

## **Research Misconduct Policies on Iranian and Non-Iranian University Portals**

### **Azimeh Takrimi**

Assistant Prof., Department of Languages and Literature, Farhangian University, Ahvaz, Iran.

Corresponding Author:

[azimehtakrimi@cfu.ac.ir](mailto:azimehtakrimi@cfu.ac.ir)

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5272-7979>

### **Reza Khojasteh Mehr**

Professor, Department of Counseling, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran.

[khojasteh\\_r@scu.ac.ir](mailto:khojasteh_r@scu.ac.ir)

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6721-3823>

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### **Abstract**

Research misconduct is increasing worldwide in both type and prevalence, creating significant issues for universities and research institutions and threatening the trustworthiness of research findings. To curb such malpractices, countries have adopted various policies tailored to their educational, social, and institutional contexts. The present study examines the research misconduct policies of Iran and non-Iranian countries, as reflected on the websites of prominent universities in these countries. The research question was whether policies for addressing research misconduct are available on these university portals and what similarities and differences exist among these policies. The research was conducted in two phases: one in English and the other in Persian. During this period, the portals of 24 selected universities, both within and outside Iran, were reviewed. Content analysis of the textual data revealed that the definitions and types of research misconduct reflected on the portals of Iranian universities closely followed national policies and were highly consistent with those of universities abroad, all extending beyond fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism. The findings also showed that the predominant approach in the policies announced by Iranian universities was punitive. Moreover, there were significant differences compared to the policies on the websites of non-Iranian universities, including attention to training and prevention; procedures for investigating and responding to allegations of research misconduct; promoting transparency through plagiarism tariffs, as well as the presence of research misconduct-cognizant committees and/or experts at departmental and/or faculty level. Recommendations were made for adopting educational and preventive approaches to research misconduct and promoting ethical research behaviors in universities and research organizations.

**Keywords:** Research Misconduct, Policies, Academic Integrity, Iranian Universities, Ethics.

### Introduction

Research misconduct refers to any unethical behavior that undermines the integrity of research and public trust in science (Resnik, Rasmussen, & Kissling, 2015). Due to the imprecise definitions offered by different disciplines, research misconduct has not yet received a universally agreed-upon description, despite the increasing prevalence of research misbehaviors worldwide (Resnik, 2023). Steneck (2006) believes that research on research behavior has led to improvements in the definitions of research integrity and a more critical understanding of research practices. However, most scholars have recently adopted a unified definition announced by the US Federal government, covering fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism (FFP) in “proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results” (Office of Science and Technology Policy, 2000). According to Steneck (1994), earlier definitions contained not only these three unethical practices but also other serious deviations from accepted values. Resnik (2023) explores the ethical concerns surrounding research misconduct and distinguishes between misconduct and questionable research practices (QRPs). In Resnik’s view, research misconduct involves fabricating, falsifying, or plagiarizing data or results, whereas QRPs are not highly unethical but still ethically problematic practices, such as selectively reporting data without providing a reasonable explanation, manipulating statistical analyses to obtain a desired result, and inappropriate authorship and citation.

Given the severity of the consequences of research misconduct, universities and research institutes worldwide have developed policies and guidelines to uphold integrity and curb unethical research practices. These policies vary in scope and emphasis, with some institutions prioritizing punitive measures and others focusing on education, training, and prevention (Resnik & Master, 2013; Shamoo & Resnik, 2015). Studies indicate that policies that incorporate educational initiatives alongside enforcement mechanisms are more effective in fostering a culture of ethical research and minimizing instances of misconduct (Bretag et al., 2011; Li & Cornelis, 2020). At Stanford University, a Research Policy Handbook is available on the university portal, clearly highlighting not only definitions and types of research misconduct and investigating procedures but also setting a time limit of six years after Stanford or a federal agency receives an allegation of research misconduct. The handbook specifies that such policies do not apply to authorship or collaboration disputes. This handbook is an addition to the University Code of Conduct, updated in 2023.

Numerous studies have investigated research misconduct policies adopted at global (Resnik & Master, 2013; Resnik et al., 2015; Weber-Wulff, 2014), regional (Bretag et al., 2011; Foltýnek & Glendinning, 2015; Li & Cornelis, 2020; Resnik, 2023), and institutional levels (Nushi & Firoozkahi, 2017; Shamoo & Resnik, 2015). What these studies highlight is that the formulation and implementation of dynamic, educational, and preventive policies to address research misconduct adequately is a shared responsibility between governments and universities. These policies can play a pivotal role in reducing research misbehaviors, as well as in enhancing the accuracy and trustworthiness of research findings. According to Resnik et al. (2015), “having a national policy was positively associated with research and development funding ranking and intensiveness” (p.249). They attribute the existence of a national policy to the nation’s commitment to scientific research. This attribution highlights the fact that national policies have the power to engage researchers in scholarly settings in adhering to research integrity standards and working towards principles of ethical conduct. In other words,

policymakers need to prioritize the establishment of transparent policies that foster a culture of research integrity, as well as the education and re-education of both skilled and novice researchers.

Furthermore, effective management methods must be implemented to both facilitate the application of research integrity principles and ensure that violations and deviations from these rules are identified, prevented, and corrected promptly. Li and Cornelis (2020) reported that in Norway, the research ethics law enacted in May 2017 had played a role in increasing the legal responsibility of the institutions in preventing research misconduct. Based on this law, information about research misconduct cases should be carefully archived by the national ethical committee.

One of the responsibilities of universities, as the primary institutions where research is taught (Li & Cornelis, 2020), is to establish clear guiding principles, define criteria for proper research conduct, enhance the quality and strength of research, and respond appropriately to deviations that threaten research integrity. However, in Iran, like many countries worldwide and in the region (including the UK, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, and several other EU countries), university policies on addressing research misconduct follow uniform governmental and national guidelines, and universities or other research institutions play little or no role in developing regulations. For example, in China, the government takes a leading role, and universities and institutions are simply tasked with implementing national policies on research misconduct. However, they can propose suggestions to the government for improving these policies (Li & Cornelis, 2020). Likewise, in Finland, institutional research integrity committees should inform the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK<sup>1</sup>) at every phase of the investigation, and if the client is not satisfied with the institutional decision, a statement from TENK is required (Li & Cornelis, 2020).

