

The State of Research Integrity and Misconduct Policies in Canada

A summary of report findings



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Five Summary Questions

- Does Canada have a research misconduct problem?
- Does Canada have a research integrity system?
- How well is it working?
- Is there a need for changing the system?
- What are the options for improving the system?

Does Canada have a research misconduct problem?

No...

- Research misconduct exists in all countries that fund research
- Canadian institutions report '1 or 2' a year
- Numbers reported by government departments and agencies were lower

But...

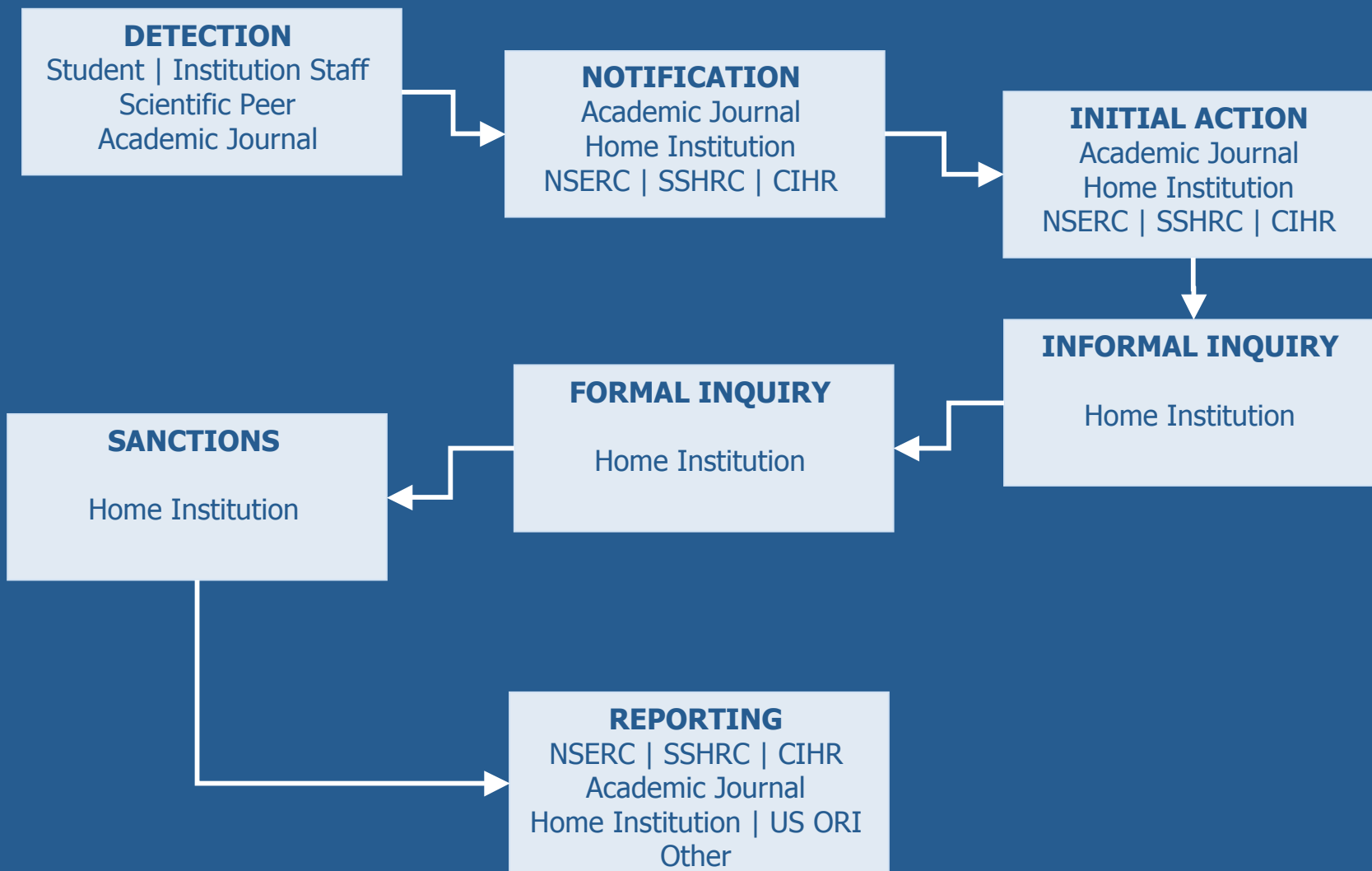
- Data difficult to collect & lack of records
- Differing definitions as to what constitutes research misconduct
- Under-reporting likely – especially for 'questionable research practices'

Does Canada have a research integrity system?

