



Memorandum

Office of the Research Integrity Officer
Tel: 514-934-1934 ext 44739
rio.vprir@mcgill.ca

TO: Senate

FROM: Dr. Christina Wolfson, Research Integrity Officer

SUBJECT: Annual Report Concerning the Investigation of Research Misconduct (2020-21)

DATE: September 22, 2021

DOCUMENT #: D21-03

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.

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

APPENDICES Appendix A: 2020-2021 Annual Report Concerning the Investigation of Research Misconduct

2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT
Report of the Research Integrity Officer
Dr. Christina Wolfson
Prepared September 2021

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 **twelfth** annual report presented to Senate and the Board of Governors in discharge of this obligation.

During this reporting year (June 1, 2020 to May 31, 2021), Dr. David Ragsdale served as interim RIO June 1, 2020 to August 31, 2020 and was supported by the Deputy RIO, Dr. Frank Ferrie. Dr. Christina Wolfson was on sabbatical leave (September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020). Dr. Wolfson returned to her role as RIO on September 1, 2020 supported by Dr. David Ragsdale and Dr. Frank Ferrie.

During this reporting year the Regulations Concerning the Investigation of Research Misconduct were reviewed and revised. The new Regulations came into effect on March 25th 2021. https://www.mcgill.ca/research/files/research/regulations_concerning_the_investigation_of_research_misconduct.pdf

During this reporting period all meetings were held via Zoom.

Background:

The Regulations provide for an internal process for the assessment (referred to as “The 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 [2015-2016 to 2020-2021].

The Big Picture:

There were 11 dossiers opened by the RIO (or Deputies) during the 2020-2021 reporting 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						
	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	Total
Plagiarism & Authorship	3	1	2	0	4	3	13
Fabrication/ Falsification	1	1	0	1	1	2	6
Ethical Misconduct	2	1	2	1	2	3	11
Misrepresentation of Credentials			1	0	0	0	1
Mismanagement of Research Funds			1	0	0	0	1
Misappropriation of Intellectual Property				2	3	1	6
Mismanagement of Conflict of Interest				1	0	0	1
False Accusation of Research Misconduct				1	0	0	1
Destruction of Research Records						1	1
Libel						1	1
Total	6	3	6	6	10	11	42

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						
	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	Total
Funding Agency	1	0	0	0	1	1	3
University Community*	1	1	5	1	4	3	15
External**	4	2	0	5	4	6	21
Anonymous	0	0	1	0	1	1	3
Total	6	3	6	6	10	11	42

*Includes administrative units of the University, **Includes Journal editors, members of the lay public, researchers outside the McGill community.

Actions in Response to Allegations:

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	2015-16	3			3	
	2016-17	1			1	
	2017-18	2			2	
	2018-19	0			0	
	2019-20	4			4	
	2020-21	3	1		2	
Fabrication/Falsification	2015-16	1			1	
	2016-17	1			1	
	2017-18	0			0	
	2018-19	1		1	0	
	2019-20	1			1	
	2020-21	2			2	
Ethical Misconduct	2015-16	2			2	
	2016-17	1			1	
	2017-18	2			2	
	2018-19	1			1	
	2019-20	2			2	
	2020-21	3			3	
Mismanagement of Research Funds	2017-18	1			1	
	2018-19	0			0	
	2019-20	0			0	
	2020-21	0			0	
Misrepresentation of Credentials	2017-18	1			1	
	2018-19	0			0	
	2019-20	0			0	
	2020-21	0			0	
Mismanagement of Conflict of Interest*	2018-19	1			1	
	2019-20	0			0	
	2020-21	0			0	
Misappropriation of Intellectual Property	2018-19	2		1	1	
	2019-20	3			3	
	2020-21	1			1	

Nature of the Allegation	Year**	Total Cases	No Prima Facie Case	Transferred*	Inquiry only OR Investigation	Finding of Research Misconduct***
False Accusation of Research Misconduct	2018-19	1			1	
	2019-20	0			0	
	2020-21	0			0	
Destruction of Research Records	2020-21	1			1	
Libel	2021-21	1	1		0	
Totals		42	3	2	37	11

*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 is one dossier ongoing.

The first step following the receipt of an allegation is an inquiry conducted by the RIO or by a Deputy RIO. The possible outcomes of the RIO inquiry are (i) insufficient evidence to proceed to an investigation; (ii) admission of research misconduct; or (iii) sufficient evidence to proceed to an investigation. Inquiries only or Inquiries followed by Investigations have taken place in thirty seven cases over the past six years. Three cases were judged as prima facie (no basis for an inquiry). Research misconduct (including admission of research misconduct) was established in eleven cases. There was one case 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 as well as 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.