

Decision regarding research misconduct

Decision

The National Board for Assessment of Research Misconduct (“the Board” or “NPOF”) finds [REDACTED] not guilty of research misconduct.

Background

On 2 July 2022, an allegation of research misconduct report was reported to the Board. The allegation concerns an unpublished thesis manuscript produced by [REDACTED] in 2021.

He is suspected of plagiarising a mathematical proof that he allegedly took from his supervisor’s notes and previous publications. According to the report, there is no reference to the supervisor’s publications in [REDACTED] thesis manuscript.

[REDACTED] has commented on the report and believes that the mathematical proof referred to in the allegations was part of a collaboration between him and the supervisor. The manuscript concerned is, according to [REDACTED], an unpublished draft dating from 2021.

Grounds for decision

Legal regulation

The Board’s remit is to examine issues of research misconduct under the Swedish Act (2019:504) on responsibility for good research practice and the examination of research misconduct (“the Act”). Section 2 of the Act defines research misconduct as a serious breach of good research practice in the form of fabrication, falsification or plagiarism, committed with intent or through gross negligence, in the planning, conduct or reporting of research. “Reporting” refers both to publication and to other forms of disclosure.¹

Planning, conduct or reporting of research

According to the definition in Section 2 of the Act, breaches of good research practice that may constitute research misconduct must have been committed during the planning, conduct or reporting of research. The wording means, according to the preparatory work, that the concept of “misconduct” refers to breaches throughout the

¹ Government Bill 2018//19:58, p. 49.

research process.² “Reporting” refers both to publication and to other types of disclosure.³

Fabrication, falsification or plagiarism

The Board’s remit is to investigate three forms of research misconduct: fabrication, falsification and plagiarism. These terms are not defined by law, but the preparatory work for the Act refers to the fact that they are described in codes (codices) and guidelines on research ethics, such as *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*.^{4,5} They are also explained in the Swedish Research Council’s publication *Good Research Practice*.⁶

Fabrication is often described, according to the preparatory work for the Act, as inventing results and documenting them as if they were genuine. Falsification refers to manipulation of research material, equipment or processes, or unjustified alteration, omission or suppression of information or results. Lastly, plagiarism is defined as a researcher’s use of other people’s texts, ideas or work without duly acknowledging the original source.⁷

The Board considers that the thesis manuscript constitutes conduct of research. It is an unpublished thesis manuscript that is still being revised. The manuscript has not been subject to any form of publication or made public in any other manner, and it is not in its final form. It is not possible to impose the same requirements on this type of work as on a published work.

Accordingly, the Board considers that it has not been demonstrated that the manuscript contains plagiarism, and the conclusion is therefore that [REDACTED] is not guilty of research misconduct.

The Board has made a decision in this case, following a presentation by caseworker Magnus Gudmundsson.

Catarina Barketorp
President

Magnus Gudmundsson
Caseworker

² Government Bill 2018/19:58, p. 100.

³ Government Bill 2018/19:58, p. 49.

⁴ *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*, revised edition. Berlin: All European Academies (ALLEA); 2018, section 3.1.

⁵ Government Bill 2018/19:58, pp. 45, 100.

⁶ *Good Research Practice*, Swedish Research Council; 2017, Chapter 8.

⁷ Government Bill 2018/19:58, pp. 45, 100.