

Guidelines for handling suspicions regarding research misconduct and breaches of responsible conduct of research at DTU

Introductory remarks

All DTU employees should take care *not to confuse conflicts* for research misconduct nor to make accusations of research misconduct based on conflicts.

1. Initial report or discussion of suspicion

Suspicions of research misconduct or breaches of responsible conduct of research performed by DTU employees, students and collaborators in DTU projects must be reported. Reporting may be done by DTU employees and/or non-DTU employees.

Reporting must be done in person and will be handled in confidence. Anonymous reports will not be investigated.

Allegations of research misconduct should be made in line with DTU's general management structure, i.e. to the immediate superior. If, for some reason, this is not feasible, it is also possible to report a suspicion to superiors further up the management structure or to the head of department/head of center.

It is always possible to take a suspicion to the administrative person in charge of research integrity or to the Provost.

2. Report of suspicion

If, after initial discussion of the suspicion with a superior, it is deemed that the matter warrants further investigation, the superior will then report the matter to the administrative person in charge of research integrity or to the Provost.

3. Preliminary investigation

The Provost and the administrative person in charge of research integrity will launch a preliminary investigation of the matter. If necessary for the investigation, the person under suspicion will be informed that a preliminary investigation is being conducted.

Based on the preliminary investigation, a decision will be made as to whether 1) the suspicion is deemed unfounded or does not fall within the scope of the code of conduct for research integrity, and therefore the matter will be dismissed or 2) that there exist grounds to continue the process based on a well-founded suspicion.

4. Investigation

At this stage, the person under suspicion must be notified of the suspicion and the ongoing investigation, as well as the person who has made the initial allegation.

Relevant information, including witness statements, data, statement from the person under suspicion, etc. will be collected.

An ad hoc expert committee may be appointed, drawing on expertise both from DTU as well as external expertise. The Provost appoints the committee.

Suspicious involving research or staff from other institutions

Should the suspicions relate to external partners – other research institutions, private businesses and industry, private foundations, public bodies, etc. – an agreement will be reached between the partners, at an appropriate level of the partner organization, as to how to handle the matter.

5. **Report**

The investigation will culminate in the creation of a report on the alleged or suspected misconduct including substantiating evidence. If the report or parts of the report is prepared by an expert committee, the committee's findings and conclusions will be included, including minority statements.

6. **Conclusion**

The Provost will make a final conclusion, based on the report.

7. **Possible outcomes**

a. Acquittal of suspicion

The person under suspicion is deemed not to have committed any breach of responsible conduct of research and no further action will be taken.

b. Confirmation of suspicion

Depending on the gravity of the breach of responsible conduct of research, various sanctions may be imposed, both at an institutional and/or academic level.

Institutional

Oral or written warning (according to employment legislation)

Change of job functions

Dismissal/termination of contract

Academic

Annulment of degree (PhD, Dr.Techn.)

Retraction of articles

Notification of misconduct to collaborators, co-authors, etc.

Annulment of honourable degrees

In case of serious academic sanctions, such as annulment of an academic degree, a hearing of the DTU Academic Council will be conducted.

8. Other relevant information

a. Suspicions brought forth in ill faith

If a suspicion has been brought forth in ill faith with wilful intention to harm or cast suspicion on a researcher, this will be regarded as misconduct in itself and may result in legal sanctions according to those imposed on violations of employment legislation, cf. possible institutional outcomes above.

b. Confidence

As long as a suspicion has not been confirmed, the investigation is to be kept as confidential as possible. If the investigation continues, involving more people, complete confidentiality cannot be expected. According to the Danish law concerning access to legal documents (Offentlighedsloven), access to files regarding disciplinary measures is prohibited.

c. Duration of process

Though DTU will strive to reach an outcome as quickly as possible, cases regarding possible breaches of responsible conduct of research are often complex and the investigation can take a considerable amount of time. If at all possible, DTU aims to conclude cases within a year.

d. Companions

All involved parties may have companions present at meetings, hearings, etc.

e. Referral to The Danish Committees for Scientific Dishonesty (DCSD)

[Udvalgene vedrørende videnskabelig uredelighed, UVVU]

Any case may be referred to UVVU by any of the involved parties at any time of the process.

If this happens, the internal process at DTU must cease.

f. Former DTU employees

It is possible to bring forth a suspicion against a former employee of DTU, and it will be handled according to the guidelines above. However, DTU's authority to impose sanctions is limited in this case.

g. Research misconduct or breaches of responsible conduct done by an external agent

If research misconduct or breaches of responsible conduct done by external scientists or others may bring a DTU employee into discredit, the DTU employee in question can ask for assistance from the administrative person in charge or the Provost.