

Responsible Conduct in Research

Guidelines and Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct

In the application of any and all phases of the procedures outlined below, it must be kept in mind that both persons making charges of misconduct and those so charged have rights to be scrupulously respected. It should also be understood that the procedures must be appropriate for applications involving persons of any university position where such misconduct may occur.

Definitions

"Research misconduct" means fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other practices that seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the academic community for proposing, conducting, or reporting research. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data.

"Falsification of data" – Ranging from fabrication to deceptively selective reporting, including the purposeful omission of conflicting data with the intent to falsify results.

"Plagiarism" – Representation of another's work as one's own.

"Misappropriation of Others' Ideas" – The unauthorized use of privileged information (such as violation of confidentiality in peer review), however obtained. This behavior is not specifically mentioned in the definition of research misconduct given above, but is generally considered to also constitute such misconduct.

Process

The specific procedures for Clark University adapted from the AAU framework are as follows:

Allegations should be taken to either of these two persons:

Dean of Research

Chair of the Faculty

Inquiries, if deemed to be required, should be conducted by a new Committee on Professional Standards. The recommended construction is one faculty member from each of these four disciplinary areas: natural sciences, humanities and the arts, the social sciences, and management. This committee would be a subcommittee of the Research Board, which is charged with overseeing the University's research policies. Members would be selected by the Research Board, with at least one member of the subcommittee selected from the membership of the Board itself. The inquiry must be completed within 60 calendar days from a receipt of the allegation, including the preparation of a written report.

At this stage, as at all others, scrupulous care must be taken to assure that no one with a conflict of interest (defined in accordance with established University policies as used by the Committee on Conflict of Interest) in the matter at issue sits in a position of judgment.

Investigations, if required by the finding of the inquiry panel, shall be conducted by a panel consisting of the Dean of Research plus three persons appointed, for the specific matter under

investigation, by the Provost after consultation with the Dean of Research, the subject of the investigation, and other involved parties. At this level, as at all others, the participation of legal counsel on behalf of any and all of the involved parties would be as allowed for in previously established University procedures for dealing with allegations of serious academic misconduct. Here, as at all other levels, protections and confidentiality for the individuals involved are always basic concerns. The investigating panel's charge is to report the facts of the Case, not to determine the case's outcome or disposition. An investigation must be completed within 120 calendar days.

Outcomes and Dispositions of Cases should be determined in accord with procedures and carried out by properly designated bodies within the University. Relevant sections of the Faculty Handbook, student Code of Conduct, and other governing University policy documents should be applied as they are now written for equally grave situations, including rights and procedures for appeal. Thus, for faculty subjects, if any personnel actions are envisioned, the Committee on Personnel would become involved at this point; for students, the proceedings would go to the University Judicial Board or appropriate dean.

Reporting to the federal agency which is supporting the research, if applicable, must be done in accordance with the federal rules.

These matters are of the utmost delicacy. The protection of all parties from unjustified actions, retaliation, and publicity must always be uppermost in the minds of the persons carrying out these procedures. Effective efforts must be undertaken to restore the reputations of the affected individuals when allegations are not confirmed, as well. However, we must also keep in mind the necessity to uphold our standards as an institution to assure that misconduct of the kind being considered here is not allowed to flourish, and that we act promptly, fairly, and with determination when cases are presented.