

Scholarly Misconduct: Some Basic Information

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1. Scholarly misconduct is an established national concept. The widely-adopted definition was first introduced by the National Academies of Science in 1992. It has been adopted by the relevant offices in NIH and NSF, as well as other places. The acronym is FFP.

“Research misconduct means fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results. (a) Fabrication is making up data or results and recording or reporting them. (b) Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record. (c) Plagiarism is the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit. (d) Research misconduct does not include honest error or differences of opinion.” <http://ori.hhs.gov/definition-misconduct>.
2. When students are accused:
 - a. Georgia Tech uses the term academic misconduct to refer to violations of our own Honor Code; it refers to products that stay on campus, like papers or exams turned in for grading. When students are accused of academic misconduct, the Dean of Students Office process is used (through the Office of Student Integrity).
 - b. The term scholarly misconduct applies to research results that are intended for publication or reporting publicly, to become part of the public body of knowledge off campus. When students are accused of scholarly misconduct, the process described in the Faculty Handbook is used, but the documents and results are protected under FERPA.
3. Georgia Tech’s process for addressing allegations of scholarly misconduct appear in the Faculty Handbook, Section 5.7. This process applies to everyone at Georgia Tech: faculty, staff, and students.
 - a. The process is taken nearly verbatim from the wording NIH recommends for university policies. We are committed to the federal government for having a posted policy and following it as part of our funding relationship.
 - b. The process involves two main stages:
 - i. Inquiry – a faculty panel determines whether there is enough evidence to undertake a full investigation
 - ii. Investigation – a faculty panel conducts a full investigation, issues a finding, and recommends action as needed.
 - c. Allegations can go to the Assistant Provost for Academic Advocacy and Conflict Resolution, who will call it to the attention of the Provost. The process is coordinated by the Office of Legal Affairs.
4. Lessons learned in recent years
 - a. Allegations should be referred immediately to the Provost for the Faculty Handbook process. Schools should not conduct their own inquiry processes, since those processes are not authoritative; the allegation can still go into the Faculty Handbook process regardless of the findings of a local inquiry.
 - b. The allegation should be kept as confidential as possible. Avoid involving other faculty and students in investigating the claim. Allegations can hurt either those who make them or those who are accused, even when the process finds no misconduct.
 - c. As soon as an allegation emerges, the school chair should secure all relevant research materials. This should include making backups of all relevant hard drives and storing the backups securely.
 - d. Inquiry and investigation committees should generally be limited to full professors; competing time commitments need to be taken into account in the appointments.
 - e. The process can take a long time. The sooner it starts, the earlier there will be a conclusion.