

NTU Research Integrity Policy and Procedures

President's Office
Nanyang Technological University
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University Policy

1. Preamble

NTU is committed to the pursuit of research excellence and equally committed to the maintenance of the highest standards of integrity and ethical behaviour in all its research endeavours and does not tolerate any departure from these standards.

Integrity and the responsible conduct of research is the basis of NTU's research activities and is necessary in order to build a relationship of trust between research colleagues (whether they be at NTU or elsewhere), funders and research collaborators. It is also necessary in building trust between NTU research and society at large. Therefore, it is a fundamental obligation of all concerned within NTU's research community to ensure that their actions are of the highest integrity and do not tarnish NTU's reputation. Breaches of these standards have to be considered as disciplinary matters and all those concerned with research at NTU must accept this obligation. On appointment, all persons involved in research at NTU shall sign a declaration of commitment to the upholding of the highest standards of research integrity.

2. Responsible Conduct of Research

The responsible conduct of research covers research behaviour in all its aspects and commits the researcher to conduct his research with care, rigour, honesty and respect for all and everything involved and which are the marks of good scholarship.

This covers the obligations to maintain full and accurate records of research and their storage in NTU, both in hard copy and as electronic records; to ensure that all those concerned or quoted are given appropriate credit and recognition; to respect all matters relating to privacy; and to comply fully with all relevant laws and codes of ethical behaviour appertaining to research.

With these obligations in the conduct of research comes the corollary that there is also an obligation of those concerned to report deviations from the responsible conduct of research, especially if there is a suspicion of research misconduct and to comply and cooperate with the investigations of research misconduct.

3. Mentoring and Training

NTU will develop and provide training on the needs of responsible conduct of research and on research integrity and ethical behaviour. Faculty members will also be encouraged to join such courses in order to be able to provide mentoring to their junior colleagues.

Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct

1. Scope

This Policy and the associated procedures apply to all individuals directly or indirectly engaged in any research, research-training or research-related grant or cooperative/collaborative agreement at or for NTU. This Policy applies to any person paid by, under the control of, or affiliated with NTU, such as scientists, trainees, technicians and other staff members, students, fellows, guest researchers (including Visiting Professors), and collaborators at NTU or in any research collaboration arrangement.

It also covers the supervision of research students and the authorship, especially joint authorship of research papers.

This Policy and the associated procedures should be followed when an allegation of possible misconduct in research is received by NTU. However, particular circumstances may dictate deviation from the normal procedure when deemed by the Provost or any person authorised by him to decide, to be in the best interests of NTU. Any deviation from the normal procedure must also ensure fair treatment to the subject of the allegation, inquiry or investigation.

2. Definitions

A. Allegation means any written or oral statement or other form of indication of possible Research Misconduct, made to NTU.

B. Committee of Inquiry means the Committee appointed by the Provost pursuant to paragraph 3C of this Policy. Members of the Committee will be senior members of the faculty, including those with expertise in the matters being considered. External members may also be appointed.

C. Conflict of Interest means the real or apparent interference of a person's own interests with the interests of another person or NTU, or where potential bias may occur due to prior, existing or future personal or professional relationships.

D. Good Faith Allegation means an Allegation made with the honest belief that Research Misconduct, as defined in Paragraph 3G below, may have occurred. An Allegation is not made in good faith if it is made with reckless disregard for or wilful ignorance of facts that may disprove the Allegation.

E. Inquiry means the formal examination and evaluation of all relevant information by a Committee of Inquiry to determine whether Research Misconduct has occurred and, if so, to determine the responsible person and the seriousness of the misconduct.

F. Investigation means gathering information and initial fact-finding to determine whether an Allegation warrants investigation.

G. Research Misconduct includes fabrication, falsification or misrepresentation of data, plagiarism or other wrongdoing in printing, designing, performing, recording, supervising or reviewing research or in reporting research results or in breaching other relevant

national ethical legislation, rules and guidelines. It also includes self-plagiarism with the undisclosed publication of similar papers in different journals. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data.

H. RIO means Research Integrity Officer, being the employee or officer of NTU appointed to assess Allegations, determine when such Allegations warrant investigation or inquiry and to oversee Investigations and Inquiries. The RIO will be a senior employee or officer of NTU appointed by the Provost.

I. Office of Human Resources means the Office of Human Resources of NTU.

J. President means the President of NTU.

K. Provost means the Provost of NTU.

L. Research Record means any data, document, computer file, computer diskette, or any other written or non-written account or object that provides or may reasonably be expected to provide evidence or information regarding the proposed, conducted, or reported research that constitutes or relates to the subject of an Allegation. A Research Record includes, but is not limited to, grant or contract applications, whether funded or unfunded; grant or contract progress and other reports; laboratory notebooks; notes; correspondence; videos; photographs; X-ray film; slides; biological materials; computer files and printouts; manuscripts and publications; equipment use logs; laboratory procurement records; animal facility records; human and animal subject protocols; consent forms; medical charts; and patient research files.

