



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

<i>Policy No. ORGS/002-2018</i> POLICY ON RESEARCH MISCONDUCT¹	
<i>Revised on</i>	October 11, 2018
<i>Approving Authority</i>	University Research Council
<i>Contact Office</i>	Office of Research & Graduate Studies
<i>Related Policies</i>	<i>This document should be read in conjunction with the University policies Code of Good Research Practice and Access to Participants Data, Intellectual Property Rights, Authorship Policy and Publications Policy</i>

This document is intended for all AKU faculty/staff, including persons with honorary positions, and students carrying out research at, or on behalf of the University. The Aga Khan University, in this document means its schools, colleges and hospitals operating across all campuses around the globe.

1.0 Background

The Aga Khan University takes pride in upholding its tradition of attaining a high level of rigour and integrity in its academic endeavours. AKU builds on common concerns and ensures that the same standards are applied in the conduct and reporting of research. This Policy applies to all research across all research disciplines, where research is defined as an undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry and/or systematic investigation².

Though unintentional violations of ethical standards remain a possibility in all investigations, a false allegation of misconduct can jeopardize the reputation of the University and its researchers. Hence, this policy is developed with the objective in mind that while having the responsibility to provide a conducive environment to promote integrity in research and quality assurance, AKU has taken steps to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to expeditiously deal with allegations of misconduct in research.

This policy also addresses the necessary checks and balances to ensure that the highest ethical standards are maintained at all AKU campuses.

The University recognizes the contributions of mentors, project supervisors, department chairs/unit heads, and faculty, which establish the high bar of honesty and integrity required in the conduct of research.

¹ First approved on: November 15, 2007; revised on: May 10, 2012

² Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement 2, http://www.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2-2014/TCPS_2_FINAL_Web.pdf

2.0 Principles and Objectives

As declared in the Vision, Mission and Value statements, AKU strives to be an international institution of distinction which is committed to the development of human capacity through the discovery and dissemination of knowledge, and application through service. In order to achieve this mission, AKU operates on core principles of quality, relevance, impact and accessibility. Strict adherence to the principles of honesty and integrity in the conduct of research and scholarly activity is greatly emphasized.

Specific objectives of the policy:

- a) To encourage responsible conduct amongst members of the AKU community, who are engaged in research and scholarly activities.
- b) To ensure that highest standards of integrity and honesty are adhered to in the dissemination of research output.
- c) To establish and maintain a climate of recognition, and acknowledgement of research contributions of all those who have been involved in achieving a particular set of research objectives.
- d) To recognize the rights of researchers and other stakeholders as per the University's policies on Intellectual Property Rights and University Authorship Policy.

3.0 Applicability

This policy applies to all University employees (*viz.* faculty, residents, students and staff) and also those affiliated with the University (such as trainees, technicians, students, fellows, clinicians, visiting researchers, collaborators, and other staff members) who are engaged in research conducted at or by the University, regardless of the source of funding.

If misconduct is discovered after the individual no longer works for/is affiliated with, the University, the case may still be processed and appropriate action taken (such as demand for public apology/retraction of publication/legal action, etc.).

The minimum time-limit for the retention of research data and records will be **seven (7) years** from the end of the data collection for the research project, the last publication/report emanating from the research, or when a degree is awarded to a student for the research work (whichever is last). Research records include all forms of results captured in the course of the research (laboratory notebooks, questionnaires, interview and similar notes, etc). The primary purpose for the retention is to preserve the ability to validate the research findings and/or to permit the work to be repeated or extended into new scholarship³.

4.0 Definitions

³ Data retention times are set to provide an adequate period to allow any questions about the data to be addressed (*e.g.*, accuracy, reproducibility, originality, etc) and to meet any requirements of the sponsors or applicable laws or regulations. Research data and related financial data must both be considered. Retention times vary: some institutions rely on a statement similar to the preceding; others state 3 years (Oxford, Memorial Sloan Kettering), 5 years (University of British Columbia, Canadian Institutes of Health Research) or 7 years (AKU, University of Alberta [for financial records]).

