Institute of Zoology

Misconduct in Research Policy

Introduction

Researchers at the Institute of Zoology (IOZ) are expected to observe the highest standards of ethics and integrity in the conduct of their research, as outlined in the IOZ Code of Practice for Research.

Scope

The Policy applies in full to all IOZ staff, including consultants and affiliated staff, registered and affiliated students, research technicians, Honorary Research Fellows and Honorary Research Associates (henceforth 'IOZ researchers').

Purpose

This Misconduct in Research Policy is designed to ensure that all allegations of misconduct are assessed and investigated thoroughly, fairly, in a timely manner, and with care and sensitivity. IOZ researchers have a responsibility to report any well-founded allegations of research misconduct, whether this has been witnessed or is suspected. Misconduct reported in confidence and in good faith will not lead to any action against the person making the allegation (the Claimant); however, frivolous, vexatious and/or malicious allegations may result in disciplinary action against the Claimant.

Misconduct in research refers to, but is not limited to:

- Fabrication or falsification of research data, results or materials
- Failure to follow accepted procedures, legal, professional or ethical requirements
- Failure to exercise due care in carrying out responsibilities for avoiding unreasonable harm or risk to humans, wildlife, the environment or cultural objects
- Misrepresentation of data, including the invention of data or the unjustified omission or selection of data, in order to avoid inconvenient results
- Unacknowledged appropriation of the work of others, including plagiarism, abuse of confidentiality with respect to unpublished materials, or misappropriation of results, physical materials or other resources
- Facilitating misconduct by others by colluding in, concealing or ignoring such actions
- Unauthorised or intentional misuse of, or damage to, research-related equipment, materials, substances or resources
- Misrepresentation of involvement in a research project, such as failure to include legitimate author(s) on outputs, or granting authorship where it is not warranted
- Misrepresentation of credentials, qualifications, experience, and publication history
- Failure to declare conflicts of interest
- Failure to follow instructions set out in the IOZ Code of Practice for Research when handling privileged or confidential information collected on human participants involved in research, or failure to follow instructions following ethical review
- Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct.

Misconduct in research does not include:

- Honest errors in designing or implementing research methods or interpreting or evaluating results
- Application or exploration of controversial or unpopular methods or ideas
- Challenging received wisdom
- Poor research, unless this encompasses the intention to deceive.

Confidentiality

All allegations of misconduct will be investigated in confidence. All those who are involved in an investigation, including witnesses and anyone providing information or evidence, have a duty to maintain confidentiality. However, for an allegation to be fully investigated, it will normally be necessary to disclose the identity of the Claimant as well as relevant information to the person who is the subject of the complaint (the Respondent). Third parties who have a legitimate interest in the allegation may also be notified, particularly when immediate action is necessary to prevent potential or actual danger, illegal activity or risk.

Procedure

Allegations of misconduct must be made in writing to the Director of Science. The Director of Science will normally notify the Respondent, where they consider it appropriate and necessary to do so. Where an allegation involves a researcher registered at another institution or in cases where the individual is no longer employed or studying at IOZ, the relevant institution may be notified accordingly. The Director of Science must ensure that all relevant information and evidence are secured for any future investigation.

Allegations that are linked to the Director of Science, or allegations that raise the potential for a conflict of interest for the Director of Science, must be referred to ZSL's People Director.

Preliminary review

The Director of Science or a nominated senior deputy will conduct a preliminary review. Where the allegation requires immediate action to prevent risk or harm to staff, other persons, animals, the environment or cultural objects, or contravene the law, immediate action may be taken to ensure that any such potential or actual danger, illegal activity or risk is prevented. When it is necessary to notify legal or regulatory authorities, IOZ will comply with an investigation led by the legal or regulatory body. The Director of Science must liaise with the HR department and follow ZSL's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure when (1) it is necessary to temporarily suspend the Respondent from their duties; (2) when it is necessary to bar the Respondent from ZSL premises or the sites of partner organisation(s) and/or (3) when it is necessary to temporarily restrict the Respondent from contacting colleagues. During the preliminary review the Director of Science may seek advice from senior staff at IOZ.

The preliminary review will establish, whether the allegation of misconduct in research:

- is mistaken, frivolous, vexatious and/or malicious
- must be referred to ZSL's disciplinary process or another internal process
- has some substance but due to a lack of intent to deceive or due to their relatively minor nature, must be addressed through training or another non-disciplinary approach
- is sufficiently serious to justify a formal investigation.

Formal investigation of misconduct in research

When an allegation is sufficiently serious to justify formal investigation, the Respondent will be advised in writing. The HR department will oversee the procedure of the investigation and a member

of the HR department will normally attend investigation meetings. An allegation against an IOZ student may be formally investigated by the degree-awarding organisation. The investigation will review all relevant evidence and conclude whether the allegation is upheld in full, upheld in part, or not upheld. The formal investigation will be carried out thoroughly and as quickly as possible in the circumstances. Confidentiality will be maintained as far as is reasonably practicable during the investigation.

Following a formal investigation the actions below may be requested:

- Retraction/correction of published articles in journals
- Withdrawal of articles submitted to journals
- Notifying other employing organisations
- Notifying other organisations involved in the research
- Adding a note of the outcome of the investigation to a researcher's file
- Review internal management, training or supervisory procedures for research.

Disciplinary meeting

If, after the formal investigation, it appears that there may be a disciplinary case to answer, a disciplinary meeting will be held following ZSL's Disciplinary Policy & Procedure.

Possible outcomes of a disciplinary

After the disciplinary meeting, the Respondent will be informed in writing of the outcome, which may, according to the circumstances, be:

- No disciplinary action
- First written warning
- Final written warning
- Dismissal with notice
- Summary dismissal (for cases of gross misconduct)

Following a disciplinary hearing additional further actions may be requested as part of the sanction:

- Retraction/correction of published articles in journals
- Withdrawal of articles submitted to journals
- Withdrawal/repayment of funding
- Notification of misconduct to regulatory bodies (such as the Home Office for research involving animals and professional bodies)
- Notifying other employing organisations
- Notifying other organisations involved in the research
- Adding a note of the outcome of the investigation to a researcher's file
- Review internal management, training or supervisory procedures for research.

Appeal

The Respondent may appeal against a decision to issue a written warning, dismissal or additional sanction, following the appeals process in ZSL's Disciplinary Policy & Procedure.

Allegations of misconduct in research can be investigated under this Policy irrespective of the Complainant withdrawing the allegation at any stage; the Respondent admitting, or having admitted, the alleged misconduct, in full or in part; or the Respondent or the Complainant resigning, or having already resigned, their post.

Updated 01/12/2025