

William Paterson University Policy

Functional Policy

SUBJECT:	Misconduct in research	TITLE:	Research Misconduct		
CATEGORY:	Board of Trustees	University	Functional	School/Unit	
Check One	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Responsible Executive:	Provost		Responsible Office:	Provost Office	
CODING:	02-20-00-00-00	ADOPTED:	06/02/2026	AMENDED:	

Last Reviewed:06/02/2026 as update to prior policy.

I. PURPOSE

This policy (“Policy”) provides guidance to William Paterson University academic, scientific, and professional staff, employees, and students of the University (“WP personnel”) on the reporting, Assessment, Inquiry, and Investigation of Allegations of Research Misconduct. This Policy is intended to comply with the federal law 2024 Public Health Service (PHS) Final Rule (42 CFR Part 93, effective Jan 1, 2026) and follows the guidance and rules from the federal Office of Research Integrity (ORI).

II. APPLICABILITY

William Paterson University (WP) is committed to fostering a culture of integrity, accountability, and excellence in research. All individuals engaged in research under the auspices of the University are expected to uphold the highest standards of honesty and ethical conduct.

This policy establishes a clear and fair framework for the receipt, assessment, inquiry, investigation, and resolution of allegations of Research Misconduct, consistent with federal requirements and recognized best practices.

III. Scope and Applicability

This policy applies to all research activities proposed, conducted, reviewed, or reported under the auspices of WP; all individuals engaged in research at WP, including faculty, staff, students, visiting scholars, and others with a research affiliation; and research regardless of

funding source, with mandatory compliance for research supported by the Public Health Service (PHS).

IV. Definitions

Research Misconduct means fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, reviewing research, or in reporting research results. Research misconduct does not include honest error or differences of scholarly opinion.

Administrative Action	An institutional or a federal agency action taken in response to a Research Misconduct Proceeding to protect the health and safety of the public, to promote the integrity of federally-funded Research, Research training, or activities related to that Research or Research training, or to conserve public funds.
Allegation	A disclosure of possible Research Misconduct through any means of communication and brought directly to the attention of an institutional official
Assessment	<p>Consideration of whether an Allegation of Research Misconduct appears to fall within the definition of Research Misconduct and is sufficiently credible and specific so that potential Evidence of Research Misconduct may be identified.</p> <p>An Assessment also considers whether an Allegation of Research Misconduct appears to involve federally sponsored research, training, or activities related to that research or training.</p> <p>The Assessment only involves the review of readily accessible information relevant to the Allegation.</p>
Complainant	The complainant is responsible for making allegations in good faith, maintaining confidentiality, and cooperating with the inquiry and investigation. As a matter of good practice, the complainant should be interviewed at the inquiry stage and given the transcript or recording of the interview for correction. The complainant must be interviewed during an investigation and be given the transcript or recording of the interview for correction
Deciding Official (DO)	The institutional official who makes final determinations on Allegations of Research Misconduct and any University Administrative Actions, per this Policy. The Associate Provost for Finance and Sponsored Programs (APFSP) is the designated Deciding Official (DO), except where the APFSP is the subject of a Research Misconduct Proceeding or has a personal, professional, or financial conflict of interest. When this occurs, the Provost appoints another institutional official to serve as the DO. The DO will not be the same individual as the Research Integrity Officer and should have no direct prior involvement in the University's Inquiry, Investigation, or Allegation assessment. A DO's appointment of an individual to assess Allegations of Research Misconduct, or to serve on an Inquiry or Investigation committee, is not considered to be

	direct prior involvement.
Evidence	Anything offered or obtained during a Research Misconduct Proceeding that tends to prove or disprove the existence of an alleged fact. Evidence includes documents, whether in hard copy or electronic form, information, tangible items, and testimony
Fabrication	Making up data or results and recording or reporting them
Falsification	Manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the Research is not accurately represented in the Research Record
Good Faith	As applied to a Complainant or witness, means having a reasonable belief in the truth of one's Allegation or testimony, based on the information known to the Complainant or witness at the time. An Allegation or cooperation with a Research Misconduct Proceeding is not in Good Faith if made with knowledge of or reckless disregard for information that would negate the Allegation or testimony. As applied to an institutional or committee member, means cooperating with the Research Misconduct Proceeding by impartially carrying out the duties assigned for the purpose of helping the University meet its responsibilities under this policy. An institutional or committee member does not act in Good Faith if their acts or omissions during the Research Misconduct Proceedings are dishonest or influenced by personal, professional, or financial conflicts of interest with those involved in the Research Misconduct Proceeding.
Inquiry	Preliminary information-gathering and preliminary fact-finding that meets the criteria and follows the procedures set forth in this Policy
Intentionally	To act with the aim of carrying out the act
Investigation	The formal development of a factual record and the examination of that record that meets the criteria and follows the procedures set forth in this Policy
Knowingly	To act with awareness of the act
Notice	A written or electronic communication served in person or sent by mail or its equivalent to the last known street address or email address of the addressee
Plagiarism	The appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words, without giving appropriate credit. Includes the unattributed verbatim or nearly verbatim copying of sentences and paragraphs from another's work that materially misleads the reader regarding the contributions of the author. It does not include the limited use of identical or nearly identical phrases that describe a commonly used methodology. Does not include self-Plagiarism or authorship or credit disputes, including disputes among former collaborators who participated jointly in the development or conduct of a Research project. Self-Plagiarism and authorship disputes do not meet the definition of Research Misconduct per this Policy, but may be prohibited by other University policies, procedures, rules or regulations.

