



Australian Government

National Health and Medical Research Council

NHMRC Research Integrity Fact Sheet One

What should I do if I suspect a researcher may be doing the wrong thing?

NHMRC supports health and medical research, provides evidence-based health advice and establishes the ethical framework for research in Australia. NHMRC does not regulate research standards in Australia or investigate allegations of research misconduct. Institutions are responsible for investigating allegations of research misconduct. This fact sheet provides information about how to raise concerns about, or make an allegation of, research misconduct. It also provides information about raising concerns related to possible fraud or other misconduct by researchers.

If you are a researcher, you should particularly note the section: 'Raising concerns about other researchers'.

If you are an NHMRC peer reviewer, you should see NHMRC Research Integrity Fact Sheet Two: ['Concerns arising during peer review about possible research misconduct'](#).

Allegations of research misconduct

- An allegation of research misconduct can arise where there is a reasonable suspicion that one or more researcher/s have not conducted research responsibly in accordance with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2007](#) (the Code).
- Anyone can make an allegation of research misconduct, including researchers, students, members of the public, peer reviewers and those involved in research projects as participants.
- The Code requires research institutions in Australia to have a well-defined policy and process for receiving and managing allegations of research misconduct. Depending on the seriousness of a matter and whether there is a legitimate explanation, institutions have a discretion to decide whether an investigation into an allegation of misconduct is warranted.
- If you are concerned that research misconduct may be occurring, you should raise your concerns directly with the institution that has responsibility for the research project, in accordance with the institution's research misconduct policy. If you are an NHMRC peer reviewer, see [Fact Sheet Two](#) for advice about how to raise your concerns.
- NHMRC cannot investigate allegations of research misconduct independently.
- Under the Code, relevant parties are entitled to be advised by the institution of the outcome of any investigations conducted by the institution, noting that some matters may be confidential or subject to privacy laws.
- Where allegations relate to research or researchers funded by NHMRC, institutions must notify NHMRC of the matter where research misconduct or a breach of the Code has been found, or where a decision has been made to establish a full inquiry into an allegation of misconduct. In these circumstances, NHMRC will monitor the progress of an investigation, and liaise with the institution. This process is explained in the [NHMRC policy on misconduct related to NHMRC funding](#).

Raising concerns about other researchers

- If you are a researcher or research student and have concerns about other researchers, either at your institution or at another institution, as a first step you should re-read the Code, to make sure that you are clear about what you believe is wrong. Definitions of research misconduct are found at page 10.1. The process the Code requires institutions to follow is set out in Part B of the Code.
- Secondly, you should review your institution's research misconduct policy, as this will provide details about how concerns and allegations are managed. If your concerns relate to a researcher at another institution, you should still review your own institution's policy, as it will include details of staff members who will be able to offer you confidential advice about your concerns.
- While your institution's policy will provide specific information, as a general rule concerns should be discussed first with your supervisor or head of department. Where this is not possible, your institution should have an adviser or advisers in research integrity who you can consult, and there should also be a 'designated person' with responsibility under the Code for assessing the seriousness of the allegations and recommending the type of inquiry that should be conducted.
- Your institution's policy should provide additional details about the conduct of investigations under the Code.

Allegations of research misconduct made to NHMRC

- Sometimes you may not want to raise concerns about research misconduct directly with the relevant institution.
- In these circumstances, you can email NHMRC at integrity@nhmrc.gov.au for advice.
 - NHMRC will encourage you to raise your concerns with the relevant institution.
 - If your concerns about raising the issue directly with the institution remain, and where the matter relates to NHMRC-funded research, NHMRC will refer the allegation to the relevant institution, including your details, unless you ask us not to provide your details.
- NHMRC's strong preference is for complainants to identify themselves when raising concerns about research misconduct. This facilitates communication between you and the institution and promotes procedural fairness for all parties.
- However, as legal protections for whistleblowers vary between Australian states and territories, NHMRC will accept anonymous allegations or de-identify allegations (at your request) if you are concerned that the relevant institution/s is not able to provide appropriate protection.
- Concerns will not be referred where it is clear that you have raised the allegation with both NHMRC and the institution or where an allegation lacks minimum information necessary for a referral (e.g. a specific research activity, researcher or institution is not identified).
- In referring a matter to an institution, NHMRC will not provide further information to you about the matter. This applies to both identified and anonymous complainants. However, we will let you know whether or not the matter has been referred.
- Once a matter has been referred to an institution, either by you or the NHMRC, it is the responsibility of the institution to manage the allegation and provide NHMRC with notifications in accordance with the [NHMRC policy on misconduct related to NHMRC funding](#).

Allegations of fraud

If you wish to make an allegation of fraud related to NHMRC funding, you can do so by emailing the details to integrity@nhmrc.gov.au.

Allegations of fraud relating to NHMRC funding will be provided to the NHMRC's Fraud Control Officer, who will make a preliminary assessment to determine whether the reported behaviour is potentially fraudulent in nature and whether action is warranted. Further information on NHMRC's management of allegations of fraud is provided in the NHMRC's [Fraud Control Framework](#).

Allegations of fraud may overlap with allegations of research misconduct (for example, where it is alleged that falsified data was used in a successful grant application). If this is the case, the allegations are likely to trigger an institutional misconduct investigation, and may also be considered by the Fraud Control Officer under the provisions of the [Fraud Control Framework](#).

Allegations of other forms of misconduct

If you wish to make an allegation about any other form of misconduct by a person who is receiving or applying for NHMRC funding, you should contact the relevant institution in the first instance. Other forms of misconduct could include, for example, criminal behaviour that does not relate to research misconduct.

If you do not want to raise your concerns with the relevant institution, you can email NHMRC at integrity@nhmrc.gov.au for advice.

What if I am not satisfied with the way my allegations were investigated?

If you are not satisfied with the way a research misconduct investigation has been conducted, and if the research was conducted by an institution that receives funding from NHMRC or the Australian Research Council (ARC), you may ask the Australian Research Integrity Committee (ARIC) to review the processes undertaken by the institution. Details about how to lodge a request for review with ARIC are provided on the [NHMRC website](#).

If the research was not funded by NHMRC or ARC, or if your allegations were about fraud or other forms of misconduct, you may be able to request that the Ombudsman at the state, territory or Commonwealth level undertake an investigation. There may also be avenues under whistleblower or other legislation. You will need to seek your own legal advice about this.