M. Respondent means the person or persons against whom an Allegation is directed or the person or persons whose actions are the subject of the Investigation or Inquiry.

N. Retaliation means any action that adversely affects the employment or other institutional status of a person that is taken by NTU because the person has made an Allegation or of inadequate institutional response thereto or has cooperated in the Investigation or Inquiry, notwithstanding that such Allegation shall have been made or such co-operation shall have been rendered in good faith..

O. Whistleblower means a person who makes an Allegation.

3. Roles, Rights and Responsibilities

A. RIO

The RIO, who is appointed by the Provost (see para.2H) will have responsibility, under the Provost's direction, for the implementation of the procedures set out in this Policy.

The RIO will conduct an initial investigation and will report his/her findings to the Provost who will then decide whether to appoint a Committee of Inquiry to consider the Allegation.

If the Provost shall decide to appoint a Committee of Inquiry, the RIO will, after consultation with the appropriate Dean(s) recommend to the Provost the composition of

the Committee of Inquiry and ensure that necessary and appropriate expertise is secured to evaluate the relevant evidence in the Inquiry. The RIO will endeavour to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

The RIO will assist the Committee of Inquiry and oversee all employees and officers of NTU in complying with these procedures and with applicable standards imposed by the competent authorities or external funding sources. The RIO is also responsible for maintaining files of all documents and evidence and for the confidentiality and the security of the files. The RIO acts as the Secretary to the Committee of Inquiry.

The RIO will report to the Provost to protect NTU's and public interest.

B. Whistleblower

The Whistleblower shall ensure that his/her Allegation is made in good faith, maintain confidentiality, and cooperate with and assist the Investigation and Inquiry. The Whistleblower will have an opportunity to be interviewed during the Investigation and to testify before the Committee of Inquiry, to review those portions of the Inquiry and Investigation reports which record the Whistleblowers evidence deemed by the RIO to be pertinent to the Allegation or testimony, to be informed of the results of the Investigation and Inquiry, and to be protected from Retaliation.

The Whistleblower is responsible for maintaining confidentiality and cooperating with and assisting the conduct of the Inquiry.

C. Respondent

The Respondent will be informed of the Allegation as soon as practicable after the appointment of a Committee of Inquiry and notified in writing of the final determinations and resulting actions. The Respondent will also have the opportunity to be interviewed by and present evidence to the Committee, to review the factual content in relation to his/her evidence, and to have the advice of legal counsel, if he/she so desires.

The Respondent shall notify NTU in writing not less than two weeks in advance if he/she wishes to engage a legal counsel to attend with or represent him at any Inquiry or Investigation

The Respondent is responsible for maintaining confidentiality and cooperating with and assisting the conduct of the Inquiry. If the Respondent is not found guilty of Research Misconduct, he has the right to receive NTU's assistance in restoring his reputation insofar as necessary and appropriate.

C. Provost

The Provost is responsible for all academic matters and for the maintenance of standards with respect to research matters.

The Provost will receive the report of any Investigation and Inquiry and any written comments made by the Respondent or the Whistleblower on the draft of any report arising from any Investigation or Inquiry.

The Provost will consult with the RIO or other appropriate persons and will determine whether an Investigation should be conducted, whether an Inquiry should be conducted, who should form a Committee of Inquiry, whether Research Misconduct has occurred, whether to impose sanctions, or whether to take other appropriate actions.

D. *President*

The President is ultimately responsible for all matters affecting the community of NTU and for the conduct of its employees.

Appeals shall be directed through the Provost to the President who will be responsible for receiving such appeals against the findings of the Committee of Inquiry and the consequent recommendations for action. The President may institute a further Inquiry if the appeal is considered to have merit. The decision of the President on whether to uphold the findings of the Committee of Inquiry or to institute a further Inquiry will be final.

E. *Office of Human Resources*

The Office of Human Resources and the Dean of the appropriate College will be responsible for the implementation of any disciplinary action resulting from an Inquiry.

4. *General Policies and Principles*

A. *Responsibility to Report Research Misconduct*

All employees or other persons in the community of NTU should report to the RIO, promptly and in good faith any observed, suspected, or apparent Research Misconduct . If any person is unsure whether a suspected incident constitutes Research Misconduct, he may consult the RIO. If the circumstances described by the person do not constitute Research Misconduct, the RIO may refer the person or Allegation to the appropriate office to consider the matter. While all Allegations, whether anonymous or not, will be investigated, Whistleblowers are encouraged to identify themselves to facilitate and expedite Investigations and Inquiries.

At any time, a member of the NTU community may have confidential discussions and consultations with the RIO about concerns of possible Research Misconduct and will be counselled about appropriate procedures for reporting Allegations.