Preponderance of the Evidence	Proof by Evidence that, compared with Evidence opposing it, leads to the conclusion that the fact at issue is more likely true than not
Recklessly	To propose, perform, or review Research, or report Research results, with indifference to a known risk of Fabrication, Falsification, or Plagiarism
Research	<p>A systematic Investigation directed toward fuller scientific knowledge or understanding of the subject studied by establishing, discovering, developing, elucidating, or confirming information or underlying mechanisms. This includes design, development, systems or methods, improvement of prototypes, new processes, testing and evaluation, experiments, study, demonstrations, or surveys designed to develop or contribute to generalizable (basic Research) or specific (applied Research) knowledge. Research may include patient-oriented Research, including epidemiologic and behavioral studies, outcomes Research, and health services Research conducted with human subjects (or on material of human origin such as tissues, specimens, and cognitive phenomena.)</p> <p>Research also includes activities involving the training of individuals in Research techniques where such activities utilize the same facilities as other Research activities and where such activities are not included in the instruction function.</p>
Research Integrity Officer (RIO)	The institutional official responsible for administering the University's written policies and procedures for addressing Allegations of Research Misconduct in compliance with this Policy.
Research Misconduct	Fabrication, Falsification, or Plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing Research, or in reporting Research results. Research Misconduct does not include honest error or differences of opinion.
Research Misconduct Proceeding	Any actions related to alleged Research Misconduct taken per this Policy, including Allegation Assessments, inquiries, Investigations, oversight reviews, and appeals.
Respondent	The individual against whom an Allegation of Research Misconduct is directed or who is the subject of a Research Misconduct Proceeding. The respondent is responsible for maintaining confidentiality and cooperating with the conduct of an inquiry and investigation.
Retaliation	<p>An adverse action taken against a Complainant, witness, or committee member by an institution or one of its members in response to:</p> <p>A Good Faith Allegation of Research Misconduct; or</p> <p>Good Faith cooperation with a Research Misconduct Proceeding.</p>

IV. Roles and Responsibilities: The Provost appoints a Research Integrity Officer (RIO) with responsibility for implementation of this policy. The Provost or Designee serves as the Deciding Official. A detailed listing of the responsibilities of the RIO is set forth in Appendix A.

V. General Process Overview

Allegations are addressed through assessment, inquiry, investigation, decision, and reporting stages in accordance with 42 CFR Part 93.

The RIO will notify the respondent in writing at the time of or before beginning an inquiry. The Respondent will be given an opportunity to comment on the inquiry report and have comments attached to the report.

RIO is required to provide communication of investigation outcomes within a reasonable time after the determination that an investigation is warranted.

The Deciding Official is the Provost designee. DO will receive the inquiry report and after consulting with the RIO and/or other institutional officials, decide whether an investigation is warranted under the criteria in 42 CFR § 93.307(d). Any finding that an investigation is warranted must be made in writing by the DO and must be provided to ORI, together with a copy of the inquiry report meeting the requirements of 42 CFR § 93.309, within 30 days of the finding. If it is found that an investigation is not warranted, the DO and the RIO will ensure that detailed documentation of the inquiry is retained for at least 7 years after termination of the inquiry, so that ORI may assess the reasons why the institution decided not to conduct an investigation.

The DO will receive the investigation report and, after consulting with the RIO and/or other institutional officials, decide the extent to which this institution accepts the findings of the investigation and, if research misconduct is found, decide what, if any, institutional administrative actions are appropriate. The DO shall ensure that the final investigation report, the findings of the DO and a description of any pending or completed administrative actions are provided to ORI, as required by 42 CFR § 93.315.

