

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH PUNE

Misconduct in research

Statement of policy and procedure to be followed in the Institute for dealing with an allegation of misconduct in research against any staff (temporary or permanent or on contract) or student.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Pune (the “IISER-P”) expects all scientists, and students (including visiting professors and project staff) working either on institutional research program or on projects sponsored by various national and international funding agencies or private industry, to exhibit impeccable scientific integrity and to adopt the highest achievable standards in the conduct of their research.

In line with this the Institute has framed standards on the conduct of research within its teams and establishments in the form of a document called “ Good Research Practice Guidelines”.

Allegations of Scientific Misconduct (as defined in section 2) are expected to be rare or non-existent, but IISER – P takes them very seriously, if at all they occur, and is resolved that, as part of its responsibility to Parliament, the public and the scientific community, they will be investigated fully and the outcome of the investigation will be reported.

This policy applies to all IISER researchers, either of a fixed term, permanent nature, students, visiting researchers or any other personnel involved in scientific research at the institute.

Where allegations of misconduct are made by an individual or body external to IISER-P, that individual or body will be made aware of the Institute’s procedure under this Scientific Misconduct Policy and of the Institute’s expectation that they will comply with its requirements.

1. PRINCIPLES

- 1.1 This policy is designed to support the IISER guidelines related to “Good Research practice”.
- 1.2 The Institute is committed to ensuring that investigations are carried out as expeditiously as possible, at the same time ensuring the utmost degree of thoroughness.
- 1.3 Where time limits are indicated these will be regarded as maximum limits and that all parties will work to ensure prompt progression of the procedure.
- 1.4 Employees accused of Scientific Misconduct (“Respondents”) will be provided with a copy of this procedure and will be informed in writing of the detail of the allegation.
- 1.5 Where a Respondent resigns from, or otherwise leaves the Institute, the complaint is nevertheless investigated as far as possible according to this procedure.
- 1.7 The Institute will take disciplinary action against any individual who attempts to influence, victimize or intimidate the individual making the allegation of Scientific Misconduct (the “Complainant”) or witnesses.
- 1.8 The Institute is committed to protecting its employees from malicious accusations and will take action against any individual(s) responsible for such allegations.
- 1.9 Individuals shall co-operate in the review of allegations and the conduct of assessments and investigations. They have an obligation to provide relevant evidence to the Director or such other person who, in the Director’s absence, is designated to receive and enquire on behalf of the institute into allegations of Scientific Misconduct (the “Director”).
- 1.10. Proven misconduct in research is considered as a serious or gross misconduct and normally merit dismissal.

2. WHAT CONSTITUTES MISCONDUCT?

Research misconduct or fraud in science refers to the fabrication, falsification, plagiarism and deception in proposing, carrying out or reporting results of research and deliberate, dangerous or negligent deviations from accepted practice in carrying out research. It includes failure to follow established protocols if this failure results in unreasonable risk or harm to humans, other vertebrates or the environment. It shall also include facilitating of misconduct in research by collusion in or concealment of, such actions by others, and any plan or conspiracy or attempt to do any of these things.

Misconduct does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretation or judgment in evaluating research methods or results, or misconduct unrelated to the research process.

- Fabrication – reporting of experiments never conducted
- Falsification – Misrepresentation or suppression of data to project a desired result
- Plagiarism – reporting another’s data as one’s own

- Fraud – Deliberate and willful suppression of previous work in publications to claim originality or to avoid quoting previous publications contrary to present results.
- Breach of confidentiality, i.e., presenting as one's own ideas or data obtained from privileged access to original grants, manuscripts etc. is also considered as misdemeanor in the same category.

3. REPORTING OF CASES OF SCIENTIFIC MISCONDUCT

- 3.1 All employees or individuals working within MRC establishments are required to report observed, suspected or apparent Scientific Misconduct to the Director in accordance with this policy.
- 3.2 If an individual is unsure whether a suspected incident of misconduct falls within the definition Of Scientific Misconduct, he or she should discuss this with the Director informally.

IISER Pane will Endeavour to organize seminars and workshops at regular intervals to create awareness among the research workers on issues related to integrity in the conduct of research. IISER Pane website will provide access to articles, debates and examples of such misconduct to sensitize research workers about nature of questionable research practice.