B. *Protecting the Whistleblower and other persons*

NTU will make diligent efforts to protect the positions and reputations of persons who make Good Faith Allegations.

C. *Protecting the Respondent*

Inquiries and Investigations will be conducted in a manner that will ensure fair treatment to the Respondent and confidentiality as far as reasonable without compromising public security, health and safety or the processes of Inquiry or Investigation in order to protect the Respondent in the case of a malicious allegation.

D. Cooperation with Committees of Inquiry and Investigations

All NTU employees have a duty to cooperate with the RIO and other employees or officers of NTU or other persons engaged by NTU in the review of Allegations and the conduct of Investigations and Inquiries. The employees have an obligation to provide relevant evidence to the RIO or other persons authorised by NTU in relation to Investigations and Inquiries.

E. Preliminary Assessment of Allegations

Upon NTU's receipt of an Allegation, the RIO will assess the Allegation to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to warrant an Investigation and whether external applications for funding are involved.

5. Conducting the Investigation and Inquiry

A. Initiation and Purpose of the Investigation

If, following his/her preliminary assessment, the RIO determines that an Allegation provides sufficient information to warrant action on the part of NTU, the RIO will as soon as practicable report to the Provost with a recommendation to initiate an Investigation. In his/her report to the Provost, the RIO should identify clearly the original Allegation and any related issues that should be evaluated. The purpose of the Investigation is to make an evaluation of the available evidence to determine whether there is sufficient evidence of possible Research Misconduct to warrant the establishment of a Committee of Inquiry. The purpose of the Investigation is **not** to reach a final conclusion about whether Research Misconduct definitely occurred or who was responsible. The findings of the Investigation must be documented in an investigation report.

B. Sequestration of the Research Records

After the Provost has determined that the Respondent is guilty of Research Misconduct, the RIO must ensure that all original Research Records and/or copies of the same if originals shall not be available, are immediately secured.

C. Appointment of the Committee of Inquiry

The RIO, after consultation with appropriate Deans and Chairs, will advise the Provost on the appointment of a Committee of Inquiry and its composition and chair within 10 working days after the RIO'S receipt of an Allegation. The Committee of Inquiry should consist of individuals (principally senior faculty members) who do not have a real or apparent Conflict of Interest in the case, and have the necessary expertise to evaluate the evidence and issues related to the Allegation, to interview the principals and key witnesses, and to conduct the Inquiry. These individuals may be scientists or scholars, administrators or other qualified persons, and they may be from within or outside NTU.

The RIO will notify the Respondent of the membership of the Committee of Inquiry within a further 5 working days. If the Respondent submits a written objection to any appointed member of the Committee of Inquiry or expert, based on bias or Conflict of Interest, within a further 5 working days, the RIO will determine whether to replace the challenged member or expert with a qualified substitute and advise the Provost accordingly.

D. Inquiry Process

The Committee of Inquiry will normally interview the Whistleblower, the Respondent, and key witnesses as well as examine Research Records. Then the Committee will evaluate the evidence and testimony obtained during the inquiry. After consultation with the RIO and NTU's advisers, the members of the Committee will decide whether there is sufficient evidence of possible Research Misconduct and recommend that appropriate action be taken or to dismiss the Allegation or recommend appropriate action in the case of a malicious allegation.

The Committee of Inquiry will report to the Provost within 45 working days of its first meeting (including 15 days for the Respondent and Whistleblower to respond, if deemed appropriate by the Committee). In the event that the Inquiry shall not be completed within such period, the Committee, through the RIO, may ask the Provost to extend the Inquiry by up to a further 30 working days. If the Provost approves an extension, the reason for the extension will be entered into the records of the Inquiry and the Committee's report. The Respondent also will be notified of the extension.

6. The Inquiry Report

A. Elements of the Inquiry Report

A written report by the Committee of Inquiry must be prepared that states the name and title of the members of the Committee of Inquiry and the experts, if any, the Allegations, external support if appropriate, a summary of the inquiry process used, a list of the Research Records reviewed, summaries of any interviews, a description of the evidence in sufficient detail to demonstrate whether an Investigation was warranted or not and the Committee's recommendation as to whether any further Investigation is desirable and whether any other actions should be taken if a further Investigation is not recommended.

B. Comments on the Draft Report by the Respondent and the Whistleblower.

The RIO will provide the Respondent with a copy of the relevant factual sections of the draft report of the Committee of Inquiry referring to the Respondent's evidence for comment and will provide the Whistleblower with such portions of the draft inquiry report as deemed by the RIO to be pertinent

1. Confidentiality

The RIO may establish reasonable conditions for review to protect the confidentiality of the draft report.