- A. **Reporting Allegations:** Allegations of research misconduct should be reported to the Research Integrity Officer (RIO). Reports can be made confidentially and anonymously.
- B. **Preliminary Assessment:** The RIO will conduct a preliminary assessment to determine if the allegation falls under the definition of research misconduct and if it is sufficiently credible and specific. If the allegation meets these criteria, an inquiry will be initiated.
- C. **Inquiry:** An inquiry committee will be appointed to conduct a preliminary review of the evidence. The purpose of the inquiry is to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to warrant a formal investigation. The respondent will be notified and given an opportunity to respond to the allegations.
- D. **Investigation:** If the inquiry finds sufficient evidence, a formal investigation will be initiated.
- E. **Initiation and Purpose:** The investigation must begin within 30 calendar days after the determination by the DO that an investigation is warranted.ⁱ The purpose of the investigation is to develop a factual record by exploring the allegations in detail and examining the evidence in depth, leading to recommended findings on whether research misconduct has been committed, by whom, and to what extent. The investigation will also determine whether there are additional instances of possible research misconduct that would justify broadening the scope beyond the initial allegations. This is particularly

important where the alleged research misconduct involves clinical trials or potential harm to human subjects or the general public or if it affects research that forms the basis for public policy, clinical practice, or public health practice. Under 42 CFR § 93.313 the findings of the investigation must be set forth in an investigation report.

On or before the date on which the investigation begins, the RIO must: (1) notify the ORI Director of the decision to begin the investigation and provide ORI a copy of the inquiry report; and (2) notify the respondent in writing of the allegations to be investigated. The RIO must also give the respondent written notice of any new allegations of research misconduct within a reasonable amount of time of deciding to pursue allegations not addressed during the inquiry or in the initial notice of the investigation.ⁱⁱ

The RIO will, prior to notifying respondent of the allegations, take all reasonable and practical steps to obtain custody of and sequester in a secure manner all research records and evidence needed to conduct the research misconduct proceeding that were not previously sequestered during the inquiry. The need for additional sequestration of records for the investigation may occur for any number of reasons, including the institution's decision to investigate additional allegations not considered during the inquiry stage or the identification of records during the inquiry process that had not been previously secured. The procedures to be followed for sequestration during the investigation are the same procedures that apply during the inquiry

An investigation committee will be appointed to conduct a thorough examination of the evidence. The RIO, in consultation with other institutional officials as appropriate, will appoint an investigation committee and the committee chair as soon after the beginning of the investigation as is practical. The investigation committee must consist of individuals who do not have unresolved personal, professional, or financial conflicts of interest with those involved with the investigation and should include individuals with the appropriate scientific expertise to evaluate the evidence and issues related to the allegation, interview the respondent and complainant and conduct the investigation. Individuals appointed to the investigation committee may also have served on the inquiry committee.

The investigation will include interviews with the complainant, respondent, and witnesses, as well as a review of relevant research records.

The investigation committee and the RIO must:

- Use diligent efforts to ensure that the investigation is thorough and sufficiently documented and includes examination of all research records and evidence relevant to reaching a decision on the merits of each allegation;ⁱⁱⁱ
- Take reasonable steps to ensure an impartial and unbiased investigation to the maximum extent practical;^{iv}
- Interview each respondent, complainant, and any other available person who has been reasonably identified as having information regarding any relevant aspects of the investigation, including witnesses identified by the respondent, and record or transcribe

each interview, provide the recording or transcript to the interviewee for correction, and include the recording or transcript in the record of the investigation;^v and

- Pursue diligently all significant issues and leads discovered that are determined relevant to the investigation, including any evidence of any additional instances of possible research misconduct, and continue the investigation to completion.^{vi}

F. **Time for Completion:** The investigation is to be completed within 120 days of beginning it, including conducting the investigation, preparing the report of findings, providing the draft report for comment and sending the final report to ORI. However, if the RIO determines that the investigation will not be completed within this 120-day period, he/she will submit to ORI a written request for an extension, setting forth the reasons for the delay. The RIO will ensure that periodic progress reports are filed with ORI, if ORI grants the request for an extension and directs the filing of such reports.^{vii}

G. **Findings and Recommendations:** The investigation committee will prepare a report detailing its findings and recommendations.

