

FWF procedure in cases of suspected violation of the Standards of Good Scientific Practice

A suspicion of violation of the Standards of Good Scientific Practice is raised by a person (informant) concerning a scientist/scholar (person concerned) who is allegedly involved in an FWF application or project.

- The person responsible for Research Integrity & Research Ethics at the FWF is informed and documents the suspected case in a database.
- I. A plausibility check is carried out by the FWF secretariat to determine whether the suspicion raised is in connection with an application to the FWF or a funded FWF project:
 1. It is a manifestly unfounded suspicion or a suspicion that has no connection with the FWF:
 - If the suspicion is unfounded, it is filed. If the suspicion is not related to the FWF, the informant is referred to the [Austrian Agency for Scientific Integrity](#) (OeAWI).
 2. There is an initial suspicion and a connection with the FWF:
 - Continue with II.
 - II. The FWF requests the informant's consent to forward the suspicion to the person concerned and asks him/her for an opinion on the suspicion raised.
 - III. The suspicion and opinion of the person(s) concerned will be forwarded to the appropriate members of the [FWF Board](#) with expertise in the relevant discipline. They will submit a written statement. The FWF Board decides on the further procedure.
 1. Unfounded suspicion
 - The process is discontinued and filed.
 2. A violation has been clearly identified, is also admitted by the person concerned, and it is a minor violation.
 - The FWF sends a cautionary letter to the researcher concerned.
 3. If a serious violation is suspected and/or the person concerned disagrees with it, the case will be forwarded to the OeAWI for review. The decision procedure of the project application is suspended until the decision on scientific misconduct has been made.
 - 3.1st The opinion of the OeAWI refutes the suspicion
 - The process is discontinued and is filed.
 - 3.2nd If the suspicion is confirmed by the OeAWI, the FWF Board decides on possible sanctions for the researcher concerned, depending on the extent of the violation:
 - a) Minor violation = cautionary letter (if necessary with requests for amendments such as *correction*, *retraction*, etc.)
 - b) Substantial violation = short or medium application ban at the FWF
 - c) Serious violation = longer application ban, halt to the project and/or repayment of funds already disbursed (under AVB (general terms and conditions of contract) § 3e(1)1).

- An amendment to the decision can be requested from the FWF. The decision has to be amended if formal errors have been made in the decision-making process or facts relevant to the decision have arisen after the decision has been made (= retrial of the decision).
- Disputes arising from suspected breach of the rules of good scientific practice are to be settled exclusively by arbitration (see FWF AVB: point 14).
- The FWF informs the OeAWI about the results of the process.
- Suspected cases and the measures taken by the FWF are published on the FWF homepage every year in an anonymised form.

Course of the procedure at the OeAWI

- The OeAWI examines the suspicion and, if necessary, enlists external experts who report their findings to the [OeAWI Commission](#).
- The commission prepares an opinion; members of the commission must be independent of the Austrian scientific/academic system.
- The opinion is forwarded to the FWF.
- The FWF board decides on the further action.
- The decision of the FWF board is also forwarded to the OeAWI.

Miscellaneous

- As a rule, accusations of scientific misconduct relate to applications and funded projects, including the results arising from them (e.g. publications).
- In principle, suspected cases are always only relevant to the FWF if they are associated with an application or approved funding. In the case of international teams, allegations are forwarded by the OeAWI to the member organisations of [ENRIO](#) (European Network of Research Integrity Offices).
- *Whistleblower protection*: is not practised by the FWF. If a suspicion is raised, the informant must provide their name to the FWF. However, the FWF can, if desired, guarantee confidentiality to the informant. At the OeAWI, the names of the informants are normally not passed on to the persons concerned. The informant must give his/her consent for the person concerned to be contacted. If it is a serious case, the OeAWI also addresses the institution's management.
- *Research Integrity & Research Ethics*: The rules of good scientific practice (research integrity) relate to the research process; in the case of violations of ethical regulations, points of contact with scientific misconduct may exist, but they are regulated by other procedures.

Other regulations:

- Not every incidence of misconduct by researchers is a violation of the Standards of Good Scientific Practice if this behaviour can be penalised by other regulations (e. g. labour law).

Classification of suspected cases of violation of the Standards of Good Scientific Practice

The following list presents the most common types of cases that may, but do not necessarily have to represent scientific/scholarly misconduct. This always requires individual clarification. This list is dynamic and needs to be adapted to recent developments.

Fabrication / falsification

- Falsification or invention of research findings
- Alteration of research findings
- Withholding of research findings
- Insufficient documentation of research findings

Plagiarism / disputed authorship

- Use of third-party ideas without indication of origin
- Multiple use of own research results without making this clear (self-plagiarism)
- Assertion of authorship without having made a contribution
- Denial of authorship despite contribution
- Commissioning of a person other than the author without acknowledgement (ghostwriting)

Other

- Misuse of research funds
- Obstruction/sabotage of research
- Discrimination against whistleblowers
- Discrimination in professional advancement
- Copyright conflicts
- Other