Resnik et al. (2015) argue that while university and institutional policies can play a significant role in preventing and controlling research misconduct, national and governmental policies are also essential in declaring, promoting, and ensuring the sustainability of ethical standards in research. From the perspective of Resnik et al (2015), these policies, whether at the national or institutional level, should include definitions of research misconduct and the methods for investigating and issuing verdicts regarding such misconduct. Likewise, Choopani, Siadat and Rajaii Pour (2020), in a study of 377 faculty members and graduate students, found that structural barriers were associated with committing research misconduct through the mediation of weak oversight.

According to the findings reported by Resnik et al. (2015), to enhance integrity in international collaborations, countries should aim to harmonize and clarify their policies for addressing research misconduct within their respective countries. They further highlight that most national governments in their study were taking research misconduct seriously (forty research and development funding countries), attempting to promote research integrity through the consistent “promulgation and enforcement of ethical standards” (p. 249). Nevertheless, scant attention has been paid to Iranian Higher Education research misconduct policies, despite the sharp increase in international collaborations (Ashtarian, 2015, p. 397), and Iranian scholars need to be familiar with the research policies and guidelines followed by other universities worldwide. This study examines research misconduct policies as presented on the portals of prominent universities within Iran and selected non-Iranian institutions. The goal of this investigation is to answer two key questions: a) whether policies for addressing research

misconduct are available on the portals of Iranian universities compared to non-Iranian universities in Europe and elsewhere, and b) what similarities and differences exist in research misconduct policies as reflected on the portals of these universities.

To answer these questions, the study adopts a content analysis approach, reviewing the research misconduct policies available on the official websites of 24 universities, both within and outside Iran. The findings provide insights into how universities define research misconduct, the preventive or punitive nature of their policies, and the mechanisms in place for addressing allegations. By identifying gaps and best practices, this study contributes to the broader discourse on research integrity, offering recommendations for enhancing research ethics policies at both institutional and national levels.

### Materials and Methods

To answer the research questions of the present study, a manual search and a Google search were conducted in two phases: English and Persian. The data entry criterion in both phases was relatedness to research misconduct, so only terms and links containing the term "research misconduct" were searched. As a result, all policies related to academic and/or educational violations or disciplinary matters were excluded from the data. In the Persian phase, the terms "بدرفتاری پژوهشی" (research misconduct), "سوء رفتار پژوهشی" (misconduct in research), and "تخلف پژوهشی" (research violation) were used. In the English phase, the terms "research misconduct", "violation of research integrity", and "research integrity" were examined. Ultimately, the portals of 24 selected universities, both from within and outside of the country, were retrieved (in English and Persian) and methodically scrutinized. In the Persian phase, eleven Iranian universities were selected from a pool of 111 universities that ranked highly in the 2021-2022 Islamic World Science & Technology Monitoring and Citation Institute (ISC) research rankings. In the English phase, a list of prominent European/American universities was compiled, focusing on those with high credibility and better access on their portals (n=13). The document search was conducted from May to November 2024 and updated in March 2025 to reflect the most recent policies (see Appendix 1). As in Iran, the Ministry of Science Research and Technology (MSRT) published its Decree No. 5, titled "قانون پیشگیری و مقابله با تقلب در تهیه آثار علمی" (*The law of preventing and combating cheating in preparing academic work*) in 2020, most policies retrieved from Iranian universities were issued between 2020 and 2024. In total, 24 documents were retrieved: 11 from Iranian universities and 13 from European/non-European universities. Table 1 presents an overview of the Iranian and non-Iranian universities investigated for this study.

Table 1

Overview of the 24 universities reviewed based on the availability of research misconduct policies

	University	Country	Policy/Document Title	Last Update	Key Observations
1	University of Tehran	Iran	Guidelines for Ethics Committee Establishment Processes and Procedures	2020	No mention of research misconduct for students; Only one PDF file containing all MSRT guidelines
2	University of Isfahan	Iran	MSRT Guidelines/ helpful files for students& faculty with	2018	Includes Q&A on misconduct; plagiarism avoidance strategies; supports with Turnitin, iThenticate,

	University	Country	Policy/Document Title	Last Update	Key Observations
			links to research misconduct information		and Grammarly; introduces research misconduct types; posts anonymized cases and outcomes.
3	Sharif University of Technology	Iran	Links to Research Ethics Guidelines + a selection of MSRT Guidelines	2023	Summarized only the national decree; posted a students' ethics charter.
4	Amirkabir University of Technology	Iran	MSRT Guidelines for Faculty and Students: Files on Identification of Essay Mills and Predatory Journals.	2020	Generally, follows MSRT memos; provides graphic presentations of the misconduct investigation process; includes files/links about predatory journals, essay mills, Retraction Watch, and COPE.
5	Tarbiat Modarres University	Iran	MSRT Guidelines for faculty & students. Separated MSRT Guidelines applicable only for grad students (Code of Conduct for Scientific Research)	2022	Mentions definitions from National Ethics Guidelines; primarily punitive.
6	University of Tabriz	Iran	Research Ethics Guidelines (in Persian)	2016	Brief references to MSRT directive; no local committee specified.
7	Iran University of Science & Technology	Iran	MSRT Guidelines/ Only one page with general information on ethics committee aims and members	2024	Emphasis on MSRT guidelines; no explanation; investigative details minimal.
8	Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz	Iran	MSRT Guidelines, Working Group specialized in research misconduct, Separate guidelines for research in animals	2018	Workshops and seminars on research misconduct, no case summaries or further explanations.
9	Allameh Tabataba'i University	Iran	MSRT Guidelines+ Handbook of ATU research guidelines	2020	Research Ethics Workshops/ Files for plagiarism avoidance techniques/ summer and winter programs for research integrity (expired in 2019)
10	Ferdowsi University of Mashhad	Iran	MSRT Guidelines on research misconduct, MSRT Charter on Ethics in Research with files on ethics in publication and authorship	2022	flowcharts related with the execution of the National Decree plus criteria for establishing authorship order
11	Shiraz University	Iran	MSRT Guidelines on research misconduct, Files from the Ethics Committee on Research in Biomedicine	2022	Code of ethics in research, various links to ethics in biomedical research (human subjects) + Generally following MSRT memos with limited elaboration on process

