

Overview of New Guidelines for Responding to Misconduct in Research

Background

- MEXT has been implementing necessary measures pertaining to responses by universities and other research institutions regarding research activities, based on the “Guidelines for Responding to Misconduct in Research (compiled by the MEXT Council for Science and Technology’s Special Committee on Misconduct in Research Activities in August 2006).
- However, because of frequently occurring cases of misconduct in research, the previous Guidelines have been revised based on recommendations (September 2013) by the “Task Force on Misconduct in Research and Misuse of Research Funds,” and the summary of findings (February 2012) of the “Cooperative Council on the Revision and Reform of the Application of the Guidelines for Responding to Misconduct in Research.”

Basic direction of revisions

- ◆ Formulation of New Guidelines initiated under a decision by MEXT Minister.
- ◆ In the past, there was a strong sense of leaving to the individual researcher the responsibility for avoiding misconduct in research; from now, measures will be strengthened by having universities and other research institutions assume responsibility for preventing misconduct in research.

New Guidelines

Red: Stipulated by New Guidelines
Black: Stipulated by former Guidelines

Section 1 Basic Idea of Misconduct in Research

Basic Stance Regarding Misconduct in Research

- Misconduct in research violates the true nature of research activities and publication of results, and is a betrayal of science itself. Universities and research institutions, as well as of course individual researchers, must take a strict stance against misconduct.

Voluntary Self-Discipline by Researchers and the Scientific Community, etc.

- Dealing with misconduct in research must be approached first of all as an issue requiring self-correction based on the voluntary efforts of researchers themselves and of the scientific community and research institutions.

Management Responsibility of Universities, Research Institutions

- In addition to the above, it will be necessary to strengthen the approach by assigning greater responsibility for preventing misconduct to research institutions, so as to create an environment in which misconduct is discouraged. In particular, the management responsibilities of the organization should be clarified by establishing lines of responsibility, and efforts should be made to prevent misconduct from occurring.
 - ◆ Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of each individual involved in joint research
 - ◆ Appropriate verification of research results by a principal researcher in a position to conduct overall monitoring of research activities involving multiple researchers
 - ◆ Offering proper support and advice to help young researchers conduct independent research (assignment of mentors)

Section 2 Initiatives for Preventing Misconduct

Provision of an Environment Discouraging Misconduct

1. Enhancing researcher integrity by conducting education on responsible research practices

- Universities/research institutions: Setting up the necessary organizational structure, such as appointing a RCR education officer, and providing regular RCR education to the wide range of personnel involved in research activities.
- Universities: To ensure proper awareness of responsible practices by students, providing them with RCR education.
- Funding organizations: Requiring all researchers taking part in research receiving competitive funding or other funding to take a RCR education program, and confirming their completion of such a program.

2. Preservation, disclosure of research data for fixed periods at universities and other research organizations

Listing of Publicizing Misconduct Cases

- For cases where specific research misconduct has been confirmed, making public by MEXT a list

Section 3 Responding to Specific Research Misconduct (clarification of management responsibilities of organization)

Applicable Types of Misconduct in Research(Specific Research Misconduct)

- Fabrication, Falsification, Plagiarism (Note: as before)

Providing and Disclosing Rules and an Organizational Structure in Universities, Research Institutions and Research Funding Organizations

- Provide and disclose appropriate rules (including investigation procedures and methods) for responding when specific research misconduct is suspected.
 - ◆ Clarification of the persons responsible for responding to research misconduct and defining their roles and scope of responsibility.
 - ◆ Ensuring confidentiality of the people involved, including complainants, and clarification of specific procedures.
 - ◆ Obligation to report to MEXT any investigations of specific research misconduct.

Receiving Allegation and Investigating Reported Cases of Specific Research Misconduct

- Procedures and methods from receiving allegation to Investigating reported case of specific research misconduct (preliminary investigation, formal investigation, findings, appeal filing, announcement of investigation results, etc.)
 - ◆ Setting, publicizing of contact point for receiving allegations, handling consultations.
 - ※ Possible to delegate the receipt of allegations to a firm outside the institution
 - ◆ Stipulating the approximate time limit for investigation at universities/research organizations.
 - ◆ Outside experts comprising at least half the members of investigative committees (those with possible conflict of interest excluded)
 - ◆ Should the investigating committee deem them necessary, opportunities for replication experiments under the direction and supervision of the investigation committee shall be ensured.
 - ◆ Appeals regarding the expertise of the investigation shall be considered with replacements of, additions to members, etc..

Section 4 Sanctions for Specific Research Misconduct and Management Responsibility

Sanctions on Researchers and Research Institutions for Specific Research Misconduct

- Return of competitive funding relating to the specified research misconduct (※)
- Restrictions on application for competitive funding and eligibility to receive such funding (※)
 - ※ Target is not only competitive funding but also misconduct carried out with administrative cost grant and other basic operating expenses.

Sanctions on Research Institutions for Failure to Fulfill Their Management Responsibilities as Organizations

1. Establishing lines of responsibility as an organization

- Should any inadequacies in organizational provision of a university or research institution for dealing with misconduct be confirmed, MEXT may set “administrative conditions” on the research institution.
- Should an institution not fulfill the “administrative conditions,” MEXT may reduce the grants for “indirect costs.”

2. Ensuring prompt investigation

- Should an investigation of specific research misconduct be conducted slowly without a legitimate reason, MEXT may reduce grants for “indirect costs”

Section 5 Surveys and Support by MEXT

Ongoing Response to Misconduct in Research

- MEXT shall provide opportunities for studies by experts, keep track of implementation.

Surveys of Implementation Status

- MEXT shall conduct surveys of institutions regarding their implementation based on these Guidelines, and shall make public the results.

Encouraging Development of Programs in RCR Education

- MEXT shall cooperate with the Science Council of Japan and research funding organizations to encourage the creation of standard programs and teaching materials in RCR education.

Support for Setting Up an Investigating Organization in Research Institutions

- In the case that the research institution lacks the organizational structure for conducting a sufficient investigation, MEXT shall provide necessary support, such as selecting and sending specialists, in cooperation with the Science Council of Japan and research funding organizations.