



Memorandum

Office of the Research Integrity Officer
1025 Pine Avenue West, P2.028
Tel: 514-934-1934 ext 44739
rio.vprir@mcgill.ca

TO: Senate
FROM: Dr. David Ragsdale, Interim Research Integrity Officer in 2019-2020
SUBJECT: Annual Report Concerning the Investigation of Research Misconduct (2019-20)
DATE: September 22, 2020
DOCUMENT #: D20-03
ACTION REQUIRED: INFORMATION APPROVAL/DECISION

ISSUE An annual report submitted to the Senate and Board of Governors for information in accordance with the provisions of the *Regulations Concerning the Investigation of Research Misconduct*.

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE According to article 11.6 of the [Regulations Concerning the Investigation of Research Misconduct](#), the Research Integrity Officer is to provide an annual report to Senate and to the Board of Governors on the operation of the Regulations. The report includes the following:

- (i) the number of Research Misconduct allegations received;
- (ii) the number of Research Misconduct allegations investigated;
- (iii) a summary of the findings of the investigations conducted;
- (iv) a summary of any actions taken pursuant to the investigations.

PRIOR CONSULTATION N/A

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS N/A

IMPACT OF DECISION AND NEXT STEPS The Report is presented annually at Senate and will be submitted to the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors on October 29, 2020.

MOTION OR RESOLUTION FOR APPROVAL This item is presented for information.

APPENDICES Appendix A: 2019-2020 Annual Report Concerning the Investigation of Research Misconduct

2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT
Report of the Research Integrity Officer
Dr. David Ragsdale
Prepared September 2020

Introduction:

The *Regulations Concerning the Investigation of Research Misconduct* (i.e. the Regulations) call for the Research Integrity Officer (RIO) to report annually to Senate and to the Board of Governors on the application of the Regulations. This is the **eleventh** annual report presented to Senate and the Board of Governors in discharge of this obligation.

During this reporting year (June 1, 2019 to May 31, 2020), Dr. David Ragsdale served as interim RIO and was supported by the Deputy RIO, Dr. Frank Ferrie. Dr. Christina Wolfson was on sabbatical leave (September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020).

This reporting year also included the first months of the COVID-19 global pandemic necessitating modifications of the logistics for meeting with complainants and respondents, and conducting investigations. For the most part, these activities took place using Zoom.

Background:

The Regulations provide for an internal process for the assessment (inquiry) by the RIO and, where appropriate, the formal investigation of allegations of research misconduct brought against members of the University community regardless of faculty or discipline. The investigation committee membership and process to be followed are governed by the Regulations.

Tables 1, 2, and 3 below provide statistical information concerning allegations and their disposition for the past six academic years [2014-2015 to 2019-2020].

The Big Picture:

There were 10 dossiers opened by the RIO (or Deputy) during the 2019-2020 reporting year. It is notable that the majority of cases (6/10) were received during the months of March or April 2020. The nature of the allegations received varies from year to year. Table 1 below presents summary statistics on the Nature of the Allegations Received. It is not uncommon for a complaint to include more than one allegation of research misconduct. What is presented below is the “primary allegation” as determined by the RIO.

	Table 1: Nature of the Allegations						
	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	Total
Plagiarism & Authorship	3	3	1	2	0	4	13
Fabrication/ Falsification	1	1	1	0	1	1	5
Ethical Misconduct	2	2	1	2	1	2	10
Misrepresentation of Credentials				1	0	0	1
Mismanagement of Research Funds				1	0	0	1
Misappropriation of Intellectual Property					2	3	5
Mismanagement of Conflict of Interest					1	0	1
False Accusation of Research Misconduct					1	0	1
Total	6	6	3	6	6	10	37

The Source of Allegations:

The sources of allegations are shown in Table 2. Over the past 6 years the majority of the respondents have been academic staff, though graduate students/postdoctoral fellows have also been named as respondents. The RIO works closely with Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies when the respondent is a graduate student or postdoctoral fellow as per the Regulations.

