

Caltech Research Misconduct (RM) Proceeding (Effective 2026)

ALLEGATION

Allegation of Research Misconduct (Fabrication Falsification or Plagiarism) Brought to the RIO¹ (or Institute) by Complainant

If Allegation is true, but not research misconduct, RIO or Designated Official provides counsel to the Complainant and tries to resolve through a satisfactory means other than RM Policy

ASSESSMENT

RIO or his/her Designated Official² assesses the allegation to determine whether the allegation (1) falls within the definition of research misconduct; (2) falls within scope of the RM policy, and (3) is sufficiently credible and specific enough so that potential evidence of research misconduct may be identified.

If YES, an Inquiry is Required.

If Assessment concludes that an Inquiry is not required, the RM proceeding ends.

Respondent is notified.

INQUIRY

Records are sequestered.

RIO or Designated Official² (typically DC) notifies Respondent of Inquiry. Provides allegations of research misconduct and a copy of RM Policy to the Respondent.

Respondent is given an opportunity to respond to allegations in writing. (Typically 5-7 days)

Inquiry: Data and Evidence Reviewed, Interviews conducted.

Draft Inquiry Report is written and issued to Respondent by RIO or Designated Official².

The Respondent is given an opportunity (not less than 5 days) to respond. Their response is considered and included in Final Inquiry Report.

RIO or Designated Official² considers the Respondent's response and finalizes the Inquiry Report.

RIO or Designated Official² determines whether an Investigation is warranted. An investigation is warranted if (1) there is a reasonable basis for concluding that the allegation falls within the definition of research misconduct under the RM policy, (2) the research falls within the scope of the RM policy, and (3) the preliminary information-gathering and fact-finding indicates that the allegation may have substance.

Inquiry must be completed in 90 days

Results in a Final Inquiry Report are provided to RIO (Copy to Respondent)

If Respondent admits misconduct, process can pause so that Caltech can work with regulatory authorities to determine whether the admission is sufficient to stop the proceedings.

If Inquiry determines an investigation is not warranted, the RM proceeding ends.

Respondent is notified.

INVESTIGATION

RIO determines an Investigation is warranted and proposes, with the help of the DC/ACS an investigation committee (IC) The Investigation must be initiated w/in 30 days of a determination that an Investigation is warranted.

RIO notifies Respondent of Investigation/allegations/committee;

RIO notifies relevant federal agencies or Research Sponsors

RIO provides IC with charge.

Records are sequestered. Interviews conducted. IC Investigates to Completion

A finding of research misconduct requires that the alleged misconduct be a significant departure from accepted practices of the relevant research community and that the misconduct was committed intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly. Each allegation must be proven by the standard of a preponderance of the evidence. The IC evaluates each allegation and makes a recommendation for a finding to the IDO.

Draft Investigation Report is provided to Respondent who is given 30 days to respond. Respondent's Response is considered by IC and included in the Final Investigation Report.

IC Issues Final Investigation Report and provides it the IDO³ with the report and institutional record, as necessary.

IDO makes a finding of research misconduct and determines the appropriate institutional action to correct the research record. IDO provides a written determination.

IDO forwards the Final Investigation Report to the President.

President decides appropriate disciplinary actions or sanctions.

RIO notifies Respondent and provides Respondent copy of Final Investigation Report and institutional actions.

All Investigation (above) must be completed within 180 Days

RIO notifies federal agencies or sponsors within 30 days of the determination.

Records are secured and stored for 7 years.

¹ RIO= Research Integrity Officer, Vice Provost for Research or JPL Chief Scientist

² Designated Official = Person appointed by RIO

³ IDO = Institutional Deciding Official = Provost or JPL Director