

§ 689.4

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subjects, other researchers, institutions or the public welfare; and

(5) Other relevant circumstances.

(c) Interim actions may include, but are not limited to:

(1) Totally or partially suspending an existing award;

(2) Suspending eligibility for Federal awards in accordance with debarment-and-suspension regulations;

(3) Proscribing or restricting particular research activities, as, for example, to protect human or animal subjects;

(4) Requiring special certifications, assurances, or other, administrative arrangements to ensure compliance with applicable regulations or terms of the award;

(5) Requiring more prior approvals by NSF;

(6) Deferring funding action on continuing grant increments;

(7) Deferring a pending award;

(8) Restricting or suspending participation as an NSF reviewer, advisor, or consultant.

(d) For those cases governed by the debarment and suspension regulations, the standards of proof contained in the debarment and suspension regulations shall control. Otherwise, NSF will take no final action under this section without a finding of misconduct supported by a preponderance of the relevant evidence.

§ 689.4 Role of awardee institutions.

(a) Awardee institutions bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct and for the inquiry, investigation, and adjudication of alleged research misconduct. In most instances, NSF will rely on awardee institutions to promptly:

(1) Initiate an inquiry into any suspected or alleged research misconduct;

(2) Conduct a subsequent investigation, if warranted;

(3) Take action necessary to ensure the integrity of research, the rights and interests of research subjects and the public, and the observance of legal requirements or responsibilities; and

(4) Provide appropriate safeguards for subjects of allegations as well as informants.

(b) If an institution wishes NSF to defer independent inquiry or investigation, it should:

(1) Complete any inquiry and decide whether an investigation is warranted within 90 days. If completion of an inquiry is delayed, but the institution wishes NSF deferral to continue, NSF may require submission of periodic status reports.

(2) Inform OIG immediately if an initial inquiry supports a formal investigation.

(3) Keep OIG informed during such an investigation.

(4) Complete any investigation and reach a disposition within 180 days. If completion of an investigation is delayed, but the institution wishes NSF deferral to continue, NSF may require submission of periodic status reports.

(5) Provide OIG with the final report from any investigation.

(c) NSF expects institutions to promptly notify OIG should the institution become aware during an inquiry or investigation that:

(1) Public health or safety is at risk;

(2) NSF's resources, reputation, or other interests need protecting;

(3) There is reasonable indication of possible violations of civil or criminal law;

(4) Research activities should be suspended;

(5) Federal action may be needed to protect the interests of a subject of the investigation or of others potentially affected; or

(6) The scientific community or the public should be informed.

(d) Awardee institutions should maintain and effectively communicate to their staffs appropriate policies and procedures relating to research misconduct, which should indicate when NSF should be notified.

§ 689.5 Initial NSF handling of misconduct matters.

(a) NSF staff who learn of alleged misconduct will promptly and discreetly inform OIG or refer informants to OIG.

(b) The identity of informants who wish to remain anonymous will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law or regulation.