	Table 2: Source of Allegations						
	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	Total
Funding Agency	2	1	0	0	0	1	4
University Community*	0	1	1	5	1	4	12
External**	4	4	2	0	5	4	19
Anonymous	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Total	6	6	3	6	6	10	37

*Includes administrative units of the University

**Included Journal editors, members of the lay public, and researchers outside the McGill community.

Actions in Response to Allegations:

The actions in response to the allegations received are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Actions in Response to Allegations

Nature of the Allegation	Year**	Total Cases	No Prima Facie Case	Transferred*	Inquiry only OR Investigation	Finding of Research Misconduct***
Plagiarism/Authorship	2014-15	3			3	
	2015-16	3			3	
	2016-17	1			1	
	2017-18	2			2	
	2018-19	0			0	
	2019-20	4			4	
Fabrication/Falsification	2014-15	1			1	
	2015-16	1			1	
	2016-17	1			1	
	2017-18	0			0	
	2018-19	1		1	0	
	2019-20	1			1	
Ethical Misconduct	2014-15	2	1		1	
	2015-16	2			2	
	2016-17	1			1	
	2017-18	2			2	
	2018-19	1			1	
	2019-20	2			2	
Mismanagement of Research Funds	2017-18	1			1	
	2018-19	0			0	
	2019-20	0			0	
Misrepresentation of Credentials	2017-18	1			1	
	2018-19	0			0	
	2019-20	0			0	
Mismanagement of Conflict of Interest*	2018-19	1			1	
	2019-20	0			0	
Misappropriation of Intellectual Property	2018-19	2		1	1	
	2019-20	3			3	
False Accusation of Research Misconduct	2018-19	1			1	
	2019-20	0			0	
Totals		37	1	2	34	10

*Allegations that upon review were transferred to other jurisdictions/universities and not managed through McGill University RIO.

** Additional categories for the nature of allegations have been added over the years. So for some categories there is no history.

*** There are two dossiers ongoing.

The first step following the receipt of an allegation is an inquiry conducted by the RIO. The possible outcomes of the RIO inquiry are insufficient evidence to proceed to an investigation; admission of research misconduct; or sufficient evidence to proceed to an investigation. Inquiries only or Inquiries followed by Investigations have taken place in thirty four cases over the past six years. Research misconduct (including admission of research misconduct) was established in ten cases. There were two cases ongoing at the end of this reporting period.

Consultative Activities:

In addition to the formal allegations noted above, the RIO (or Deputy RIO) opened approximately a dozen files and held preliminary discussions with current or former members of the McGill community who were concerned about an issue of research misconduct. No formal allegations of research misconduct were submitted to the RIO for any of these dossiers, the dossiers were closed.

Additional Statistical Reporting:

Each year in addition to the annual report to Senate, the RIO files the following annually:

- (a) In accordance with the *Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research (2016)*, Article 4.5(b), institutions are required to report annually to the Secretariat on Responsible Conduct of Research matters involving Agency funding. This is a statistical report only.
- (b) Each institution which receives or applies for US Public Health Service research funding must report to the US Office of Research Integrity concerning any allegations of research misconduct involving U.S. Public Health Service funded research. This is a statistical report only.
- (c) For all allegations involving research funded by FRQ or in relation to allegations against a member of the McGill community based at an FRQ funded research institute, a letter, devoid of personal information must be forwarded to the FRQ with the decision concerning the disposition of the allegation (i.e. insufficient evidence to proceed to an investigation; admission of guilt; or sufficient evidence to proceed to an investigation).

Acknowledgements:

The Research Integrity Officer, Interim Research Integrity Officer and Deputy Research Integrity Officer take this opportunity to thank all those who have served on, or cooperated with, investigation committees. This includes members of the McGill University Community as well as those from outside the University who have served as external members. All recognize the critical importance of such allegations and the major impact that they can have on the academic and professional lives of respondents and complainants. The dedication that committee members and advisors, both faculty and students, have exhibited in these important roles, the integrity with

which they have fulfilled their responsibilities, and the time and energy they have devoted to ensuring a fair and impartial investigation of all the issues deserve commendation. The RIOs extend their gratitude to the University its members for the opportunity to have served in this capacity and for their cooperation and support.