

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 1 July 2022, Malmö University submitted a research misconduct case to the Board. The submission took place in accordance with Section 6 of the Act (2019:504) on responsibility for good research practice and the examination of research misconduct (“the Act”).

The submission concerns a PowerPoint presentation produced by [REDACTED] and given at a research seminar in Paris on 11 October 2021. [REDACTED] is suspected of passing off as his own, in the presentation, a mathematical proof shown although, according to the submission, it is similar to a mathematical proof found in a thesis manuscript written by one of [REDACTED] PhD students. The student’s view is that he is the originator of the proof. Malmö University has submitted the case as suspected plagiarism.

The presentation in question was:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] contests the allegation of plagiarism. He states that the mathematical proof in question is something he had worked on for several years, and also published, in publications including two scientific articles enclosed with the case. Furthermore, he believes that the PhD student received and studied notes as part of his supervision, which may explain how the proof also came to be used in the student’s thesis manuscript. According to [REDACTED] the seminar in question was an informal get-together within the circle of experts in Paris and the surrounding area. Roughly 15 people attended.

Grounds for decision

Legal regulation

Under the Act (2019:504) on responsibility for good research practice and the examination of research misconduct (“the Act”), the Board is tasked to investigate issues of research misconduct. 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.

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 research process.¹ “Reporting” refers both to publication and to other types of disclosure.²

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*.^{3,4} They are also explained in the Swedish Research Council’s publication *Good Research Practice*.⁵

Fabrication is often, according to the preparatory work for the Act, described 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.⁶

PowerPoint presentation constitutes reporting of research. PowerPoint presentations of the kind that took place do not always contain complete references, and it is therefore not possible to impose on the presentation the same formal requirements as could have been imposed if the research had been made public through a published document or by some other means. The presentation contains few references, either to the author personally or to anyone else. Accordingly, it cannot be concluded that research misconduct is involved.

¹ Government Bill 2018/19:58, p. 100.

² Government Bill 2018/19:58, p. 49.

³ *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*, revised edition. Berlin: All European Academies (ALLEA); 2018, section 3.1.

⁴ Swedish Government Bill 2018/19:58, pp. 45, 100.

⁵ *Good Research Practice*, Swedish Research Council; 2017, Chapter 8.

⁶ Government Bill 2018/19:58, pp. 45, 100.

The Board's conclusion is therefore that [REDACTED] is not guilty of research misconduct.

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

Catharina Barketorp
President

Magnus Gudmundsson
Caseworker