	University	Country	Policy/Document Title	Last Update	Key Observations
12	University of Cambridge	UK	Research Integrity & Misconduct Policy	2023	Clearly outlines definitions, inquiry/investigation stages, and AMBeR tariff.
13	Uppsala University	Sweden	Guidelines for Handling Suspected Deviations from Good Research	2024	Offers mandatory ethics courses for PhD students and departmental committees.
14	University of Cologne	Germany	Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice at the University of Cologne	2024	
15	University of Helsinki	Finland	Guideline of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK)	2024	2023 revised English translation and 2 more languages of research misconduct guidelines; focus on education & prevention; educational videos illustrating the importance of research integrity & good practice.
16	Åbo Akademi University	Finland	Research Ethics at Åbo Akademi University	2024	Two processes for supporting research integrity: preventive measures provided by research advisors (no further information because an ÅAU login was required); second guidelines by TENK applied for handling allegations.
17	KU Leuven	Belgium	Integrity and Ethics-Responsible Research – Key Entry Points	2024	Includes prevention programs and whistleblower protection.
18	Universiteit Leiden	The Netherlands	Universiteit Leiden policies on academic integrity	2018	Academic integrity focused; no information available on research integrity.
19	UC Berkeley	USA	UC Berkeley Research-Misconduct/University Policy on Integrity in Research (June 26, 1990)	2007	Clarifies government versus institutional roles; provides misconduct case summaries; offers interactive tutorial videos (The Lab); and offers various research misconduct checklists.
20	Stanford University	USA	Research Policy Handbook, Chapter on Research Misconduct: Policy on Allegations, Investigations, and Reporting (1.7)	2023	In-depth guidelines; multi-phase investigation, appeals process.
21	University of Western Australia	Australia	The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (the 2018 Code)	2024	Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research; UWA Code of Conduct and Research Integrity Policies for allegations and investigations, training, and support
22	The Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Principles of Research Integrity	2017	Definitions of academic misconduct, plagiarism avoidance techniques, case

	University	Country	Policy/Document Title	Last Update	Key Observations
	University of Science and Technology				summaries.
23	University of Edinburgh	UK	University of Edinburgh Research Misconduct Policy	2024	Research misconduct policy; whistleblowing policy; the Russell Group Statement of Cooperation for research misconduct allegations involving more than one discipline.
24	University of Geneva (UNIGE)	Switzerland	Integrity in scientific research (Handbook)	2006	Guidelines on integrity in research and procedures for handling alleged violations

### Analysis

Texts from both Persian and English search results were analyzed and compared. To this end, a deductive content analysis, as proposed by Elo and Kyngas (2007), was followed in three main steps: preparation, organization, and reporting. In this approach, a preexisting model is used, and data are analyzed in a general-to-specific movement simply to retest the existing data or categories in new contexts. For the preparation phase, all the documents were read multiple times to understand the forms and meanings contained in the policies. The unit of analysis was “whole document” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, cited in Elo & Kyngas, 2007). For the organizing phase, a combination of the framework of misconduct behaviors developed by Resnik et al. (2015) and a more recent list of research misconduct categories by Li and Cornelis (2020) was utilized as the analysis matrix. According to these typologies, certain research behaviors are defined as research misconduct, including but not limited to falsification, fabrication, plagiarism, unethical authorship, academic paper transaction, and misconduct in misconduct investigations. A coding protocol was conducted based on the obtained categories, wherein the content was reviewed and coded for correspondence. A Persian translation of the framework was also used for the equivalent types. The comparison was made in three categories: definitions of research misconduct, instances of research misconduct, and the process of investigating research misconduct or allegations of research misconduct at the institutional or national level. Following Resnik et al. (2015), a national misconduct policy was operationally defined as any “law, regulation, or government funding agency policy operating at the national level that addresses research misconduct” (p.251).

### Results

The content analysis of research misconduct policies available on university websites provided insights into how higher education institutions define research misconduct and the procedures followed for upholding research ethics and standards. Table 2 displays a summary of the key features extracted from the research misconduct policies across the Iranian and non-Iranian universities (in both Persian and English searches).

Table 2

A detailed comparison of Iranian vs. non-Iranian university policies on research misconduct

	Policy Feature	Iranian Universities	Non-Iranian Universities
1	Definitions of Misconduct	Generally, align with national guidelines (MSRT decree); (FFP plus additional unethical practices: data manipulation, authorship violations, buying/selling papers)	Align with broader international guidelines, also emphasize FFP; often explicitly distinguish questionable practices: self-plagiarism, undisclosed conflicts of interest, ghostwriting, manipulation of peer review
2	Investigative Procedures (oversight mechanisms, reaction focus, designation of committees, clarity & transparency)	Often rely on a single memo or decree; limited local detail on committees or timelines for inquiries/investigations -top-down (government/ ministry) approach with minimal systematic oversight at the faculty/departmental level  - primarily punitive; emphasis on sanctions and punishment rather than education/training - research misconduct-specialist committees absent or not indicated; if present, often applied to faculty only - scant preparation & transparency in handling misconduct offences	Typically transparent, stepwise procedures: initial inquiry, formal investigation, adjudication, and appeals -decentralized committees at departmental/faculty levels with clear mandates and oversight structures, which ensured transparency in enforcing research integrity guidelines - preventive & punitive, with recurrent training workshops and mandatory ethics courses - established ethics committees or integrity boards with clearly announced roles or responsibilities for both students and faculty - Many European universities placed a plagiarism tariff (AMBeR) on their portals, which allows both the offender and the responsible officials to react to misconduct clearly and objectively.
3	Reporting Mechanisms & Whistleblower Protection	General instruction to report to superiors or ethics committees; confidentiality stressed, but with scant details	Clear guidelines for confidential reporting; whistleblower protection policies explicitly stated and enforced
4	Accessibility & Communication of Policies and Procedures	Often remains internal or generic (rarely publicized outcomes)	Policies encourage transparency (e.g., named/unnamed summaries of cases, published statistics, or)
5	Educational Initiatives	Limited to ad hoc seminars or optional training sessions; rarely mandated for students/faculty	Frequent, structured ethics training at multiple career stages (e.g., for PhD students, new hires, supervisors)

Note: FFP = Fabrication, Falsification, and Plagiarism

The findings indicated that in the category of defining research misconduct, there was a remarkable similarity between the selected Iranian universities and those abroad, with research

misconduct generally being described as unethical behaviors that deviate from the accepted principles in proposing, conducting, or reporting research results in the scientific community. Such misbehaviors are manifested in various forms and may lead the authorities to take punitive steps or impose levels of punishment.

The findings of the present study also showed that the examples mentioned on the portals of selected universities from Inside and outside Iran often included additional unethical practices, such as the buying and selling of academic work, incorrect authorship attribution, and overlapping publications, with a strong focus on plagiarism. However, most non-Iranian universities took a broader scope and contained self-plagiarism, ghostwriting, manipulation of peer review, and failure to disclose potential conflicts of interest as misconduct.

The second major theme extracted from the data was named “investigating procedures,” with minor themes including oversight mechanisms, focus of reaction, designation of members of ethics committees, and transparency in handling offenses. The policies reviewed, both within and outside Iran, showed apparent discrepancies in how research policies are established and executed in different higher education contexts.

Regarding the process of investigating research misconduct, the study revealed notable similarities and differences in the approaches between Iranian and non-Iranian universities. Iranian universities were found to be less transparent in announcing procedures for handling misconduct, often relying on a single memo or decree with limited local detail on committees or timelines. For instance, according to Article 2-4 of the National Ethics Guidelines in Research Publication in Iran which is mandatory for all universities nationwide, researchers are required to report any suspected misconduct during the design, execution, or publication of research results to ethics committee, the head or responsible authority at their workplace or educational setting, or to the concerned researchers/authors, while maintaining strict confidentiality in all aspects. However, in many universities abroad, it is clearly stated that the response to allegations of research misconduct involves several stages: 1) inquiry to assess whether the allegation is substantiated and whether an investigation is warranted; 2) investigation, including the formal creation of a case file and a review that may lead to the case being closed or referred for further action regarding misconduct or other resolutions; 3) adjudication, where the findings are reviewed, and corrective actions are determined (Office of Science and Technology Policy, 2000). In such universities, research misconduct investigations are often conducted transparently, with stepwise procedures (e.g., initial inquiry, formal investigation, adjudication, and appeals). Once the investigation or adjudication process is completed, the institution or governmental authority overseeing the institution takes the necessary steps to monitor the institution's performance. If required, further investigations will be conducted. During the writing process, Grammarly generated responses to the following AI prompts:

Prompts created by Grammarly

- "Identify any gaps"

Prompts I wrote

- "Check for AI writings" conducted. Ultimately, based on the governing principles and regulations, a final decision is issued, and both the individual against whom the allegation was made and their institution are informed of the outcome of the case. After this stage, an appeal may be requested.

The oversight mechanisms found on the portals of Iranian and non-Iranian universities

revealed that the former primarily followed a top-down (government/ministry) approach with minimal systematic oversight at the faculty/departmental level. In contrast, the latter had decentralized committees at the departmental/faculty levels with clear mandates and oversight structures, which ensured transparency in enforcing research integrity guidelines.

According to the research policies of the US Department of Health and Human Services, government agencies and research institutions share joint responsibility for the research process. Thus, government agencies have full authority over federally funded research. In contrast, research institutions bear the primary responsibility for preventing, identifying, and overseeing investigations, examinations, and judgments regarding alleged research misconduct within their institutions. Also, based on the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, the responsibility of the researcher's supervisors is clearly stated as

... incorporate oversight of all relevant stages of the research process from conceptualization and planning through to dissemination of outcomes and, as appropriate, publication and follow-up activities. Supervisors also must be satisfied that the research methods and outcomes of researchers under their supervision are appropriate and valid (R15).

Codes extracted from the research misconduct policies revealed that the focus of reaction was primarily punitive in Iranian universities, with a strong emphasis on sanctions and punishment rather than education/training. The guidelines on all university portals were mandated by the Iranian Ministry of Sciences, Research, and Technology, which supervises all state-run universities in the country. They shared an element of prevention, curbing, and punishment as the titles read: *The Law for Preventing and Combating Cheating in Preparing Academic Work* (قانون پیشگیری و مقابله با تقلب در تهیه آثار علمی) and *Guidelines for Reviewing Research Misconduct Cases* (دستورالعمل بررسی تخلفات پژوهشی). Based on these guidelines, fines will be issued to all parties involved in preparing academic work on behalf of students, researchers, or other academics who benefited from the work for grades, ranks, job promotions, or academic degrees. Punishments were also predicted, including fines, social deprivation, and imprisonment (Takrimi, Khojasteh Mehr, & Eaton, 2022). However, the non-Iranian counterparts adopted a more balanced approach (i.e., preventive & punitive) through recurrent training workshops and mandatory ethics courses, along with structured penalties for misconduct (e.g., penalty tariffs such as AMBeR).

Additionally, there were notable differences between Iranian and non-Iranian universities in the designation of ethics committees. While such research misconduct-specialist committees were absent or not indicated on Iranian portals, or if present, they were generally described or applied to faculty only, universities abroad had commonly established ethics committees or integrity boards with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for both students and faculty. Many European institutions have highly specialized ethics committees or advisory boards that not only investigate misconduct but also provide guidance on proper research conduct to prevent violations (the same is true for Australian universities).

For clarity and transparency in handling plagiarism offenses, many European universities (e.g., UK universities) have implemented a tariff on their portals, which enables both the offender and the responsible officials to react to misconduct clearly and objectively. This tariff, called the Academic Misconduct Benchmarking Research Project (AMBeR), is a plagiarism tariff system developed by Tennant, Rowell, and Duggan (2007) that helps determine the seriousness of an offense and the appropriate penalties to be applied (Weber-Wulff, D., 2014).

In doing this, the system calculates and scores the plagiarizer's history, the amount/extent of plagiarized text, the level/stage, the value of the assignment, and additional characteristics, such as evidence of a deliberate attempt to disguise plagiarism by changing words, sentences, or paragraphs, to determine the severity of the misconduct. These features will be taken into consideration when penalties for plagiarism are applied. Such preparation and objectivity were not observed on the Iranian university portals, where outcomes remained largely internal or were communicated only in generic forms (never publicized).

Themes extracted from the data highlight the difference between Iranian vs. non-Iranian reporting mechanisms and whistleblower protection strategies. Iranian universities provided general guidelines for reporting misconduct to superiors or ethics committees, emphasizing confidentiality and providing scant details. However, foreign universities often offer clear guidelines for confidential reporting and explicit whistleblower protection policies on their websites. In many such universities, actions are taken to ensure timely and fair handling of accusations, including protection of whistleblowers, protection of individuals against whom allegations are made, transparency and expertise of the investigating parties, confidentiality throughout the entire process, and consideration of the severity of the research misconduct (e.g., the degree of knowledge, intent, or recklessness involved; whether it was a one-time occurrence or part of a recurring pattern; the impact on the research, etc.). Based on the university of Cologne's academic integrity policies, "provided that the allegations were not made intentionally or maliciously, whistleblowers must not suffer any disadvantage even if the allegation of academic misconduct proves to be false or cannot be proven" (Guidelines for Dealing with Academic Misconduct, 25 January 2022, Section 7, p.6).

The penultimate finding of this study pertained to the accessibility and communication of policies and procedures related to research misconduct in the Iranian context, which are often posted as PDFs or scanned memos with minimal explanation, few questions and answers, or summaries. In contrast, universities abroad contained more user-friendly online presentations (FAQs, flowcharts, guidelines) and sometimes accompanied by named or unnamed case examples. Moreover, despite the uniform policies and procedures for addressing research misconduct issued by governmental bodies in Iran, different universities in the country have adopted varying approaches for announcing the guidelines sent by MSRT, without providing further explanation or interpretation. One university (University of Isfahan) took steps to clarify the contents of these memos through awareness-raising files in the form of Q&A sessions. Also, to further the faculty and students' awareness, the ethics committee at this university announced cases that had been discussed, along with the penalties or acquittals handed out (without mentioning names). Unlike most Iranian universities, which regard research ethics primarily as a faculty-level concern, thereby reducing students' access to information on research misconduct, the University of Isfahan focuses on students and early-stage researchers by providing clear guidance on how to avoid research misconduct. In a highly accessible manner, the university's portal not only presents the MSRT Guidelines but also facilitates assignment checks using tools such as Turnitin, iThenticate, Grammarly, and Persian plagiarism detectors (e.g., مشابہت یاب). Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz was the only university with a working group titled "Specialized group for research misconduct review (in Persian, کارگروه تخصصی بررسی تخلفات پژوهشی)". However, no case summaries or specific reports were provided about the outcomes. Another university (Sharif University of Technology) took the initiative of posting

a research ethics charter for students on its portal. A recent initiative featured on Iranian university portals, particularly Isfahan University, requires graduate students participating in training workshops to sign a commitment letter before receiving their certificates. In these forms, students pledge not only to avoid research misconduct themselves but also to report any such behavior to the university's ethics committees.

The final theme extracted from the policies was named "educational initiatives," reflecting Iranian guidelines that primarily consisted of ad hoc seminars or optional sessions, rarely mandated for students or faculty. An exceptional initiative featured on the Isfahan University portal requires graduate students participating in training workshops to sign a commitment letter before receiving their certificates (فرم شرکت در کارگاه تخلفات پژوهشی). In these forms, students pledge not only to avoid research misconduct themselves but also to report any such behavior to the university's ethics committees. In contrast, most universities abroad offered more frequent and structured ethics training programs, staged at multiple career points (e.g., for PhD students, new hires, and supervisors). Moreover, to enforce standards of academic integrity and underscore the penalties for violations, many European and non-European universities practiced transparent communication of case outcomes. These institutions often shared named or anonymized case summaries or published statistics, thereby turning each case into a lesson in integrity for the broader academic community.

At Uppsala University, Sweden, there is a compulsory course in research ethics for doctoral students within the faculty of Science and Technology (with at least two credits). Postgraduate students are selected based on their admission year and the time of their doctoral defence session. Similar courses are offered for supervisors and faculty with elements of research ethics specialization (<https://www.uu.se/en/staff/faculty/science-and-technology/education-and-teaching/doctoral-studies/doctoral-student/courses/compulsory-course-in-research-ethics>). In 2020, course modules were developed aimed at doctoral students, students, supervisors, managers, and administrative staff at the university, which combined web-based training with learning activities and seminars.

## Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine the reflection of policies addressing research misconduct on the websites of Iranian universities in comparison to those of some European and non-European universities. The findings revealed a high similarity and alignment between the selected Iranian and foreign universities in the categories of defining research misconduct and related instances. This finding is consistent with those of Li and Cornelis (2020) and Resnik et al. (2015). The high level of alignment between the scope of definitions and instances of research misconduct on Iranian and European/non-European university portals is noteworthy. In response to the question of what type of behavior constitutes research misconduct, both sets of universities emphasize the unethical nature of practices such as data fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism. This agreement is crucial, as it highlights a shared understanding of the core principles of research integrity, which is essential for fostering international collaboration and maintaining the credibility of scientific research. In other words, this alignment in the definitions and examples of research misconduct across Iranian and foreign universities underscores the global consensus on what constitutes unethical research practices, which closely aligns with studies by Steneck (2006) and Fanelli (2009) that highlight the universal acknowledgment of these practices as threats to research integrity.

However, a key difference between the Iranian and non-Iranian universities emerged in their approach to addressing research misconduct. While European institutions often employed transparent, systematic procedures with clearly defined steps for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating allegations of research misconduct, Iranian universities appeared to have more informal and less structured approaches to these processes. For instance, many Iranian universities merely posted links to government-issued directives or memos without providing detailed explanations. These directives mostly require the ethics committees to ensure that punishment regulations issued by MSRT comply, without paying sufficient attention to or allocating resources to academia, which can be used to curb research misconduct. This discrepancy in procedural clarity and transparency is also noted in comparative studies that show how the mere existence of national directives does not guarantee effective implementation at the institutional level (Bouter, Tjeldink, Axelsen, Martinson & Riet, 2016)

In Iranian higher education, ethics committees generally oversee faculty-related misconduct, while students' research misbehaviors are typically addressed through disciplinary procedures. Because faculty matters are treated as internal, official, and confidential, it is challenging for an outsider to find clear, accessible information on the university portal about research misconduct policies. Like many other universities in Iran, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad provides research misconduct policy files and links on the Vice President for Research & Technology page of its official portal, making information on research misconduct rarely accessible to students and novice researchers. These findings are consistent with those of Kalichman and Plemmons (2007), who suggest that the limited accessibility of these guidelines can result in confusion and reduced engagement with research ethics standards. These authors highlight further that the rare expectation that responsible conduct of research (RCR) education is required for all researchers is a disappointing reminder that education is not universally viewed as central to research.

In contrast, European universities frequently employ structured frameworks, such as the AMBeR tariff, a point-based system that rates severity, assigns penalties, and ensures the transparent handling of plagiarism cases (Tennant et al., 2007). This suggests that, while there is a shared commitment to combating research misconduct, the implementation and communication of policies are crucial, particularly in terms of transparency and clarity. Determining whether transparent guidelines are more effective at reducing instances of research misconduct than non-transparent ones remains a subject for future study. It is beyond the scope of this investigation. The structured frameworks employed by European universities, such as AMBeR, minimize personal judgment in determining penalties for student plagiarism, attempt to quantify the severity of misconduct, provide transparency, and increase accountability. This tariff was established because inconsistencies were observed among universities in the penalties applied for plagiarism (Tennant et al., 2007). This approach towards transparency aligns with the recommendations of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (2018), which stress the importance of clear and systematic procedures in addressing research misconduct to build trust within the academic community.

The study also revealed a key difference in Iranian and non-Iranian approaches towards addressing research misconduct. It was found that Iranian universities predominantly focused on punitive measures, with less emphasis on educational and preventive strategies. This finding aligns with reports by Takrimi et al. (2022), Choopani et al. (2020), Nushi & Firoozkahi (2017), and Mahdavi Zafarghandi, Khoshroo, and Barkat (2012), which express the need for the

inclusion of instructional and/or preventive measures. This finding also aligns with Anderson, Horn, Risbey, Ronning, De Vrie, and Martinson (2007), who argued that educational interventions are crucial in reducing research misconduct, particularly among early-career researchers. Furthermore, these authors emphasized that preventive measures, such as workshops on research ethics and accessible guidelines, are more effective in fostering a culture of integrity than solely punitive approaches. Similar conclusions were drawn by Macfarlane, Zhang and Puna (2014), emphasizing that punitive policies alone may not be sufficient to curb research misbehaviors in the long run if not complemented by educational support and clear ethical frameworks.

The findings of this study revealed that the attitude reflected in Iranian research policies contrasts with the European model or with a more balanced approach that includes proactive education on research ethics, clear guidelines for prevention, and the establishment of support systems for researchers. These educational initiatives can play a significant role in fostering a culture of research integrity among both students and faculty. For example, many European institutions have highly specialized ethics committees or advisory boards that not only investigate misconduct but also provide guidance on proper research conduct to prevent violations (e.g., Australian universities; Bretag et al., 2011). This finding aligns with the work of Resnik et al. (2015), who emphasized the importance of both preventive and corrective strategies in maintaining research integrity.

Furthermore, weak oversight by universities indirectly exacerbates this issue, a problem previously reported by Choopani et al. (2020). Describing plagiarism in German universities, Weber-Wulff (2014) points out that oversight bodies or institutional changes dedicated to avoiding plagiarism and academic misconduct play a very crucial yet challenging role in teaching students how to prevent such misconduct” (p.37).

A significant challenge identified in this study is the inconsistent presentation (i.e., communication of policies) of misconduct policies across Iranian universities. Although the government provides national guidelines, individual universities adopt varying levels of rigor in presenting these policies. Some institutions, such as the University of Isfahan, have taken steps to clarify and communicate their policies through FAQs or updates on previous cases, serving as models for other universities. This finding closely aligns with Li & Cornelis (2016), who noted the difference between national and institutional approaches towards academic misconduct, with national policies being narrowed down to a few types of behavior (slightly broader than FFP). These authors argue that universities also seek to educate researchers about specific forms of misconduct, thereby encouraging best practices. However, in the Iranian context, few universities followed the example set by the University of Isfahan. Most merely offered access to governmental directives without further clarification, which could cause confusion or reduced engagement among faculty and students. This inconsistency may reflect broader structural challenges in the academic administration of research misconduct policies, underscoring the need for more robust institutional frameworks to guide and support the implementation of national guidelines (Fang, Steenc & Casadevall, 2012).

Another important finding relates to the weight of oversight policies on the portals of the selected universities. Despite multiple investigations (e.g., Choopani et al., 2020) in Iran highlighting how weak oversight indirectly contributes to the persistence of research misconduct, scant attention has been given to oversight mechanisms in Iranian research misconduct policies—unlike in many universities across Europe, the United States, and

Australia. University oversight mechanisms can come into operation through examining bodies such as Research Integrity Offices, ethics committees, and related bodies, which protect the integrity and credibility of scholarly work, safeguard the interests of students and researchers, and ensure compliance with guidelines and regulations (Martinson, Anderson & de Vries, 2005). Such policies include, but are not limited to, transparently defining research misconduct, announcing processes for inquiry and investigation, reporting allegations, appeal processes, imposing sanctions, and corrective actions, as well as devising educational and preventive programs. In the non-Iranian search, universities with more robust monitoring mechanisms, such as clear reporting channels and independent investigation protocols, appeared to have more effective systems for handling allegations. Resnik (2023) emphasizes the importance of clear policies and training in research ethics to prevent misconduct and QRPs. He also emphasizes the importance of peer review, oversight, and institutional accountability in addressing these issues and promoting ethical research practices. This suggests that enhancing institutional oversight, as well as fostering a culture of accountability and transparency, can play a crucial role in reducing the incidence of research misconduct—a significant finding supported by Resnik and Dinse (2012). According to these authors, institutions with dedicated ethics committees and precise reporting mechanisms experienced lower rates of misconduct. As mentioned earlier, Choopani et al. (2020) highlighted those structural barriers, coupled with weak oversight, indirectly contribute to the persistence of research misconduct. One plausible explanation is that in the absence of clearly stated monitoring mechanisms, faculty and students may be uncertain about what constitutes research misconduct and to what extent and how violations of best practice and non-compliance with applicable policies and ethical standards will be penalized. Strengthening institutional oversight policies could therefore significantly enhance the effectiveness of research integrity within academic environments (Smith & Williams-Jones, 2012).

To sum up, in light of these findings, it is clear that both Iranian and European/non-European universities have taken positive steps in addressing research misconduct; however, there are several areas for improvement. Iranian universities, in particular, need to adopt a more structured, transparent, and proactive approach to research ethics. Above all, implementing clear procedures for reporting and investigating misconduct, providing regular training for researchers, and fostering a culture of open dialogue about ethical issues can significantly enhance the integrity of the research process. Likewise, integrating preventive measures such as ethics education and establishing clear guidelines on how to handle conflicts of interest and misconduct can help mitigate the occurrence of unethical practices. By focusing on both punitive and educational strategies, institutions can create a more comprehensive framework that supports responsible research conduct and sustains public trust in scientific endeavors.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The findings of this study have several important implications for policy development and best practice. First, there is a need for greater emphasis on educational initiatives around research integrity. This could involve the introduction of mandatory training on research ethics for all researchers, as well as more comprehensive guidance on how to avoid unethical practices in research. Second, universities should prioritize the consistent implementation of research misconduct policies, ensuring that all members of the academic community are aware of the procedures and know how to report potential violations. Ultimately, fostering an environment

of transparency, accountability, and open communication within universities is essential for cultivating a culture that prioritizes ethical research practices.

### Conclusion

This study aimed to explore research misconduct policies as reflected on the portals of universities in Iran, Europe, and elsewhere, with a particular focus on the presentation and enforcement of these policies, and their alignment with international best practices. The findings revealed several key similarities and differences, shedding light on the broader landscape of research integrity across higher education institutions. Several suggestions are offered, including the necessity of having a research integrity guidebook on university portals, the introduction of a portal for registering and tracking reports of research misconduct, ensuring that violations are directly reported to the Research and Technology Department, organizing seminars on integrity and honesty in designing, conducting, and reporting research, and mandating the participation of young and newly recruited faculty members. Finally, it is recommended that universities announce and update proven research misconduct violations and the penalties applied (with or without the names of the offenders) on their portals. Updating policies on addressing research misconduct will contribute to improving the quality of research within the country and foster better international research collaborations with universities abroad.

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### Endnote

1. The Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK is appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture to promote responsible conduct of research, preventing research misconduct, promoting discussion and spreading information on research integrity in Finland(<https://www.tenk.fi/en>).

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## Appendix 1

Iranian Vs. Non-Iranian Universities reviewed for research misconduct policies in alphabetical order

	Country	University	Document	retrieved or Last modified	Website/Link/or Pdf reference	language
1	Iran	Allameh Tabataba'i University	قانون پیشگیری و مقابله با تقلب در تهیه آثار علمی + آیین نامه اجرایی قانون پیشگیری و مقابله با تقلب در تهیه آثار علمی - تصویب نامه هیأت وزیران + دستورالعمل ماده ۵ آیین نامه اجرایی قانون پیشگیری و مقابله با تقلب در تهیه آثار علمی وزارت عتف + دستورالعمل نحوه بررسی تخلفات پژوهشی وزارت عتف + مجموعه قوانین و مقررات معاونت پژوهشی دانشگاه	09/06/2020	<a href="https://research.atu.ac.ir/fa/اخلاق+پژوهشی">https://research.atu.ac.ir/fa/اخلاق+پژوهشی</a>	Persian
2	Iran	Amirkabir University of Technology	آئین نامه اجرایی قانون پیشگیری. ۱۳۹۸، دستورالعمل آئین نامه پیشگیری. ۱۳۹۸، - قانون پیشگیری و مقابله. ۱۳۹۶، مجلات یغماگر. ۱۳۹۹، فرآیند رسیدگی به تخلفات علمی در کارگروه اخلاق در پژوهش، لینک‌هایی به کمیته اخلاق نشر جهانی (COPE)، پایگاه مقالات سلب اعتبار شده (Retraction Watch)، و سامانه آموزش و آزمون اخلاق پژوهش (آوا)	2020	<a href="https://researchoffice.aut.ac.ir/content/14700-اخلاق-در-پژوهش">https://researchoffice.aut.ac.ir/content/14700-اخلاق-در-پژوهش</a>	Persian
3	Iran	Ferdowsi University of Mashhad	منشور اخلاق پژوهش + منشور و موازین اخلاق پژوهش + دستورالعمل نحوه بررسی تخلفات پژوهشی + مصادیق تخلفات پژوهشی + مجموعه قوانین، دستورالعملها و راهنماهای اخلاق در پژوهشهای زیست پزشکی ایران	2024	<a href="https://vpr.um.ac.ir/index.php/fa/group-ak">https://vpr.um.ac.ir/index.php/fa/group-ak</a>	Persian
4	Iran	Iran University of Science & Technology	منشور و موازین اخلاق پژوهش + راهنمای کشوری اخلاق در انتشار آثار پژوهشی، آیین نامه قانون پیشگیری و مقابله با تقلب-سال ۹۸، دستورالعمل ماده ۵ آیین نامه اجرایی قانون پیشگیری و مقابله با تقلب در آثار علمی	Not specified	<a href="https://res_office.iust.ac.ir/research-ethics-working-group/">https://res_office.iust.ac.ir/research-ethics-working-group/</a>	Persian
5	Iran	Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz	کارگروه تخصصی بررسی تخلفات پژوهشی: منشور اخلاق راهنمای کشوری اخلاق در انتشار آثار پژوهشی، آیین نامه اجرایی قانون پیشگیری و مقابله با تقلب	1/7/2018	<a href="https://scu.ac.ir/web/rms/">https://scu.ac.ir/web/rms/</a>	Persian

	Country	University	Document	retrieved or Last modified	Website/Link/or Pdf reference	language
			در تهیه آثار علمی-۹۸، فرم طرح شکایت، مصادیق تخلفات پژوهشی، دستورالعمل ماده ۵ آیین نامه اجرایی قانون پیشگیری و مقابله با تقلب در آثار علمی			
6	Iran	Sharif University of Technology	منشور اخلاق پژوهش + منشور و موازین اخلاق پژوهش + دستورالعمل نحوه بررسی تخلفات پژوهش + مصادیق (تخلفات پژوهشی) وزارت علوم	2024	<a href="https://research.sharif.ir">https://research.sharif.ir</a> - آیین نامه فرم f.ir -/ها	Persian
7	Iran	Shiraz University	نظامنامه اخلاق آموزش + فایل‌هایی در خصوص اخلاق در پژوهش‌های زیست پزشکی + دستورالعمل نحوه بررسی تخلفات پژوهشی	18/4/2022	<a href="https://research.shirazu.ac.ir/researchmanagement">https://research.shirazu.ac.ir/researchmanagement</a>	Persian
8	Iran	Tarbiat Modarres University	دستورالعمل نحوه بررسی تخلفات پژوهشی + قانون مقابله با تقلب	2022	<a href="https://modares.ac.ir/uploads/Res.Regulations.Management.34.pdf">https://modares.ac.ir/uploads/Res.Regulations.Management.34.pdf</a>	Persian
9	Iran	University of Isfahan	آشنایی با مصادیق تخلفات پژوهشی، آشنایی با فعالیتهای کارگروه تخصصی تخلفات پژوهشی، مصادیق تخلفات و توصیه های لازم، سامانه ثبت تخلفات پژوهشی	4/6/2016	<a href="https://rnc.ui.ac.ir/">https://rnc.ui.ac.ir/</a>	Persian
10	Iran	University of Tabriz	موازین اخلاق پژوهش	27/12/2016	<a href="https://researchaffairs.tabrizu.ac.ir/fa/page/1179/">https://researchaffairs.tabrizu.ac.ir/fa/page/1179/</a> - موازین اخلاق - پژوهش	Persian
11	Iran	University of Tehran	دستورالعمل نحوه تشکیل، روش کار و شرح وظایف کارگروه / کمیته های اخلاق در پژوهش (فصل ششم: رسیدگی (به تخلفات پژوهشی	5/7/2021	<a href="https://science.ut.ac.ir/rec+ETHICS-Committee-Establishment-Process.pdf">https://science.ut.ac.ir/rec+ETHICS-Committee-Establishment-Process.pdf</a> - کمیته اخلاق	Persian
1	Finland	Åbo Akademi University	Research Ethics at Åbo Akademi University	22/10/2024	<a href="https://www.abo.fi/en/research-at-aau/open-science-and-ethics/research-ethics-at-abo-akademi-university/">https://www.abo.fi/en/research-at-aau/open-science-and-ethics/research-ethics-at-abo-akademi-university/</a>	English
2	Belgium	KU Leuven	Integrity and Ethics-Responsible Research – Key Entry Points	5/12/ 2024	<a href="https://research.kuleuven.be/en/integrity-ethics">https://research.kuleuven.be/en/integrity-ethics</a>	English

	Country	University	Document	retrieved or Last modified	Website/Link/or Pdf reference	language
3	USA	Stanford University	Research Policy Handbook, Chapter on Misconduct	2023	<a href="https://doresearch.stanford.edu/policies/research-policy-handbook">https://doresearch.stanford.edu/policies/research-policy-handbook</a>	English
4	USA	UC Berkeley	UC Berkeley Research-Research Misconduct	3/2/2007	<a href="https://vcresearch.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/Research_Misconduct_Policy_2007.pdf">https://vcresearch.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/Research_Misconduct_Policy_2007.pdf</a>	English
5	The Netherlands	Universiteit Leiden	Universiteit Leiden policies on academic integrity	2018	<a href="https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/research/about-our-research/quality-and-integrity/academic-integrity">https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/research/about-our-research/quality-and-integrity/academic-integrity</a>	English
6	UK	University of Cambridge	University of Cambridge Policies & Procedures/ Misconduct in Research	23/2/2024	<a href="https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/policies-procedures/misconduct-research">https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/policies-procedures/misconduct-research</a>	English
7	Germany	University of Cologne	Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice at the University of Cologne	24/11/ 2024	<a href="https://www.uni-koeln.de/sites/uni/images/Forschung/uni_im_profil/Werte/EN_GWP_O_Untersuchung_wiss_Fehlverhalten.pdf">https://www.uni-koeln.de/sites/uni/images/Forschung/uni_im_profil/Werte/EN_GWP_O_Untersuchung_wiss_Fehlverhalten.pdf</a>	English
8	UK	University of Edinburgh	Research misconduct policy and how to report	24/1/2024	<a href="https://research-office.ed.ac.uk/research-integrity/research-misconduct">https://research-office.ed.ac.uk/research-integrity/research-misconduct</a>	English
9	Switzerland	University of Geneva (UNIGE)	Directives, guidelines, and ethics	22/05/2006	<a href="https://www.unige.ch/recherche/en/resources/guidelines-ethics">https://www.unige.ch/recherche/en/resources/guidelines-ethics</a>	English
10	Finland	University of Helsinki	Guideline of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK)	04/10/ 2023	<a href="https://www.helsinki.fi/en/research/research-integrity">https://www.helsinki.fi/en/research/research-integrity</a> (The University of Helsinki is committed to observing the Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice and Procedures for	English

	Country	University	Document	retrieved or Last modified	Website/Link/or Pdf reference	language
					Handling Misconduct and Fraud in Science of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK)	
11	Hong Kong	The University of Hong Kong	Principles of Research Integrity	28/02/ 2017	<a href="http://www.rss.hku.hk/integrity/rcr/policy#PrinciplesofResearchIntegrity">http://www.rss.hku.hk/integrity/rcr/policy#PrinciplesofResearchIntegrity</a> + <a href="https://researchintegrity.law.hku.hk/hku-policy-on-research-integrity/">https://researchintegrity.law.hku.hk/hku-policy-on-research-integrity/</a> The University of Hong Kong's Policy on Research Integrity (239/1216 amended)	English
12	Australia	University of Western Australia	The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (the 2018 Code)	2018	<a href="https://www.uwa.edu.au/research/reputation-governance/ethics-and-integrity">https://www.uwa.edu.au/research/reputation-governance/ethics-and-integrity</a>	English
13	Sweden	Uppsala Universitet, Sweden	Information and guidelines on good research practice	18/9/2024	<a href="https://www.uu.se/en/staff/gateway/research/research-handbook/research-ethics/tools-for-good-research-practice">https://www.uu.se/en/staff/gateway/research/research-handbook/research-ethics/tools-for-good-research-practice</a>	English

**Notes:**

1. Diacritics such as Å in “Åbo” are treated as “A” for purposes of alphabetical ordering.
2. “The University of Hong Kong” is listed under “U” (University of Hong Kong) for alphabetical purposes.
3. “Not specified” under Retrieved / Last Modified indicates the source did not list a specific date.