Misconduct in research includes any, some, or all of the following acts:

- a) Fabrication and/or falsification of research-related data, or in reported research outcomes.
- b) Plagiarism in all research-related matters, including publications, appropriation of someone else's ideas, processes, results, outputs, or words, without giving appropriate credit. [Refer to Section 3.0, above, and 5.0, below]
- c) Inappropriate use of someone else's intellectual property (without reference, acknowledgment, or permission, as the case may be).
- d) Denial of individual rights such as authorship to collaborative partners in research publications.
- e) Non-compliance with the University's policies on "*Conflict of Interest*", "*Intellectual Property Rights*" and "*Authorship Policy*".
- f) Non-compliance with the University's "*Policy on Code of Good Research Practice and Access to Participant Data.*"
- g) Deliberate misuse of institutional or sponsored funds for financial gains.
- h) Wilful failure to honour an agreement or contract with the funding agency, to perform certain tasks.
- i) Publishing any data or results that are against the internationally accepted general principles of research and scholarly activities.
- j) Deliberate destruction of one's own or others' research data, records, or research-related property.
- k) Making use of any information in breach of any duty of confidentiality associated with the review of any manuscript or grant application.
- l) Violation of (or non-compliance with) the code of ethics for research as established by the University.
- m) Wrongful attribution towards an approving authority (*e.g.*, claiming approval from an Ethics Review Committee [ERC], Ethical Committee for Animal Care & Use [ECACU], biohazard assessment, etc, when such approval does not exist) .
- n) Inappropriate use of technology (*e.g.*, misinformation resulting from manipulation of images through photo-editing technology or software)

Misconduct does not include:

- i. unintentional errors in interpretations or judgments of data.
- ii. an accidental loss of data or loss of results.
- iii. discontinuation of an agreed research collaboration or assigned task due to legitimate reasons, such as ill health or situations beyond one's control.

5.0 Plagiarism

The University is uncompromising towards plagiarism and considers it an act of misconduct liable to disciplinary action. In keeping with past practices, the University will adhere to the guidelines issued by the higher education authority of the country in which AKU operates (*e.g.*, *Higher Education Commission in Pakistan* and *Tanzanian Commission for Universities*).

The following types of plagiarism, irrespective of their degree of seriousness, whether committed deliberately or inadvertently, are considered as unethical and illegal:

- a) *Complete Plagiarism*: When the whole document, manuscript, or research idea, is copied *verbatim* from one or more sources, even if the source is disclosed in the reference section.
- b) *Partial Plagiarism*: When part or whole section(s) are inserted without paraphrasing, with few or only cosmetic changes to the text, without giving appropriate reference. It also applies to insertion of figures/photos, diagrams, illustrations, graphs, or charts, from various sources without prior approval of the author(s) and/or publisher(s), as may be the case.
- c) *Self-Plagiarism*: When one's own published work is re-sent for publication to another journal, without the permission of the original publisher, even if the publication is translated into another language.
- d) *Plagiarism of Ideas*: When ideas or documented work of others are presented as one's own, in any form whatsoever, and at any forum whatsoever. This includes proposed research studies on specific topics previously conceived by another individual or group.
- e) *Concealing Sources/Denying Acknowledgement*: When the source of the information is not disclosed or acknowledged, or due credit is not given to fellow contributors in a publication or research study (for further clarity, refer to "University Authorship Policy"). Any word-for-word quote must have a reference citation, while written permission of the author and/or the publisher is needed for lengthy quotations.

6.0 Finding and/or Reporting of Research Misconduct

The initial reporting of the misconduct may be made in writing or by producing documentary evidence to the Chair, University Research Council of the University, who may direct it to the chair/head of the respective department for verification. Alternatively, upon receiving a report with evidence, the Chair, University Research Council will initiate an investigation by setting up an *ad hoc* committee for this purpose. The *ad hoc* committee will submit a full report of the findings and advise penalties, if any, to be imposed.

7.0 Confidentiality and Protection

Every effort must be made to maintain confidentiality to protect the interests of the University and those involved in reporting research misconduct.

Allegations of research misconduct might originate from outside the University, possibly from other institutions, in learned journals, or in the press. Within the University, allegations of research misconduct might come from members of academic, research or technical staff, or from students and residents.

Under no circumstances will an anonymous complaint be the basis for a formal proceeding.

8.0 Procedure of Inquiry (Details in Appendix: "Procedures for resolving disputes and allegations of misconduct in research")

The Office of Research & Graduate Studies is responsible for evaluating and investigating all allegations of misconduct related to research at Aga Khan University. Individuals should not undertake investigations of suspected research misconduct on their own. Scientific and research misconduct does not include honest errors or differences of opinion.

