Description of process for the Committee for Responsible Conduct of Research at Aarhus University (the Research Practices Committee)

0. Flowchart – consideration of cases concerning questionable research practices and research misconduct

PROCEDURE IN CONNECTION WITH ENQUIRIES CONCERNING SUSPICION OF RESEARCH MISCONDUCT OR QUESTIONABLE RESEARCH PRACTICES

1. Start-up of cases

The secretariat of the Research Practices Committee is typically contacted by a PhD supervisor, a department head or another academic staff member who has a potential case for the Research Practices Committee. The case has most often come to their attention in connection with, for example, an article having been screened in a plagiarism detection program prior to publication, or they have received the information via a reviewer.

In this context, the secretariat provides guidance to the effect that a Research Practices Committee has been appointed to assess the case. The complainant is requested to submit a note with a brief and factual summary of the case for use in the assessment.
In addition, the following information must be enclosed for use in the assessment:

- The scientific product which is the subject of the report
- The name, title, place of employment, telephone number and email address of the researcher or researchers which the report concerns
- The allegations made concerning research misconduct or questionable research practices
- The reason for the allegations made concerning research misconduct or questionable research practices.

Moreover, all relevant documents should be enclosed, including email correspondence etc. In the event of a case of plagiarism, for example, the plagiarised material as well as the material subject to plagiarism must be enclosed.

If the enquiry does not contain the above information, the secretariat of the Research Practices Committee may refuse to consider the case or refer it to the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct.

The secretariat ensures that all information in the case is available before it is referred to the Research Practices Committee or the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct.

2. Briefing of the Chairman of the Research Practices Committee

When the secretariat is notified of a case, the secretariat informs the Chairman of the Research Practices Committee thereof.

3. Consultation

The secretariat submits the case to relevant parties for consultation, with a time limit for submitting consultation responses of normally 2-3 weeks.

In the consultation letter, the person complained about is notified that he or she is not obliged to make a statement if he or she thereby risks being exposed to punishment or disciplinary sanctions.

4. Scheduling case for consideration by the Research Practices Committee

During the consultation phase, the secretariat starts the work by scheduling the case for consideration by the Research Practices Committee. The date for the meeting is set for approximately three weeks after the conclusion of the consultation phase. The person complained about is informed about when the case has been scheduled for consideration by the Research Practices Committee.

5. After expiry of the deadline for submitting consultation responses
When the deadline for submitting consultation responses has expired, and the person complained about has had the opportunity to make a statement, the secretariat prepares a bundle of documents for use at the Research Practices Committee’s meeting.

Depending on the nature of the case, and if the Chairman deems this necessary, a draft case presentation is prepared.

The bundle of documents must include an agenda with items for the meeting as well as all relevant material for use in the consideration of the case or cases which have been scheduled for consideration.

The agenda and documents are sent to the Research Practices Committee via email.

6. Meeting in the Research Practices Committee

The Chairman of the Research Practices Committee chairs the meetings. The secretariat takes notes from the meeting for internal use, but minutes will not be prepared.

The case is considered by the Research Practices Committee in accordance with Aarhus University’s rules for the area.

7. Termination of case

After the meeting, the Chairman prepares a draft recommendation in the case or cases which were considered at the meeting, and the draft is then submitted to the other members of the Research Practices Committee for consultation.

When the consideration of the case has been completed, the Research Practices Committee sends a recommendation in the specific case to the rector. If the Research Practices Committee assesses that it is a case of research misconduct, the case is referred for consideration by the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct.

8. Follow-up

- The Research Practices Committee endeavours to handle all cases within 3-4 months, but if this time frame cannot be observed, the relevant players in the case are notified
- AU’s head of press and communication is briefed on relevant cases to the extent necessary
- The rector is briefed on all cases on an ongoing basis
- All cases are recorded.