

Special issue

Experience from the Research Foundation of South Africa

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Abstract: Scientific Ethics and Research Integrity plays an important role for the researcher, the institution that hosts the researcher and the funding agency funding the research. The applicants applying for funding are doing so with research credentials/publications assumed were obtained ethical and with integrity. Based on the applicant info provided in the proposal is reviewed and then funded the funding agency. The agency expects the applicant to submit a proposal in an ethical manner and subsequently creating research output that has integrity and obtain ethically. Funding agency main objective is not to police researchers to see if they are applying ethical and ensure research outputs that of high integrity. It is therefore important that funding agencies engage with research organisations to work closely with other agencies involved in research for example universities, research councils, policy makers etc. However, funding agencies need to implement protective mechanism to prevent and monitor any unethical behaviour and ensure that integrity principles were adhere to when applicants apply for funding. An internal standard operating procedure (SOP) document was developed to handle unethical conduct. The document needs to allow for a fair and transparent process. Due the fact that the applicant, the institute of the applicant and the panel that identify the misconduct, a structure process should be followed. When applicant found guilty of misconduct, it is up to the respective applicant institution to come up with appropriate punishment the applicant. The funding agency can institute additional restriction such as preventing the guilty applicant to apply for funding for a set period. The funding agency should insist on a rehabilitation process and sensitise other applicants (as a deterrent) from refraining from unethical practises. Ethical research and research integrity are important obligation from the research, the researcher institute, the funding agency and the broader science system all the role player serve. Identifying violation of the ethical and integrity principles should allow for actions to be taken and the gaps that existed to be close.

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