Elements of the Investigation Report

The investigation committee and the RIO are responsible for preparing a written draft report of the investigation that:

- Describes the nature of the allegation of research misconduct, including identification of the respondent;
- Describes and documents the funding support, including, for example, the numbers of any grants that are involved, grant applications, contracts, and publications listing federal grant support;
- Describes the specific allegations of research misconduct considered in the investigation;
- Includes the institutional policies and procedures under which the investigation was conducted, unless those policies and procedures were provided to ORI previously;
- Identifies and summarizes the research records and evidence reviewed and identifies any evidence taken into custody but not reviewed; and
- Includes a statement of findings for each allegation of research misconduct identified during the investigation.^{viii} Each statement of findings must: (1) identify whether the research misconduct was falsification, fabrication, or plagiarism, and whether it was committed intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly; (2) summarize the facts and the analysis that support the conclusion and consider the merits of any reasonable explanation by the respondent, including any effort by respondent to establish by a preponderance of the evidence that he or she did not engage in research misconduct because of honest error or a difference of opinion; (3) identify the specific PHS support; (4) identify whether any publications need correction or retraction; (5) identify the person(s) responsible for the misconduct; and (6) list any current support or known applications or proposals for support that the respondent has pending with non-PHS federal agencies.^{ix}

The respondent will be given a copy of the draft investigation report for comment and, concurrently, a copy of, or supervised access to the evidence on which the report is based. The respondent will be allowed 30 days from the date he/she received the draft report to submit comments to the RIO. The respondent's comments must be included and considered in the final report.^x

The report will be submitted to the Deciding Official (DO) for a final decision.

Decision by Deciding Official

The RIO will assist the investigation committee in finalizing the draft investigation report, including ensuring that the respondent's comments are included and considered, and transmit the final investigation report to the DO, who will determine in writing: (1) whether the institution accepts the investigation report, its findings, and the recommended institutional actions; and (2) the appropriate institutional actions in response to the accepted findings of research misconduct. If this determination varies from the findings of the investigation committee, the DO will, as part of his/her written determination, explain in detail the basis for rendering a decision different from the findings of the investigation committee. Alternatively, the DO may return the report to the investigation committee with a request for further fact-finding or analysis.

When a final decision on the case has been reached, the RIO will normally notify both the respondent and the complainant in writing. After informing ORI, the DO will determine whether law enforcement agencies, professional societies, professional licensing boards, editors of journals in which falsified reports may have been published, collaborators of the respondent in the work, or other relevant parties should be notified of the outcome of the case. The RIO is responsible for ensuring compliance with all notification requirements of funding or sponsoring agencies.

- H. **Actions and Sanctions:** If research misconduct is confirmed, appropriate actions and sanctions will be imposed, which may include retraction of publications, termination of employment, or other disciplinary measures. The findings will be reported to the federal Office of Research Integrity (ORI) as required by PHS regulations. Administrative actions available under the Federal research misconduct policy, such as debarment from federal funding, supervision and certification of research, and correction of the literature, will be considered
- I. **Confidentiality:** All proceedings will be conducted in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the individuals involved. Disclosure of information will be limited to those who need to know to carry out a thorough, competent, objective, and fair investigation.
- J. **Protection Against Retaliation:** The university will protect individuals who, in good faith, report research misconduct or cooperate with an investigation from retaliation.
- K. **Review and Approval:** This policy will be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to ensure continued compliance with PHS regulations and the Federal Research Misconduct Policy.
- L. **Enforcement:** Institutional Actions and Outcomes

Appropriate administrative actions may be imposed when misconduct is substantiated. The administrative 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, letter of reprimand, special monitoring of future work, probation, suspension, salary reduction, or initiation of steps leading to possible rank reduction or termination of employment;
- Restitution of funds to the grantor agency as appropriate; and
- Other action appropriate to the research misconduct.

VII. Confidentiality and Protection Against Retaliation

The University will protect confidentiality and prevent retaliation to the extent permitted by law.

VIII. Records Retention and Reporting

Records will be maintained and reported in accordance with federal requirements.

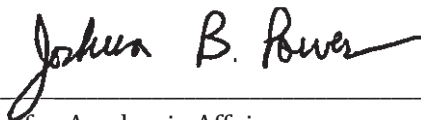
IX. Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed periodically.

X. EXHIBIT(S) :Appendix A – Research Integrity Officer (RIO) Responsibilities

By Direction of the Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs:

Date: 6/2/2026



Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs

ⁱ 42 CFR § 93.310(a)

ⁱⁱ 42 CFR § 93.310(b) and (c)

ⁱⁱⁱ 42 CFR § 93.310(e)

^{iv} 42 CFR § 93.310(f)

^v 42 CFR § 93.310(g)

^{vi} 42 CFR § 93.310(h)

^{vii} 42 CFR § 93.311

^{viii} 42 CFR § 93.313

^{ix} 42 CFR § 93.313(f)

^x 42 CFR §§ 93.312(a), 93.313(g)