

Research Misconduct Policy

Policy Owner	Scientific & Strategic Advisory Board
Approved By	ARNECH Scientific & Strategic Advisory Board
Effective Date	2021
Next Review Date	January 2027
Version	3.0
Applies To	All ARNECH staff, consultants, subcontractors, and field teams
Last Updated	January 2025

1. Purpose

This policy defines research misconduct and sets out how allegations are received, investigated, and adjudicated, safeguarding the integrity of ARNECH's research output and protecting those who raise concerns in good faith.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all research activity conducted under ARNECH's name, at every stage from study design and data collection through to analysis, reporting, and publication, and to all staff, consultants, and collaborators involved in that work.

3. Policy Statement

Research misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Fabrication — inventing data, results, or findings that were not actually generated
- Falsification — manipulating research materials, equipment, processes, or data such that findings are not accurately represented
- Plagiarism — presenting another person's ideas, methods, or words as one's own without appropriate attribution
- Failure to obtain appropriate ethics approval or informed consent where required
- Improper allocation of authorship or failure to disclose relevant conflicts of interest in publications

Honest error and legitimate differences in interpretation of data do not constitute misconduct.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- The Scientific & Strategic Advisory Board is responsible for receiving allegations, appointing an independent investigation panel, and adjudicating findings.
- Unit Heads are responsible for promoting research integrity within their teams and for the initial handling of concerns raised to them.
- All researchers are responsible for maintaining accurate records and raising concerns about the conduct of others where warranted.

5. Procedures

- Allegations of research misconduct are submitted in writing to the Scientific & Strategic Advisory Board.
- An initial assessment determines whether a formal investigation is warranted; if so, an investigation panel independent of the individuals concerned is convened.
- The panel reviews evidence, interviews relevant parties, and reports findings and recommendations to the Advisory Board.
- Substantiated misconduct may result in correction or retraction of affected outputs, disciplinary action, and notification to co-authors, journals, clients, or funders as appropriate.

- Those against whom an allegation is made are informed of the process and given the opportunity to respond.

6. Reporting Concerns and Breaches

Concerns about possible research misconduct may be raised with a Unit Head or directly with the Scientific & Strategic Advisory Board, including anonymously where preferred. Reports made in good faith are protected from retaliation, even where an allegation is not ultimately substantiated.

7. Training and Awareness

Researchers receive guidance on data integrity, authorship, and citation practice at induction, with additional briefing for staff supervising junior researchers or enumerators.

8. Related Standards and References

This policy is aligned with the following external standards and frameworks:

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) Guidance — <https://publicationethics.org/guidance>

UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) Code of Practice for Research — <https://ukrio.org/publications/code-of-practice-for-research/>

9. Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed by the Scientific & Strategic Advisory Board at least every two years, or sooner where changes in law, donor requirements, or organisational practice require it. Comments and proposed amendments may be submitted to the Policy Owner at any time.

Registration certificates, financial statements, and full policy documentation are available on request for prospective partners, clients, and funders as part of due diligence.

