Office of the Science Advisor
Coordination Procedures between the Scientific Integrity Official and the Office of Inspector General regarding Research Misconduct Allegations
Draft Revision March 30, 2015

Introduction and Purpose

The Scientific Integrity Official and the OIG will rely on the following authorities in interpreting the division of responsibilities and actions in these procedures:

- EPA Order 3120.5 Policy and Procedures for Addressing Research Misconduct.
  - Section 7 of the EPA Order 3120.5 outlines the circumstances when the OIG must be notified immediately.
- Section 9 A of EPA Order 3120.5 requires EPA employees to promptly report allegations of research misconduct by EPA personnel.

For the purposes of this document, the term Research Misconduct Allegation is defined, according to EPA Order 3120.5, "Policy and Procedures for Addressing Research Misconduct[1]," as, "fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing or reviewing research, or in reporting research results, or ordering, advising or suggesting that subordinates engage in research misconduct." Research misconduct does not include honest error or differences of opinion.

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I. Notification Upon Receipt of an Allegation of Research Misconduct

1. Upon receipt of a research misconduct[2] allegation, the Scientific Integrity Official will, within seven calendar days: a) refer the allegation to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) Hotline.

2. If the OIG or the OIG Hotline receives an allegation of research misconduct, within 7 days, the allegation will be forwarded to the OIG Hotline which will contact the Scientific Integrity Official to discuss the allegation, as appropriate.

II. Determining Which Office Will Address the Allegation of Research Misconduct

1. The OIG agrees that the U.S. EPA Scientific Integrity Official will evaluate allegations of plagiarism (except in the circumstances listed in EPA Order 3120.5, Section 7), including making inquiries and writing reports summarizing the findings of those inquiries. The Scientific Integrity Official will then share the report with the OIG and

[1] http://www2.epa.gov/programs-office-science-advisor-osa/epa-order-policy-and-procedures-addressing-research-misconduct
[2] As defined by EPA Order 3120.5

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take actions necessary to secure the science. If during an inquiry into a plagiarism allegation, the Scientific Integrity Official discovers there is a potential criminal aspect to the allegation (false statement, fraud or theft) to the allegation which was not apparent during initial screening, then the Scientific Integrity Official will stop its inquiry and consult with the OIG, which will address the matter in accordance with OIG Hotline procedures.

2. The OIG through the OIG Hotline will inform the Scientific Integrity Official about its decision regarding disposition of research misconduct allegations. The OIG disposition will consist of one of the three following options:
   a. There is no further OIG interest in the allegation. The OIG Hotline will send a referral memorandum to the Scientific Integrity Official within 5 business days of this decision. The Scientific Integrity Official will conduct its inquiry in accordance with its policy for resolving allegations of loss of scientific integrity. The Scientific Integrity Official will respond to the complainant for these allegations. The OIG Hotline will be closed.

   b. OIG needs to gather additional information prior to making a determination regarding the disposition of the allegation, or

   c. OIG will start an audit, evaluation, investigation, or other action and will contact the Scientific Integrity Official for assistance as needed. The OIG or the OIG Hotline will send a notice to the Scientific Integrity Official within 5 business days of its decision to take action on the allegation. The notice to the SIO may be a courtesy copy of a Hotline Referral, OIG Assignment Notification Memorandum, or electronic message.

III. Communications between the OIG and the Scientific Integrity Official

1. For allegations retained by the OIG, within 30 days of the receipt of the referral, and quarterly thereafter, the OIG will inform the Scientific Integrity Official of the status of any OIG action on the referral.

2. For allegations addressed by the Scientific Integrity Official, the Scientific Integrity Official will report on the status quarterly and final documentation of the resolution of the allegation will be sent to the OIG Hotline Coordinator.

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