

Questionable Research Practices Investigation Procedure

Version: 1

Responsible Executive: Vice President for Research

Responsible Offices: Research Compliance

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1. Introduction:

- 1.1. This Procedure must be read in conjunction with the KAUST Research Integrity Policy (November 2022) and Research Misconduct Procedure (November 2022).
- 1.2. Questionable research practices (QRPs), also known as Detrimental Research Practices have become more prevalent than Research Misconduct (defined as plagiarism, fabrication, and falsification), and in some cases may be more harmful¹. QRPs are new forms of problematic conduct and misbehavior in research.
- 1.3. Allegations of Research Misconduct that do not meet the definition of Research Misconduct in this Policy, but given the seriousness of the alleged violation of scientific integrity principles, may constitute QRPs.
- 1.4. This Procedure defines QRPs and sets out the process to follow in cases where QRPs are alleged or suspected. Further details about the process are set out in Section 4 below.

2. Definitions²:

- 2.1. **Questionable research practices** mean actions that violate the traditional values of the research enterprise and that may be detrimental to the research process.
- 2.2. Other relevant definitions appear in the Research Integrity Policy and Research Misconduct Procedures.

3. Examples of Questionable Research Practices (QRPs)^{3,4}

This Procedure includes a list of examples of QRPs based on international guidelines and literature:

- 3.1. Inaccurate referencing of ideas and concepts
- 3.2. Failing to keep accurate records of the research process
- 3.3. P-hacking: running statistical tests on a set of data until some statistically significant results arise
- 3.4. Incomplete reporting of relevant aspects of the study design

¹ Bouter, L. (2020). What Research Institutions Can Do to Foster Research Integrity. *Science and Engineering Ethics*. Vol. 26. p. 2363–2369. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-020-00178-5>.

² National Academy of Sciences. (2017). p. 3. <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/download/21896>.

³ <https://libguides.uvt.nl/researchintegrity/questionable-research>

⁴ Kaizer, M. et al. (2021). Questionable Research Practices and Misconduct among Norwegian Researchers. *Science and Engineering Ethics*. Vol. 28, No. 2. pp. 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-021-00351-4>

- 3.5. Selectively reporting studies that ‘worked’
- 3.6. Claiming to have predicted an unexpected finding
- 3.7. Failing to report or discuss relevant contrary evidence
- 3.8. Creating the impression of having consulted a source by copying others’ citations
- 3.9. Limiting or denying access to research data, failure to preserve raw data, and efforts to influence the peer review practices of journals.
- 3.10. Failing to share data or relevant information on the research with peers who would like to verify research results
- 3.11. Not retaining or making data, code, or other information or materials underlying research results available as specified in institutional or sponsor policies or standard practices in the field
- 3.12. Changing the design, methodology, or results of a study in response to pressure from stakeholders or funding sources
- 3.13. Using research data or material when its ownership is contested
- 3.14. Misleading statistical analysis that falls short of falsification
- 3.15. Refraining from informing end-users and decision-makers about significant limitations or uncertainties in the data material, analysis, or conclusion
- 3.16. Including irrelevant or unnecessary references in a publication to increase the citation frequency of a colleague, a research environment, or a journal
- 3.17. A group of researchers or colleagues, usually in the same scientific field, who cite each other’s work overly to achieve higher metrics. This behavior results in a citation cartel.
- 3.18. Detrimental authorship practices such as demanding authorship in return for access to previously collected data or materials
- 3.19. Breaking up or segmenting study results into two or more publications to boost your publication credits, at the expense of scientific quality (salami slicing)
- 3.20. Neglecting or exploiting, abusing, or irresponsible supervision in research
- 3.21. Not reporting serious breaches of research ethical guidelines
- 3.22. Sabotaging research work and destroying primary data.
- 3.23. Misusing seniority to manipulating authorship
- 3.24. Not disclosing the use of AI to create content
- 3.25. Facilitate the unauthorized access to third parties (external to KAUST) to KAUST research data or equipment.

4. Procedures for adjudication of Allegations of QRPs

4.1 In addressing Allegations of QRPs, this Procedure makes provision for the Vice President of Research to impanel a committee consisting of:

- 4.1.1 an Associate Vice President for Research,
- 4.1.2 the respective Dean or Associate Dean – in a case of potential conflict of interest, a representative of the Office of the Provost could be appointed,
- 4.1.3 a content expert (if required), and

4.1.4 Research Integrity Officer (or delegate) to provide administrative and advisory support.

4.2 The purpose of the panel is to:

- 4.2.1. Review the Allegations to determine if the Allegations meet the definition of QRPs;
- 4.2.2. Determine the seriousness of the Allegations; and
- 4.2.3. Write and submit a report with a recommendation(s) and appropriate sanction, if any, or actions to mitigate risk or protect the reputation of KAUST research, to the Vice President of Research.

4.3 The Vice President for Research may consult with other senior KAUST leadership to reach a determination.

4.4 The determination of the Vice-President is final, and not subject to appeal.

5. References

[KAUST Research Misconduct Procedure \(Office of Research\)](#)

[Policy on Whistleblowing and Reporting Wrongdoing \(Office of the General Counsel\)](#)

[Disciplinary Policy and Procedure \(Human Resources\)](#)

[Behavioral Abuse Procedure \(Human Resources\)](#)

[KAUST Code of Conduct at Thuwal Campus \(Human Resources\)](#)

[Faculty and Staff Member Policy on Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment \(Human Resources\)](#)

[Intellectual Property Policy \(Office of Innovation and Economic Development\)](#)

[Schedule of Delegations and Authorities \(Office of the General Counsel\)](#)

[Graduate Student Handbook 2021-22 \(Office of Graduate Affairs\)](#)

[Faculty Handbook \(Vice President for Academic Affairs\)](#)