2. Receipt of Comments

Within 15 working days of their receipt of the relevant parts of the draft report, the Whistleblower and the Respondent will provide their comments, if any, to the Committee of Inquiry. Any comments that the Whistleblower or Respondent submits on the draft report will become part of the final Inquiry report and record. Based on the comments, the Committee of Inquiry may revise the report as appropriate.

C. Inquiry Decision and Notification

1. Decision by the Provost

The RIO will transmit the report of the Committee of Inquiry to the Provost, who will make the determination of whether the findings of the Committee of Inquiry provide sufficient evidence of Research Misconduct to justify action on the part of NTU or whether there is insufficient evidence so as to warrant a dismissal of the Allegation. The Inquiry shall be deemed to be completed when the Provost makes such determination, which will be made within 15 days after the Committee's report.

2. Notification

The RIO will notify both the Respondent and the Whistleblower and all other relevant persons in writing of the Provost's determination.

D. Ratification and Appeal

The Provost's decision should be given within a further 15 working days. If the Provost shall determine that there shall have been Research Misconduct on the part of the Respondent and that action should be taken on the part of NTU in respect of such Research Misconduct, the Respondent may appeal in writing against the determination to the President within 20 working days of the Respondent's receipt of the Provost's decision. The Respondent shall be deemed to have received the decision if served at his/her address last notified to NTU. The Respondent's appeal shall also state the reason for his appeal. On receipt of the appeal, the President, after further due consideration and consultation, may dismiss the appeal or initiate a further review by a new Committee of Inquiry, in which case the procedure set out hitherto in this Policy shall be followed accordingly. The President's decision is final.

7. NTU's Actions

NTU may take appropriate actions against Respondents and other relevant persons when an Allegation of Research Misconduct has been substantiated. Such actions may include withdrawal or correction of all pending or published abstracts and papers emanating from the research where Research Misconduct was found, removal of the responsible person from the particular project, suspension of rights to supervise research students for a determined period, letter of reprimand, special monitoring of future work, probation, suspension, salary reduction, initiation of steps leading to possible rank reduction or termination of employment or restitution of funds.

8. Other Considerations

A. Termination of University Employment or Resignation Prior to Completing Inquiry or Investigation

The termination of the Respondent's employment by NTU, by resignation or otherwise, before or after an Allegation has been reported, will not preclude or terminate the Investigation or Inquiry.

If the Respondent, without admitting to the Research Misconduct, elects to resign his/her position prior to the initiation of an Inquiry, but after an Allegation has been reported, or during an Investigation, the Investigation or Inquiry may, at NTU's discretion, proceed nevertheless.

Even if the Respondent refuses to participate in an Investigation or Inquiry, the RIO and the Committee of Inquiry may use their best efforts to reach a conclusion concerning the Allegation, noting in its report the Respondent's failure to cooperate and its effect on the Committee's review of all the evidence. Failure of the Respondent to assist or cooperate with the RIO or a Committee of Inquiry shall be taken into account against the Respondent.

B. Restoration of the Respondent's Reputation

If the Provost finds no Research Misconduct, NTU will make reasonable efforts to restore the Respondent's reputation. Depending on the particular circumstances, NTU may notify relevant persons of the final outcome of the Inquiry or expunge all references to the Allegation from the Respondent's personnel file. Any action by NTU to restore the Respondent's reputation must first be approved by the Provost and the President.

C. Protection of the Whistleblower and Others

Regardless of whether NTU determines that Research Misconduct occurred, the RIO will make reasonable efforts to protect Whistleblowers and other persons who make Good Faith Allegations and who cooperate in good faith with Investigations and Inquiries.

D. Allegations Not Made in Good Faith

If necessary, the Provost will determine whether the Allegation was made in good faith. If an Allegation was not made in good faith, the Provost will determine whether any action should be taken against the Whistleblower.

E. Interim Administrative Actions

Employees and officers of NTU will take interim administrative actions, as appropriate, to protect public funds.

9 Record Keeping and Retention and Reporting

After completion of an Investigation or an Inquiry and all ensuing related actions, the RIO will prepare a complete file, including the records of any Investigation or Inquiry and copies of all documents and other materials furnished to the RIO. The file, after completion of the case, will be deposited in NTU's archives, to permit later assessment of the case as necessary.

NTU will report, annually, to the Board of Trustees on any Allegations and inquiries completed during the preceding year and these may be published in the interests of transparency and the protection of NTU's reputation and interests.

10 *Liability*

Nothing in this Policy is intended nor shall be taken as rendering any employee or officer of NTU or other person appointed or authorised by NTU personally liable in respect of or arising from any Investigation or Inquiry.

Acknowledgement:

NTU is grateful for the advice of Professor Nick Steneck, University of Michigan, in the preparation of this Policy and procedures for conducting investigations. These are based largely on the model procedures and guidance issued by the US Office of Research Integrity.