

Implementing a national questionnaire on research integrity (RI) misconducts :

**how does data collection lead to standardization
of norms?**

French Office for Research Integrity (Ofis)

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Background

- A national questionnaire has been legally compulsory since 2021
- The French Office for Research Integrity (Ofis) is responsible for its implementation and for analyzing the results, as part of its mission as a national observatory for RI.
- The first data collection covers the years 2021-2023
- The expected data in the questionnaire are also legally defined
- **Indicators & thematic goals :**
 - **Monitor and qualify proven misconducts** in research performing organisations (RPOs) : obtain data at a national scale that can be compared every 2 years to measure any changes.
 - **Improve understanding of the cases** that are being reported and the extent to which they correspond to proven misconducts.
 - **Analyze the effectiveness of investigation mechanisms**, especially those introduced (or generalized) by the 2021 law (referrals, investigation methods, duration of case management).



Background

Expected data :

- **Reports of alleged RI misconducts** : number of **reports**, number of **admissible reports**
- **Investigations** : number of **investigations in progress**, types of investigations carried out (inside a RPO, between 2+ RPOs), conducted interviews (internal or with external expert(s))
- **Case management** : number of **finalized investigation reports**, **duration** of the investigation, types of **outcomes**
- **Deferral procedure** : number of cases in which the Research Integrity Officer (RIO) requests a deferral, number of deferrals **inside** the RPO, number of deferrals **outside** the RPO.
- *“Ensuring that data and publications affected by the breach of RI requirements are reported to the relevant concerned parties (organisations)”* : number of reports made, organised system for reporting



Background & methodological goals

Prior to the law, several RPOs had already appointed RIOs
They have been conducting investigations and collecting data using their own methodology.

Methodological goals :

- Include questions to obtain the expected data (standardization of the data collection process) **and** draw on existing operational procedures (diversity).
- Implement a questionnaire as close as possible to the monitoring templates already used by RIOs.
- Create of a reporting tool for RIOs, to facilitate future monitoring of activities throughout the period and the transcription of indicators into the national questionnaire.



First draft & challenges highlighted by the stakeholders' consultation

N°5

No. of admissible reports by category of alleged misconduct.	2022-23
Fabrication	
Falsification	
Plagiarism	
« self-plagiarism »	
Authorship conflicts, authorship problems	
Non-preservation/destruction of data	
Conflicts of interest	
Fraudulent declaration	
Others	

Procedure for managing reports

N°13

No. of cases where the investigation resulted in

Further investigations (data search, file consultation)

Interviews (internal or external)

Creation of an experts' committee

Implementation of mediation

2022-23



First draft and challenges identification

Outcomes

N°17

No. of cases where 'scientific', rehabilitation or support measures were taken

correction and/or retraction (publications, data)

Research project paused or modified

Official communication of the RIO to the relevant concerned parties

Rehabilitation measures

Support (training, mentoring, etc.)

Others, please specify

2022-2023

N°18

Number of cases resulting in disciplinary measures

Warning, reprimand

Suspension

Dismissal

Removal from the promotion list, lowering of step, exclusion for 15 days, compulsory reassignment

Demotion, exclusion from service for 3 months to 2 years

Compulsory retirement

Other, please specify



Challenges

- **Procedure:** steps of the procedure, name of these steps, order and details of the procedure
 - **Essential steps** only
 - No fixed order
 - Introduction of the **explanatory note**
 - Explanation and standardization of the **deferral procedure**
 - **Nomenclature(s)** of RI breaches / misconducts
- Follow-up to the report's conclusions
 - **“Concerned parties”**
 - Remedies or sanctions



Thematic goals after consultation

- **Indicators & thematic goals :**
 - **Monitor and qualify proven misconducts** in research performing organisations (RPOs) : obtain data at a national scale that can be compared every 2 years to measure any changes.
 - **Improve understanding of the cases** that are being reported and the extent to which they correspond to proven misconducts.
 - **Analyze the effectiveness of investigation mechanisms**, especially those introduced (or generalized) by the 2021 law (referrals, investigation methods, duration of case management).
- **Harmonization of practices,**
- **Formalization of procedure(s) for case management**
- **Adoption of recommendations**



2nd draft : procedure

I. Investigation reports completed and submitted to the organisation's management authority in 2022 and 2023

		Rapport submitted in 2022	Rapports submitted in 2023
N°1	No. of investigation reports submitted to the organisation's management authority		
N°2a	No. of reports submitted concerning events within the organisation		
N°2b	No. of reports submitted concerning inter-organisations events		
	For reports concerning inter-institutional incidents, can you specify the organisations concerned?		

V. Deferral cases

N°18 - Number of deferrals (investigation entrusted to an *ad hoc* RIO, within or outside your organisation), for all investigations opened for the years 2022 and 2023, whether or not the investigation report has already been transmitted.

Indicate the total number of investigations opened in 2022-2023 which have been the subject of a deferral, *i.e.* the taking over of the case by a person acting as the organisation's RIO for this given case, even though this person is not your organisation's permanent RIO.

Count in this category all cases, in 2022 and 2023, of deferral: choice of an internal person, solicitation of a person in another organisation, or solicitation of Ofis as provided for in article 4 of the decree of 3 December 2021 [repealed in 2024. In force for the period concerned].

Count all cases: those for which the investigation report has already been sent, and cases for which the investigation report has not yet been sent.

Would you like to add a comment about the cases of deferral?

The commentary may relate to any aspect of deferral.

The commentary can be used to explain some of your answers, if you feel this is necessary.

V. Cases of deferral

N°18	No. of deferrals (investigation entrusted to an <i>ad hoc</i> RIO, within or outside your organisation), for all investigations opened in 2022-2023, whether or not the investigation report has already been sent.	in 2022-23

Would you like to add any comments about the deferral cases?

2nd draft : Nomenclature(s) of RI misconducts

	No. of transmitted reports by category of RI misconduct	Reports submitted in 2022-23
N°14	<i>Fabrication</i>	
	<i>Falsification</i>	
	<i>Plagiarism</i>	
	<i>Conflicts of authorship, authorship problems</i>	
	<i>Inappropriate data management (failure to store, destroy or retain data)</i>	
	<i>Failure to declare conflicts of interest</i>	
	<i>Violation, abuse or non-compliance with laws or ethical protocols</i>	
	<i>Other (e.g. inappropriate practices or behaviour), please specify</i>	

** in the case of a report concerning several types of misconduct, the report may be counted several times, within each type of misconduct.*



2nd draft : « concerned parties »

N°10	a) Number of reports resulting in a notification of 'data or publications affected by the misconduct to the concerned parties'.
	b) Number of datasets affected
	c) Number of publications affected
N°11	Indicate the 'concerned parties' (Publisher(s), funder(s), personal data protection committees or research ethics committees, etc.)
N°12	a) In the case of information to publishers: number of reports that have led to a recommendation for correction(s) or retraction(s)
	b) For information to publishers: number of publications concerned by a recommendation for correction(s) or retraction(s)

N°10 – No. of reports resulting in a notification of « data or publication affected to the misconduct to the concerned parties ».

The conclusions of the investigation indicate that data or publications are affected by the misconduct. It is recommended that these affected data or publications be reported to the concerned parties, i.e. the natural or legal persons involved in the research work that led to the production or use of the data or to the preparation of the publication(s) affected by the breach.

N°10a - Number of datasets affected.

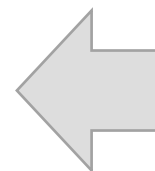
If possible, indicate the number of datasets affected by the breach.

N°10b - Number of publications affected.

Indicate the number of publications affected by the breach.

N°11 - Indicate the 'concerned parties' (Publisher(s), funder(s), personal protection committees or research ethics committees...).

The parties directly concerned are: publisher(s) (in terms of editorial responsibility); funder(s); participants and stakeholders in research work, particularly involving the human person (persons involved, sponsors, investigators, ethics committees, etc.).





FAIT LE POINT

OFFICE FRANÇAIS
DE L'INTÉGRITÉ SCIENTIFIQUE

Décembre 2023



Quels sont les acteurs à informer en cas de manquements à l'intégrité scientifique avérés ?

Pour la fiabilité de la science et le bon fonctionnement des communautés de recherche, quand un manquement à l'intégrité scientifique est avéré à l'issue d'une instruction et qu'il affecte des données de recherche ou des publications, il est essentiel que tous les acteurs concernés en soient informés. En effet, ceux-ci peuvent avoir à agir en conséquence, chacun selon ses prérogatives.

Cette fiche vise à répondre à plusieurs questions qui peuvent se poser en pratique : quels sont les acteurs à informer ? Qui doit le faire ? Que doit indiquer le signalement ?

Selon l'article 3.6° du [décret du 3 décembre 2021](#), qui définit les missions du référent à l'intégrité scientifique, ce dernier a notamment pour mission de « veiller à ce que les données et publications affectées par le manquement aux exigences de l'intégrité scientifique soient signalés aux parties concernées ».

Results & impact (analyze of 39 completed questionnaires)

Variations in the procedure:

“There were no investigations as such. However, 4 cases were the subject of formal intervention by the RIO in 2023 (0 in 2022, not counting exchanges and advice on situations when the RIO was called upon). 2 cases were handled by several RIOs (and **we concluded that it would be appropriate to issue only an information note to the presidents**).”

Nomenclature(s) of RI misconducts

“Rather than “proven misconduct(s)”, we should talk about “errors”.”

“Usurpation of the identity of a researcher from our organisation and of the organisation's name”.

“4 authorship problems, 1 **suspected inappropriate behaviour**, 2 problems relating to **doctoral supervision**”.

Concerned parties

“The report submitted concluded that there had been misconduct, not RI breaches.” (implied, misconduct was not on research practices directly and the results were not affected)



Conclusion

The final version of the questionnaire includes six categories (19 questions) supplemented by a note for its completion.

The implementation of this process of data collection, every 2 years, by a national regulatory body, has an impact on the norms and practices at the practitioners' level.

It induces norms about steps to be investigated, definitions of actions or acts, and factors to be considered that will influence or transform local practices and harmonize them at national level.

However, by including blank fields at the end of each category and specifying in the instructions that comments may relate to the questionnaire itself and its unsuitability for the organisation's practices, we are giving ourselves the opportunity to improve the questions.

Data collection enable us to fulfil our role as a national observatory for research integrity, but also to adapt the harmonisation process **to the realities of practitioners' work.**



Thank you for your attention!

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