4. REPORTING AND EVALUATION OF THE COMPLAINT

The charge of misconduct has serious implications for all concerned. Therefore, investigation related to the review of alleged misconduct will be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible. While investigating allegation of misconduct, caution will have to be exercised to distinguish between differences in interpretation or unintended errors from the misrepresentation of information. Thus, the procedure adopted to address the issue of misconduct will perforce have to be flexible and determined on a case-to-case basis.

- 4.1. Reports of alleged misconduct are to be made directly to the office of the Director, IISER Pane.
- 4.2. If a Complainant makes an allegation to a Director informally, the Director may ask them to put such allegation in writing.
- 4.3. Misconduct may be reported by either a staff of the IISER Pane or anyone else. The identity of the complainant will not be revealed at this time.
- 4.4. The Director shall, either himself or through an officer delegated the responsibility, shall cause to investigate (a) assess the allegations of research misconduct to determine if they fall within the definition of research misconduct and warrant an inquiry on the basis that the allegation is sufficiently credible and specific so that potential evidence of research misconduct may be identified, and (b) oversee enquiries and investigation.
- 4.5. A preliminary evaluation of the complaint will be made by the Director (which may include consultation with other colleagues) either independently or through constitution of a committee and if the findings indicate that there are no reasonable grounds for the allegation, the complaint will be dismissed. Written report stating the reasons for the dismissal shall be

maintained in the office of the Director, but will not enter the subject's confidential file. The complainant will also be informed of the decision to dismiss the complaint.

- 4.6. If the preliminary evaluation indicates that the allegation of misconduct warrants a full investigation, the following processes will be initiated with the appropriate records of procedures.

5. INVESTIGATION

- 5.1. The person against whom the complaint is being made (respondent) will be informed of the allegation.
- 5.2. The Director will appoint a committee to conduct a full investigation into the allegations of misconduct
- 5.3. The committee will comprise of a chairman, and 2 members, at least two of which will be experts from outside. The committee will be invested with complete confidentiality and will not be permitted to interact with Press or other faculty members individually during the course of investigation. The committee is expected to function within full cognizance of the rights of the respondent as well as complainant.
- 5.4. The scope of the committee shall be:
- To investigate the accuracy of charge of misconduct
 - To assess the extent and nature of alleged misconduct
- 5.5. The relevance of any other material or information revealed during the course of investigation into the alleged instance of misconduct.

6. PROCESS OF ENQUIRY

The committee will be given access to material that is required to complete the investigation with due diligence and accuracy which will include grant approvals, reports, primary data, electronic records, manuscripts and any other material requested and considered relevant to the investigation. The committee will be given access to laboratory and will be permitted to interview the complainant, the respondent and any other laboratory staff which the committee considers necessary to gather information. The committee is expected to complete the investigations and report submission within a period of 60 (sixty) days.

7. OUTCOME OF THE INVESTIGATION

- 7.1 The committee will submit its report with a recommended course of action to the Director within a week of completing the inquiry, explaining the modalities of the investigation, the source and method of obtaining information relevant to the investigation, the conclusions reached and the basis on which the conclusions are reached. .

- 7.2. A copy of the report will be provided to the respondent and an opportunity given to him to comment in writing on the report and its findings within 15 days. The written comments will be attached as annexure to the original report.
- 7.3. The Director will discuss the report with Head of the Group. If the faculty against whom the complaint was lodged has been proved to have engaged him in research misconduct, the Director will take appropriate action, with the approval of the Board of Governors, which will be communicated to the Individual and will be entered in the personal file and service book.
- 7.4. The individual may appeal to the Board of Governors against the decision of the Director and the Board's decision will be final and binding on the individual.

8. SAFEGUARD AGAINST FALSE ALLEGATIONS

Efforts should be made to safeguard the interests of the complainant. If it is established that the complaint itself was false and was done with malaise intentions, Director will formulate an appropriate action against the individual who lodged a false complaint. The person who has been charged with wrong allegations may appeal against the decision to the Board of Governors. The decision of the Board is final and binding on the individual.
