



Document name		
Guidelines in the event of alleged research misconduct		
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Appendix to the vice-chancellor's decision of 7 March 2011

Guidelines in the event of alleged research misconduct

Introduction

Pursuant to the Higher Education Ordinance (HF) Chapter 1, Section 16, a university which receives a report about, or otherwise becomes aware of, suspected scientific misconduct must investigate such suspicions. During the investigation, the university may seek an opinion from the expert group on research misconduct at the Central Ethical Review Board. The university must obtain such an opinion if so requested by the person reporting the suspected misconduct or the person suspected of misconduct. An opinion need not be sought, however, if the university deems it patently unnecessary to do so.

The provision contained in Chapter 1, Section 16 of the Swedish Education Act assigns colleges and universities the responsibility of addressing issues of scientific misconduct, but neither specifies how this should be implemented nor defines the term 'scientific misconduct'. Therefore a more thorough description of the appropriate way to handle such issues is needed so that disparate parts of the university can act in a uniform manner.

General guidelines

Scientific misconduct means:

1. falsification and fabrication
2. plagiarism
3. unjustified claims of authorship
4. failure to obtain and comply with the necessary permits from government agencies (e.g. Ethical Committees on Human Research and Animal Experiments, isotope committees, the Data Inspection Board and the Medical Products Agency).
5. the rendering impossible of repetition or subsequent reconstruction of research results

The misconduct must have been committed intentionally in order for accountability to be assigned.

Each person who participates in research activities at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) has an obligation to ensure that results are obtained, compiled and reported in accordance with the accepted principles of the scientific community. One implication of this is that supervisors and co-authors must make sure that research findings have been obtained through honest means and are accurately described.

The university must inform scientific and administrative staff about the rules in effect within the field.

Preliminary investigation

The dean must be notified immediately in writing should the suspicion of scientific misconduct arise. In response to this notification, the dean will appoint a group of individuals suitably composed for the matter at hand to conduct a preliminary investigation. The group will consist of experts, with at least one participant who is affiliated with another academic institution. The group will also include a lawyer from the legal department.

Members will be appointed to the preliminary investigation group such that no conflicts of interest, including administrative dependence, close personal relationships, professional relationships, financial dependence or scientific bias exist within the group.

The dean shall promptly inform the vice-chancellor of any suspicions of scientific misconduct that have been expressed. Reports of scientific misconduct involving the dean, deputy vice-chancellor, prot vice-chancellor or any member of the faculty board or any area board must be submitted to the vice-chancellor.

The preliminary investigation should be carried out expeditiously and with the highest possible level of confidentiality to protect both the accused and the person alleging the misconduct. The purpose of the preliminary investigation is to determine the necessity of conducting a full investigation.

During the preliminary study, fact-gathering will be conducted and the accused will be given an opportunity to provide oral or written comment after being informed about the facts underlying the allegation as well as what has emerged during the course of the investigation.

The preliminary investigation should be completed within 60 days of the allegation; if it is not, the reasons for this must be documented.

The preliminary investigation report shall state which evidence has been reviewed. It shall contain a summary of relevant interviews and the conclusions of the investigation. The report shall be made available to the accused and the person alleging the misconduct.

Based on the results of the preliminary investigation, the dean may make one of the following decisions:

- that insufficient grounds exist for a full investigation of the allegation. The vice-chancellor must be informed before the dean decides to close a case following the preliminary study
- that the material compiled suggests that scientific misconduct may have taken place, in which case a full investigation will be performed.

Full investigation

The full investigation should be initiated promptly and completed within 90 days. The investigation must be carried out with the highest possible level of confidentiality to protect both the accused and the person alleging the misconduct.

For the full investigation, the dean shall assign a suitably composed group of individuals the task of

completing information gathering on the matter and consulting with the parties involved. The group will consist of experts, with at least one participant who is affiliated with another academic institution. The group will also include a lawyer from the university's legal department. When appointing the group, the dean shall pay special attention to ensuring that no conflicts of interest, including administrative dependence, close personal relationships, professional relationships, financial dependence or scientific bias exist within the group.

The group shall take minutes during the investigation and the group's work will culminate in a written report to the dean.

In the process, the accused will be given an opportunity to provide oral or written comment after being informed about the facts underlying the allegation as well as what has emerged during the course of the investigation.

The group's report to the dean shall document the allegation and the investigation and present the committee's assessment of the accuracy of the allegation and the severity of a verified violation.

Obtaining an opinion from the Central Ethical Review Board (*Centrala Etikprövningsnämnden*)

During the investigation, the university may request an opinion from the expert group on research misconduct at the Central Ethical Review Board.

If so requested by the person reporting the suspected misconduct or by the person accused of misconduct, the university must obtain an opinion from the expert group on research misconduct at the Central Ethical Review Board. An opinion need not be sought, however, if the university deems it patently unnecessary to do so.

Response measures

The dean shall decide on possible response measures based on the complete results of the investigation.

If it is determined that insufficient grounds exist for a full investigation of the allegation, or if the allegation cannot be verified following a full investigation, meticulous measures shall be taken to re-establish the reputation of the accused. The reputation and professional position of the person who made the allegation of scientific misconduct in good faith is not to be questioned as a result of his or her action.

Should the investigation result in the allegation being verified once a full investigation has been carried out, following the decision of the dean, the matter shall be submitted to the faculty accountability board (personalansvarsnämnden) or the vice-chancellor to address discipline and responsibility issues as applicable.

Information

Once the preliminary investigation has been initiated, the head of the department in question and the vice-chancellor must be kept informed of the proceedings.

In order to maintain high standards and credibility in research, the results of the investigation must be disseminated if a person participating in research activities is found guilty of scientific misconduct. Specific information on the matter shall be submitted to the relevant branch of the scientific community. Based on the circumstances, an assessment must be made as to whether a separate disclosure shall be submitted to scientific journals in which the material in question has been published, and if there is a need for the journal to publish information about what was revealed during the investigation. Should the person found guilty of scientific misconduct hold a scientific appointment with any government agency, the determination must be made as to whether to notify the agency.