- a) The Chair, University Research Council, or designated director, in whose office the allegation charges are filed, will set up an initial inquiry to assess whether or not the matter is research misconduct, as defined in this policy.
- b) The faculty member or an employee whose research work is the subject of investigation shall be notified about the nature of the complaint without disclosing the identity of the initiator.
- c) Evidence relevant to the complaint must be securely placed with the respective Chair, University Research Council, or designated director (or relevant authority) of the academic unit, and only duplicates shall be used for the investigative process.
- d) An *ad hoc* Inquiry Committee shall be appointed by the Chair, University Research Council to conduct the investigation; the Committee will submit a written report of the inquiry proceedings. All activities and proceedings of the meetings must be recorded in audio and transcribed, to fulfil legal requirements.
- e) The *ad hoc* Inquiry Committee may refer to University policies, as well as various international organizations and committees, as resources for its deliberations.
- f) The *ad hoc* Inquiry Committee may also consult with faculty, students, or any other individual who has knowledge of the alleged research misconduct in question.
- g) If an outside sponsor or collaborator is involved in the research, the report of the *ad hoc* Inquiry Committee may be shared with the concerned organization or affected individuals, with the consent of the Chair, University Research Council.
- h) The entire inquiry process from initiation, post-allegation, to submission of the inquiry report to the Chair, University Research Council (or a relevant/appropriate authority), must be completed in sixty (60) calendar days.
- i) An appropriate extract of the report shall be provided to the accused for rebuttal.
- j) If the alleged misconduct is not substantiated, diligent efforts will be undertaken, where appropriate, to restore the reputation of those under investigation. The research records will be restored appropriately as well. No further action will be taken by the University and no reports will be made to funding agencies unless they are specifically required under the circumstances of the allegation, or unless the funding agency is aware of the allegation.
- k) If misconduct is proven, the University will take appropriate action. The Provost or President, upon receiving the recommendations of the respective Dean/Director, based on the findings of the *ad hoc* Inquiry Committee and any statement of rebuttal by the accused, shall take a final decision with respect to the action to be taken and will formally notify all parties, including the sponsor of the research.

- l) The final investigation report must be in writing and submitted to the Provost/President in a timely fashion. The Provost will review the report and determine whether to accept it as is, or return it to the *ad hoc* Inquiry Committee for further deliberation or fact-finding.
- m) The timeline should allow for submission of the report to the concerned sponsor, if required, no later than 120 days from the date the investigation began, in cases where misconduct is found.
- n) Copies of the inquiry report, along with all supporting documents and decisions must be retained for seven (7) years.

9.0 Penalty for Research Misconduct

- a) In the event that a researcher is found guilty of misconduct, the *ad hoc* Inquiry Committee shall impose a penalty, taking into account the severity of the misconduct. Penalties may include:
 - ◆ A reprimand
 - ◆ Withdrawal of article/proposal or any other dissemination material
 - ◆ Public/private apology
 - ◆ A fine not exceeding US\$1,000 (One thousand dollars), or equivalent in appropriate local currency
 - ◆ Disallowance of the work
 - ◆ Suspension of work/employment
 - ◆ Termination from job.
- b) In cases where the investigation does not confirm the allegations, the *ad hoc* Inquiry Committee shall recommend the same to the Chair, University Research Council, who shall undertake appropriate efforts to ensure that the reputation and integrity of the individual is not harmed (*See 8.10*).
- c) The higher authorities shall also take appropriate actions to protect the position and reputation of those who, in good faith, made the allegations. However, if it is revealed that the complainant has brought charges with a malicious intent, he/she should be reprimanded, disciplined and/or penalised as may be deemed fit.
- d) If a student commits plagiarism in his/her thesis, that student may be judged to have failed the thesis.

See Appendix following the References

References:

1. American Psychological Association. Research Misconduct
<http://www.apa.org/research/responsible/misconduct/index.aspx> retrieved April 11, 2012
2. Higher Education Commission Pakistan “The Little Book of Plagiarism”
<http://beta.hec.gov.pk/InsideHEC/Divisions/QALI/QADivision/Documents/Plagiarism%20Policy.pdf> retrieved April 2012
3. Kenyatta University (May 2010). Intellectual Property Rights Policy. Nairobi, Kenya
4. Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (August 2011). Research Policy Guidelines. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
5. Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (August 2011). Intellectual Property Policy and Guidelines. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
6. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_misconduct (retrieved April 10, 2012)
7. Agres T. NIH Misconduct Rules Reviewed, Professional Societies Support Revisions To Rules On Whistle-Blowers And Research Misconduct. The Scientist April 26, 2004
8. Department of Health and Human Services. Public Health Service Policies On Research Misconduct; Proposed Rule, 42 CFR Parts 50 and 93, Federal Register, 69:20777-20803, April 16, 2004. <http://www.regulations.gov/fredpdfs/04-08647.pdf>
9. DeFrancesco L. Researcher Seeks Whistle-Blower Protection. The Scientist, November 1, 2002. <http://www.biomedcentral.com/news/20021101/04/>
10. La Trobe University: The Academic Misconduct Policy. <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/policies>
11. PhD students Handbook, The Aga Khan University, 2007

APPENDIX

Suggested Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct

