



*Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne: Lár Tíre Iarthar Láir*  
**Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest**



## **TUS RESEARCH INTEGRITY POLICY**

**2022 - 2025**

<sup>1</sup><http://www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/National-Policy-Statement-on-Ensuring-Research-Integrity-in-Ireland-2014.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/Public\\_documents/Publications/Code\\_Conduct\\_ResearchIntegrity.pdf](http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/Public_documents/Publications/Code_Conduct_ResearchIntegrity.pdf)

<sup>3</sup><https://www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/National-Forum-on-Research-Integrity-Seminar-Report-Feb-2017-web-version.pdf>

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## Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Good Research Practices .....	5
3. Scope .....	6
4. Intent .....	7
5. Research Integrity Officer.....	8
6. Procedures.....	8
6.1 Procedure for Managing Research Integrity Misconduct .....	8
6.1.1 Allegation .....	8
6.1.2 Preliminary inquiry .....	8
6.1.3 Investigation .....	9
6.1.4 Appeals .....	10
6.1.5 External Notification .....	11
7. Policy Review.....	11
Figure 1: Allegation, Preliminary Inquiry & Investigation .....	12
Figure 2: The Appeals Process .....	13

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## 1.0 Introduction

Research activity is a defining hallmark of higher education – informing teaching and learning and adding to the global body of knowledge. Research integrity relates to the performance of research at TUS to the highest standards, and to the accuracy and integrity of the research record in publications and elsewhere. TUS is committed to providing an environment where research integrity prevails through the promotion of good research practices, together with the use of fair and transparent procedures to address research misconduct. The National Policy Statement on 'Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland'<sup>1</sup>, substantively based on the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity<sup>2</sup>, and the National forum on Research Integrity<sup>3</sup> commits Irish research performing organisations to the highest standards of integrity in carrying out their research, so that partners and other stakeholders, and the international research community have full confidence in the Irish research system.

The '**European Code**' specifies eight basic principles of research integrity and good practice in carrying out research that all researchers within TUS must observe and promote in performing their research. These principles are:

1. **Honesty** in communication of research goals, research methods and procedures, and in valid interpretations with respect to possible applications of research results;
2. **Reliability in performing research** and in full and unbiased communication of the results;
3. **Objectivity** in the collection and presentation of verifiable research data and results;
4. **Impartiality and independence** of the research results;
5. **Openness and accessibility** in contributing to public knowledge through publication of the findings with due cognisance to data and potential IP protection;
6. **Duty of care** for participants in and the subjects of research with due cognisance of relevant ethical procedures;
7. **Fairness** in providing references and giving credit to collaborators and contributors to research;
8. **Responsibility** for the scientists and researchers of the future. These principles of Research Integrity together with good research practices are essential for promoting and safeguarding a culture of research integrity at TUS.

## 2.0 Good Research Practices

**Publication of results:** TUS actively encourages researchers to disseminate the findings of their research in as open a public forum as possible. The Technological University encourages the publication of results usually in peer reviewed open access journals or books or book chapters with impactful publishers or as exhibitions of work. Publication should occur in a timely fashion. Once results have been published TUS encourages researchers to make available relevant data and materials to others on request to enable the research findings to be replicated, if this is consistent with any ethics approvals and consents which cover the data and materials and any Intellectual Property (IP) rights in them. Researchers should have regard for the National IP Protocols as laid out in the Technological University IP Policy document regarding the need to protect any IP arising from their research that has potential to create economic value.

**Research Leadership:** At TUS it is the responsibility of the President, Vice Presidents, and the Deans of the Faculties, Heads of Departments, senior staff, Principal Investigators and Supervisors to ensure that a climate of cooperation is created which allows research to be conducted in accordance with good research practice.

**Documenting Results and Storing Primary Data:** All research data and records including oral and video recordings should be securely stored and managed in accordance with good data retention/record management practice. Where Data Protection requirements apply to research data/records (e.g., personal information) then such data/records should be managed in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679.

