

funding can be deferred by the program until the completion of the inquiry or investigation.

(g) If, during the course of an OIG conducted inquiry or investigation, it appears that immediate administrative action, as described in § 1275.106, is necessary to protect public health or safety, Federal resources or interests, or the interests of those involved in the inquiry or investigation, the OIG shall inform the NASA sponsor for the research and the NASA Office of the Chief Scientist.

§ 1275.103 Role of awardee institutions.

(a) The awardee institutions have the primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct and for the inquiry, investigation, and adjudication of research misconduct alleged to have occurred in association with their own institutions, although NASA has ultimate oversight authority for NASA research.

(b) When an allegation of research misconduct related to NASA research is made directly to the OIG and the OIG defers to the awardee institution's inquiry or investigation, or when an allegation of research misconduct related to NASA research is made directly to the awardee institution which commences an inquiry or investigation, the awardee institution is required to:

(1) Notify the OIG if an inquiry supports a formal investigation as soon as this is determined.

(2) Keep the OIG informed during such an investigation.

(3) Notify the OIG immediately—

(i) If public health or safety is at risk;

(ii) If Federal resources, reputation, or other interests need protecting;

(iii) If research activities should be suspended;

(iv) If there is reasonable indication of possible violations of civil or criminal law;

(v) If Federal action is needed to protect the interests of those involved in the investigation; or

(vi) If the research community or the public should be informed.

(4) Provide the OIG with a copy of the investigation report, including the

recommendations made to the awardee institution's adjudication official and the Respondent's written comments (if any), along with a copy of the evidentiary record.

(5) Provide the OIG with the awardee institution's final determination, including any corrective actions taken or planned.

(c) If an awardee institution wishes the OIG to defer its own inquiry or investigation, the awardee institution shall complete any inquiry and decide whether an investigation is warranted within 60 days. It should similarly complete any investigation, adjudication, or other procedure necessary to produce a final determination, within an additional 180 days. If completion of the process is delayed, but the awardee institution wishes NASA's deferral of its own procedures to continue, NASA may require submission of periodic status reports.

(d) Each awardee institution must maintain and effectively communicate to its staff, appropriate policies and procedures relating to research misconduct, including the requirements on when and how to notify NASA.

§ 1275.104 Conduct of Inquiry by the OIG.

(a) When an awardee institution or another Federal agency has promptly initiated its own investigation, the OIG may defer its inquiry or investigation until it receives the results of that external investigation. When the OIG does not receive the results within a reasonable time, the OIG shall ordinarily proceed with its own investigation.

(b) When the OIG decides to initiate a NASA investigation, the OIG must give prompt written notice to the individual or institution to be investigated, unless notice would prejudice the investigation or unless a criminal investigation is underway or under active consideration. If notice is delayed, it must be given as soon as it will no longer prejudice the investigation or contravene requirements of law or Federal law-enforcement policies.

(c) When alleged misconduct may involve a crime, the OIG shall determine whether any criminal investigation is already pending or projected. If not,

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the OIG shall determine whether the matter should be referred to the Department of Justice.

(d) When a criminal investigation by the Department of Justice or another Federal agency is underway or under active consideration, the OIG shall determine what information, if any, may be disclosed to the Respondent or to NASA employees.

(e) To the extent possible, the identity of sources who wish to remain anonymous shall be kept confidential. To the extent allowed by law, documents and files maintained by the OIG during the course of an inquiry or investigation of misconduct shall be treated as investigative files exempt from mandatory public disclosure upon request under the Freedom of Information Act.

(f) When the OIG proceeds with its own inquiry, it is responsible for ensuring that the inquiry is completed within 60 days after it is commenced. The OIG may extend this period of time for good cause.

(g) On the basis of what the OIG learns from an inquiry, and in consultation as appropriate with other NASA offices, the OIG shall decide whether a formal investigation is warranted.

§ 1275.105 Conduct of the OIG investigation of research misconduct.

(a) The OIG shall make every reasonable effort to complete a NASA research misconduct investigation and issue a report within 120 days after initiating the investigation. The OIG may extend this period of time for good cause.

(b) A NASA investigation may include:

(1) Review of award files, reports, and other documents readily available at NASA or in the public domain;

(2) Review of procedures or methods and inspection of laboratory materials, specimens, and records at awardee institutions;

(3) Interviews with parties or witnesses;

(4) Review of any documents or other evidence provided by or properly obtainable from parties, witnesses, or other sources;

(5) Cooperation with other Federal agencies; and

(6) Opportunity for the Respondent to be heard.

(c) The OIG may invite outside consultants or experts to participate in a NASA investigation.

(d) During the course of the investigation, the OIG shall provide a draft of the investigation report to the Respondent, who shall be invited to submit comments. The Respondent must submit any comments within 20 days of receipt of the draft investigation report. This period of time may be extended by the OIG for good cause. Any comments submitted by the Respondent shall receive full consideration before the investigation report is made final.

(e) At the end of the investigation proceedings, an investigation report must be prepared that shall include recommended findings as to whether research misconduct has occurred. A recommended finding of research misconduct requires that:

(1) There be a significant departure from accepted practices of the relevant research community for maintaining the integrity of the research record;

(2) The research misconduct be committed intentionally, knowingly, or in reckless disregard of accepted practices; and

(3) The allegation be proven by a preponderance of evidence.

(f) The investigation report must also be transmitted with the recommendations for administrative action, when recommended findings of research misconduct are made. Section 1275.106 lists possible recommended administrative actions and considerations for use in determining appropriate recommendations.

(g) NASA OIG may elect to proceed with its administrative investigation processes in lieu of a research misconduct investigation under this part when the allegation is against a civil service employee (an intramural researcher).

§ 1275.106 Administrative actions.

(a) Listed in paragraphs (a)(1) through (a)(3) of this section are possible administrative actions that may be recommended by the investigation