Yes...

- A fire alarm system
 - Passive, self governed
- Structured primarily by TCPS and influenced by a number of other policies
- Locus of responsibility rests with research institutions
 - To develop and promote policies
 - To follow-up on allegations
- Primary mechanism of accountability: MOU between Tri-Councils and eligible institutions
- Formal reporting requirements

Does Canada have a research integrity system?



Does Canada have a research integrity system?

...But

- System coverage is fragmented:
 - TCPS-IRS sphere of influence extends only to higher education institutions and collaborators
 - Government departments and agencies operate in a different policy context from rest of research system
 - 4 out of 8 major SBDAs have explicit RI policies
- No comprehensive independent oversight mechanism
- There are informal elements to the functioning of the system
- Variability in research integrity policies at the institutional level
 - E.g. definition of misconduct...



Does Canada have a research integrity system?

Type of Research Misconduct Recognized in Institutional Definitions	Total (37)
Falsification, fabrication & plagiarism	97%
Failure to reveal conflict of interest	73
Dishonest authorship practices / misappropriation	68
Breach of any regulations on research ethics	68
Financial misconduct	57
Breach of confidentiality	43
Failure to reveal financial conflict of interest	35
Improper data management	27
Retaliation	11
Other	30



How well is it working?

Relatively well...

- Central investigatory role of institutions viewed positively
- Sensitive to complex nature of many allegations
- Accommodating of the complex policy environment at the institutional level
- Non-legislated structure has provided the flexibility needed for on-going improvements by Tri-Councils and SBDAs
- Compared to other countries, Canada' system holds up well



How well is it working?

Country		State of Development	Nationally Legislated	Central Body	Granting Council Oversight	National Policy / Code / Statement
Type 1	Denmark	Established	Yes	Yes	No	No
	Norway	Developing	Yes	Yes	No	No
	United States	Established	Yes	Yes	Yes	Quasi (via Granting Agency)
Type 2	Germany	Established	No	Yes	Yes	Quasi
	United Kingdom	Established	No	Yes	Yes	Quasi
	Canada	Established	No	No	Yes	Quasi (via Granting Agencies)
Type 3	Japan	Developing	No	No	Yes	Yes (Code)
	Australia	Established	No	No	Limited	Yes-(Code)
	France	Developing	No	No	Limited	No



How well is it working?

But...

- Research system is not comprehensive in reach
 - Research conducted in private sector is excluded
 - Reach of RI policies in government is variable
- Limited accountability and transparency
- Weak reporting
- Inconsistent education and training
- System working less well for those areas with most at stake



■ Is there a need for changing Canada's system?

Yes

- Sufficient number weaknesses is a cause for concern within research community
- Compared to other countries, Canada's system:
 - lacks visibility
 - offers no central node for information dissemination & advice
 - offers no central node for 'soft' or 'hard' accountability

But how much?

- Build from existing strengths or full overhaul?

What are some options for improving the system?

Option A: An Evolving Current System

- Not a static option: ongoing improvements by Tri-Councils
- However, limited in addressing problems of reach & oversight, and education and training
- Incremental changes might include:
 - An explicit national definition
 - Strengthened reporting requirements
 - An elaboration of timelines for addressing allegations

What are some options for improving the system?

Option B: Office of Ombudsman

- A trusted intermediary – not an investigator of allegations
- Provides an official centralized point of contact
 - Be recognized as the focal point of Canada's RI system
 - Open to all research performers – government / private sector
- Provides advice & assistance in navigating system
- Offers 'soft' accountability
- Provides needed whistleblower assistance
- Could be limited to one individual on full or part-time basis

What are some options for improving the system?

Option C: Canadian Office of Research Integrity

- Enhance roles of Ombudsman as per Option B
- Expanded responsibilities may include:
 - A research integrity helpline
 - Maintaining a registry of advisers and experts who can support investigations at institutions
 - Education and training programs and materials
 - Collecting data on cases and allegations
 - Disseminating best practices and experiences



Thank you.

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