**Conflict of Interest:** The Technological University is committed to the principle that the activities of its researchers should not give rise to situations in which its researchers have, or appear to have, conflicts of interest. The primary obligation rests with the researcher to recognise situations in which they have an existing and/or potential conflict of interest, and to disclose/report and discuss that conflict with their supervisor/ Head of Department/ Dean of Graduate Studies & Research/ Head of Research.

**Ethical practice:** Research which requires research ethics approval must have prior approval from the TUS Research Ethics Committee. Once approved, the research must be conducted in line with the conditions, if any, of such approval. In addition, researchers should ensure that research involving any identifiable personal data is carried out in a manner which fulfils the legal requirements of the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018, General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

**Training:** The Research Office in conjunction with the library will provide researchers the opportunity to receive appropriate research training. In this regard, all new researchers are required to undertake postgraduate induction training and other training programmes from time to time. Continuing education on research integrity should also be provided through mentorship by senior investigators responsible for the supervision/training of PhDs and postdoctoral researchers

alike. As part of structured research programmes in TUS, completion of a research integrity module is mandatory.

### **3.0 Scope**

Research misconduct is harmful for knowledge. This policy applies to all employees of the Technological University, all Technological University students undertaking research, and to all Adjunct, Emeritus, and visiting personnel officially engaged in research work at the Technological University and/or undertaking any research activity in the Technological University's name. All those undertaking research shall undertake appropriate training in research integrity.

Failure to conduct research ethically, lawfully or in compliance with the Technological University Research Policies (I-V) below, and with regard to the National Policy Statement examples of research misconduct and other types of poor research practice listed below, may be regarded as research misconduct:

- I. Technological University Research Degree Programme Regulations;
- II. Technological University Research Integrity Policy;
- III. Technological University Ethics Policy for Researchers;
- IV. Technological University Intellectual Property Policy (NDAs, Template Collaboration Agreements, Deeds of Adherence and Invention Disclosure etc.);
- V. Governance of Research Groups, Centres and Institutes Technological University's policy

Deviations from the Technological University's Research Policies include but are not limited to:

- Non-adherence to or significant departure from the approved research programmes;
- The carrying out of unapproved research programmes;
- Non-compliance with the Technological University Research Degree Programme Regulations;
- Conducting research without the necessary ethical approval – Technological University Ethics Policy for researchers;
- Failure to declare and manage serious conflicts of interest;
- Non-compliance with health and safety policies;
- Failure to accurately maintain research laboratory notebooks or research practice notebooks;
- Failure to abide by the Technological University Intellectual Property Policy;
- Willful concealment or facilitation of research misconduct/serious misconduct by others.

With reference to the National Policy Statement, research integrity misconduct and other types of poor practices which may be damaging to the overall reputation of research and the research community's integrity includes, but is not limited to:

- Fabrication of data i.e., making up results and recording or reporting them
- Falsification of data i.e., manipulating research, materials, equipment, or processes.
- Omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
- Plagiarism i.e., the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit, including those obtained through confidential review of other's research proposals and manuscripts.
- Data-related misconduct e.g., not preserving primary data, poor data management and/or storage.
- Personal misconduct in the research setting e.g., inadequate mentoring of next generation of researchers and scholars, inappropriate personal behaviour.
- Research practice misconduct e.g., harmful, dangerous, or unethical research methods;
- Publication-related misconduct e.g., claiming undeserved authorship, denying authorship to contributors, artificially proliferating publications;
- Financial and other misconduct e.g., peer review abuse, non-disclosure of a conflict of interest, misrepresenting credentials.

#### **4.0 Intent**

These Guidelines provide mechanisms for identifying and responding to suspected research integrity breaches and to perceptions of research misconduct. They provide a single point of entry for formal allegations, a mechanism for assessing and investigating allegations and an approved pathway for managing and resolving allegations. This policy seeks to ensure that where a research integrity breach /misconduct is identified it is addressed promptly and effectively. The affected parties are treated fairly, and that steps are taken to maintain public confidence in the Technological Universities research endeavours. It must be demonstrated that the research integrity misconduct was committed intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly. Proof must be based on the preponderance of evidence. Research integrity misconduct does not include honest error or honest difference in the design, execution, interpretation, or judgement in evaluating research methods or results. Research integrity misconduct does not include poor research unless such research encompasses an intention to deceive.

## **5.0 Research Integrity Officer**

In accordance with the National Policy Statement and the National Forum on Research Integrity, research integrity disciplinary issues will be dealt with by a senior official other than the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar (VP AAR) or Dean of Graduate Studies & Research (or equivalent) with the title of, Research Integrity Officer (RIO). It should be noted that this will not preclude the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar (VP AAR) or Dean of Graduate Studies & Research (or equivalent) in identifying possible cases of research misconduct requiring investigation and notifying the appropriate institutional authorities. The RIO will normally be an individual within the organisation with significant knowledge and experience of research. The RIO will act as the Technological Universities first point of contact for receiving allegations of research misconduct. The RIO will not be involved in deciding whether individual allegations of research misconduct should be upheld. This decision will be made via the TUS process for investigating allegations of misconduct in research. The RIO will initiate and coordinate the process, but they shall not personally participate in any investigation panels/process nor seek to influence the work or findings of said panels/process. The term of appointment of a RIO will be for a period not longer than five years and will not normally be held on a full-time basis. To allow for cases where the appointed RIO has a potential conflict of interest with the complainant or respondent or is otherwise involved in the case, the RIO should also have a formally nominated alternate to whom allegations can be brought to directly or be referred by the RIO. In addition, to facilitate a “no-wrong-door” approach for reporting of allegations, the organisation should inform all staff that any person who brings an allegation of misconduct in research to them should instruct the complainant, in confidence, to bring the allegations to the RIO or their alternate.

## **Procedures 6.0**

### **6.1 Procedure for Managing Research Integrity Misconduct**

#### **6.1.1 Allegation**

A TUS staff member, student or visiting researcher/scholar who is aware of any incident(s) of suspected research misconduct should in the first instance advise the Research Integrity Officer (RIO). If the RIO is a) the subject of the allegation or b) is conflicted in any way regarding the nature or source of the allegation, the RIO will inform the VP AAR who will instruct a nominated alternate to fulfil the role of the RIO in the investigation of the allegation. All allegations will be treated with fairness, sensitivity and respect. The RIO will acknowledge receipt of the allegation within five (5) working days. While the Technological University will endeavour to comply with all the timelines outlined in this Procedure, these may be extended in exceptional circumstances. All investigations will be conducted in line with the TUS HR Grievance Policy & Grievance procedure and with oversight also of the Disclosures Policy.

#### **6.1.2 Preliminary inquiry**

Following receipt of an allegation (anonymous or otherwise), the RIO will conduct an initial preliminary inquiry to determine whether there is sufficient evidence of research integrity misconduct to proceed with a full investigation. The RIO may be assisted in the inquiry by



internal and/or external experts if required. The preliminary inquiry should be complete and a written record of findings should be prepared within 15 working days of its initiation. If the 15-day deadline cannot be met, a report should be filed citing progress to date and the reason for the delay and the complainant should be informed. Following the preliminary inquiry, the RIO will provide the complainant with a written determination summarising the reasons for the decision reached following the preliminary inquiry:

- i. If the RIO determines that the allegation does not fall within the definition of research integrity misconduct, the allegation is then dismissed. No further action is taken under this procedure.
- ii. If the RIO determines that the allegation falls within the definition of research misconduct, an investigation is warranted. The RIO will notify the Dean of Faculty/School, the associated Head of Department, and the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research of this determination once the preliminary inquiry is complete.

### **6.1.3 Investigation**

The objective of an investigation is to determine whether or not, on the balance of probabilities, the alleged research integrity misconduct occurred. Proof of research misconduct must be based on the preponderance of evidence. The RIO will set-up a panel of enquiry, comprising of appropriate trained senior managers who will investigate the allegation and report their findings in writing to RIO. A copy of this report will be made available to the person(s) against whom the allegation is made within ten (10) working days of the conclusion of the investigation and to the Dean of Faculty/School and Head of Department. In carrying out their investigation, the panel will ensure that the person(s) against whom the allegation is made will have the opportunity to present his/her side of the case and to be represented by an appropriate person of their choice.

The report of the investigation panel may conclude:

- i. That there is no evidence of breach/research misconduct, the matter will be considered closed, and all relevant parties will be so advised;
- ii. That there is evidence of breach/research misconduct but that measures short of disciplinary action are warranted, in which case such measures will be implemented (e.g., support, training, staff development);
- iii. That there is evidence of breach/research misconduct and that in addition to non-disciplinary measures (if any) disciplinary action may be appropriate, in which case, a recommendation will be made to initiate the TUS Student or Staff Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

It is a requirement that all parties involved maintain confidentiality. Information is, however, subject to any limits or disclosure requirements imposed by law, by this procedure or by the Freedom of Information Act 2014, Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU)2016/679.

A summary of the steps outlined in an investigation is outlined in Figure 1.

#### **6.1.4 Appeals**

The Institute will provide for an appeals process in respect of an investigation into alleged research integrity misconduct. The purpose of the appeal panel is to

- i. Consider and review the internal investigation.
- ii. Assess if the decisions and actions taken were reasonable in the circumstances;
- iii. Aim to reach a final internal Institute decision which is fair and just.

The appeal should be submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar (VP AAR) in writing. This should normally be submitted within 10 working days of receipt of the response from investigation panel. The appeal should detail the reasons for requesting the findings of the Research Integrity Investigation Panel. The (VP AAR) will acknowledge receipt of the request for review within 5 working days of receipt of the appeal. The (VP AAR) shall arrange the appointment of the Appeal Panel and convene a meeting of the Panel normally within 15 working days of receipt of the request. As part of its review, the Panel will have access to all prior records and documents arising from the initial investigation. The Panel may request to meet with all parties involved, individually or collectively as appropriate. Any additional or new information may normally only be submitted if it was reasonably not available during the initial investigation. However, the Review Panel may at its discretion accept new information if it deems it appropriate. The Panel shall endeavour to have completed its review within 30 working days of receipt of the Appeal and has the authority to take the same action as the Investigation panel. Having completed its review, the Panel will decide which may include one or more of the following:

- i. upholding the original decision of the Investigation panel;
- ii. modifying the original decision of the Investigation panel;
- iii. overturning the decision of the Investigation panel;

The Appeal Panel's determinations shall be sent within 5 working days of the conclusion of the review to the relevant party and the relevant Dean of Faculty/School and Head of Department. The decision of the Research Integrity Appeal Panel shall be final and binding within the Institute. This outcome does not interfere with the Statutory Rights of any parties to the application. A summary of the steps outlined in an appeal is outlined in Figure 2.

### **6.1.5 External Notification**

Where necessary and/or appropriate the RIO will notify relevant external parties of research misconduct allegations which have been upheld after an investigation and appeal and, where it occurs, an appeal. External parties may include funding bodies and publishers, and any other stakeholders who the RIO, in consultation with the (VP AAR), deems appropriate. In accordance with the 'National Policy Statement', the RIO will collate the information record of the investigation and, where it occurred, the appeal, and subsequently report on the investigation and, where it occurred, the appeal with internal contacts and external organisations where appropriate.

## **7. Policy Review**

This procedures document will be reviewed every 3 years.

