or Breaches of Research Integrity have been raised with someone other than the Pro Vice Chancellor Research, that person must take responsibility for informing the Pro Vice Chancellor Research.
- 5.6 The Pro Vice Chancellor Research will refer all reported concerns of Research Misconduct and Breaches of Research Integrity in accordance with these Procedures.

6. Researcher review

- 6.1 The Pro Vice Chancellor Research will refer the concern of Research Misconduct or Breach of Research Integrity to the Designated Officer.

6.2 The Designated Officer will determine whether the concern relates to a Breach of Research Integrity that amounts to Poor Research Practice for the purposes of these Procedures. If the Designated Officer makes such a determination, they may approach the researcher and request that the researcher reviews any related research and associated publications and takes any corrective actions arising from that self-review.

6.3 This self-review by the researcher may identify the requirement for an improvement plan that would be led by the relevant supervisor and/or School as required.

7. Investigation

7.1 Where the Designated Officer determines that the allegation of Research Misconduct or Breach of Research Integrity does not amount to Poor Research Practice, the Designated Officer will conduct an investigation.

7.1.1 In conducting an investigation, the Designated Officer may obtain confidential advice from internal and/or external independent experts in the research area concerned, request relevant evidence from both the complainant and the person/s whom the allegation has been made against. This may include experimental material, names of witnesses, IT records and other documents subject to the prior approval of the General Counsel or their nominee.

7.1.2 Failure to provide the requested information may be considered misconduct or gross misconduct.

7.2 In determining whether there is a case to answer, the Designated Officer will consider whether the allegations, if proven, could constitute Research Misconduct.

7.3 Following the investigation, the Designated Officer may form any of the following views:

7.3.1 there is no substance to the allegation; or

7.3.2 the case is appropriate for researcher review; or

7.3.3 there is a case of Poor Research Practice; or

7.3.4 there is a case of a Breach of Research Integrity; or

7.3.5 there is a case of Research Misconduct; or

7.3.6 there may be substance to the allegation but this is subject to a separate University policy or procedure so referral is required in accordance with that policy or procedure.

7.4 Even if the person accused of non-compliance has resigned from the University, an investigation to establish the facts may be pursued by the Designated Officer. Distortions of the research record may need to be rectified, whether or not the person involved remains at the University.

7.5 The Designated Officer will report the outcome of the investigation to the person who made the allegation, to the person against whom the allegation was made, and to the Pro Vice Chancellor Research to the fullest extent permissible by law.

8. Determination of a Breach of Research Integrity

Where the Designated Officer determines that there is a case of a Breach of Research Integrity, the Designated Officer may refer the matter under the University’s disciplinary procedures, where it may be dealt with as a matter of gross misconduct.

9. Determination of Research Misconduct

9.1 Where the Designated Officer determines that there is a case of Research Misconduct, the Designated Officer may take the following action:

9.1.1 Refer the matter to the Pro Vice Chancellor Research, with a recommendation for action. Where the recommendation includes further inquiry, the Designated Officer will include a recommendation about an inquiry format which may include a mix of internal or external persons and a panel or single member.

9.1.1.1 The Pro Vice Chancellor Research will determine how to proceed in accordance with the relevant agreement or other relevant procedures, for example, if non staff are involved.

9.1.1.2 The Pro Vice Chancellor Research may refer the matter under the University’s disciplinary procedures, where it may be dealt with as a matter of gross misconduct.

9.1.1.3 The Designated Officer will provide all correspondence and information collected as part of the investigation to the Pro Vice Chancellor Research.

9.1.2 Ensure that relevant funding agencies, journals and other media through which the research in question was reported are informed of the determination of a case of Research Misconduct to the fullest extent permissible by law.

10. Definitions

Designated Officer	<p>An experienced senior staff member nominated by the Pro Vice Chancellor Research to provide independent and informed guidance to university staff regarding research integrity and associated courses of action.</p> <p>The Designated Officer will have research experience, analytical skills, empathy, knowledge of the University's policies and management structure and a familiarity with accepted practice in research. The Designated Officer will take advice from subject matter experts including the Director of Governance and the General Counsel.</p>
Interference	<p>A researcher or reviewer takes, sequester or materially damages any research-related property of another, including, but not limited to, apparatus, reagents, biological materials, writings, data, hardware, software, or any other substance or device used or produced in the conduct of</p>

	research either intentionally, deliberately, recklessly or involving gross and/or persistent negligence.
Misappropriation	<p>A researcher or reviewer either intentionally, deliberately, recklessly or involving gross and/or persistent negligence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) plagiarises, which shall be understood to mean the presentation of the documented words or ideas of another as his or her own, without attribution appropriate for the medium of presentation; (b) makes use of any information in breach of any duty of confidentiality associated with the review of any manuscript or grant application; and/or (c) omits reference to the relevant published work of others for the purpose of inferring personal discovery of new information.
Misrepresentation	A researcher or reviewer states or presents a material or significant falsehood or omits a fact so that what is stated or presented as a whole states or presents a material or significant falsehood either intentionally, deliberately, recklessly or involving gross and/or persistent negligence.
Poor Research Practice	This encompasses the intention to deceive and honest differences of interpretation or judgement in the management of research, or honest errors in the collection, evaluation or reporting of research results that are minor or unintentional.
Protocol Breach	Failure to obtain, or deviation from, approved protocols, including University published protocols, accepted by a scientific discipline or from protocols for research involving humans, animals, gene technology, radiation, or defence trade controls either intentionally, deliberately, recklessly or involving gross and/or persistent negligence.
The Concordat	The concordat to support research integrity published by UniversitiesUK.
The Guidance	The RCUK Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct.