

**Public Policy Research Funding Scheme and
Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Scheme
Summary of Substantiated Research Misconduct Cases**

This document provides a summary of substantiated research misconduct cases involving applications and projects under the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme (PPRFS) and Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Scheme (SPPRFS). For simplicity's sake, words importing one gender shall include all genders. Personal data of individuals are not mentioned herein for data protection purpose.

Case 1: Non-disclosure of Similar / Related Research Work in the Application and Double-Dipping

Case Background

During the processing of an application under the SPPRFS 2023-24 exercise, it came to the Secretariat's attention that a Principal Investigator (PI) had been granted funding from another government research funding scheme on a seemingly similar subject before he submitted the SPPRFS application but such details were not disclosed nor mentioned in the SPPRFS application form.

Having examined the two applications, relevant materials of the case and the information provided by the PI, including the PI's explanation of the differences of the two applications, the Reviewers¹ noted that the objectives of the two applications were similar and details of some of the research work were basically identical. The Reviewers were of the view that the information available could not sufficiently justify the two proposals as distinct and separate, and there was prima facie evidence to warrant further investigation.

On request, the PI's affiliated institution conducted a formal investigation into the alleged misconduct, namely (a) non-disclosure of similar / related research work in the application form and (b) double-dipping. While acknowledging that the two applications might have different research scopes, the investigation panel formed by the PI's affiliated institution considered the differences between them insufficient to regard them as distinct and separate. It concluded that the alleged misconduct of non-disclosure of similar / related research work was substantiated.

As regards the alleged misconduct of double-dipping, the investigation panel was of the view that the PI was aware of the funding approval before he submitted the SPPRFS application, he could have rephrased or reorganised the arguments in the

¹ In accordance with the Procedures for Handling Research Misconduct, in general, Panel Readers of the application in question will serve as Reviewers of the suspected research misconduct case.

SPPRFS application before submission to address the issues regarding the extensive similarities between the two applications. It concluded that the case could be considered potentially a double-dipping case.

The case was further examined by the Reviewers and they considered the two allegations substantiated. Afterwards, the Assessment Panel, having thoroughly and carefully considered all relevant materials, including the PI's final written representations, was of the view that the alleged research misconduct of non-disclosure of similar / related research work was substantiated and there was strong evidence to suggest that there was double-dipping.

Penalty

Non-disclosure of similar / related research work and double-dipping are serious research misconduct which warrant a heavy penalty. Given the substantial overlap between the two applications, the Assessment Panel did not consider the misconduct a mere careless oversight nor unintentional.

To maintain the credibility of researches, researchers are expected to observe the highest standard of integrity in preparing research proposals. The Assessment Panel attaches great importance to research integrity and will not tolerate any research misconduct. Having considered the nature and gravity of the misconduct and the circumstances of the case including absence of strong mitigating factor, the Assessment Panel decided that the SPPRFS application in question shall be disqualified and the PI shall be debarred from applying for funding under PPRFS and SPPRFS in the capacity of PI for five years.