## Procedure Summary Flowcharts

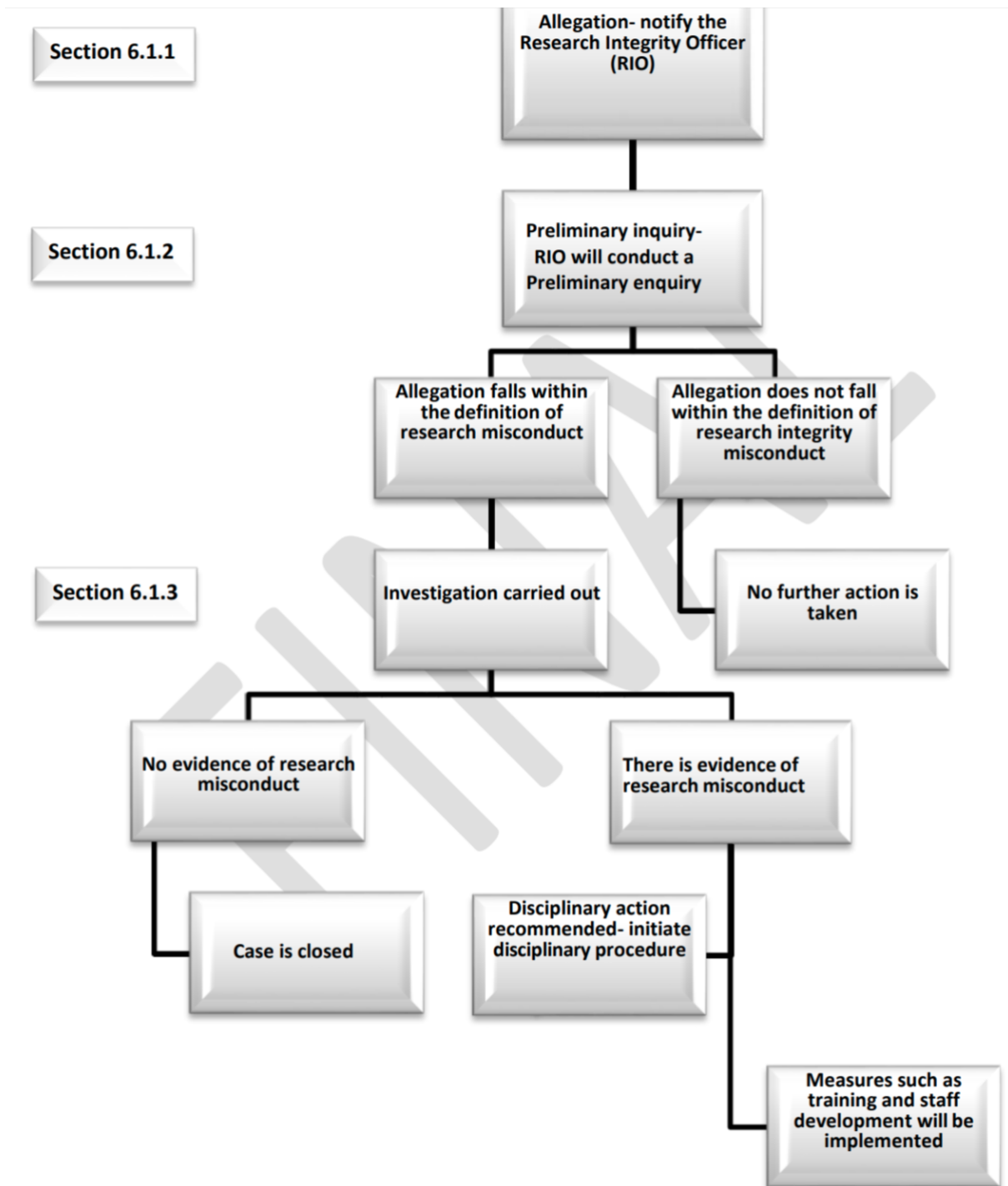


Figure 1: Allegation, Preliminary Inquiry & Investigation

Section 6.1.4

Appeal the research integrity misconduct investigation in writing to the VP of AAR

Appeal request is reviewed by the VP of AAR and appeal panel is appointed to review decision of investigation panel

The decision is upheld

The decision is modified

The decision is overturned

Figure 2: The Appeals Process