

Publication

The Quest for Clarity in Research Integrity: A Conceptual Schema

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Author(s) Shaw, David

Author(s) at UniBasel [Shaw, David](#) ;

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Researchers often refer to "research integrity", "scientific integrity", "research misconduct", "scientific misconduct" and "research ethics". However, they may use some of these terms interchangeably despite conceptual distinctions. The aim of this paper is to clarify what is signified by several key terms related to research integrity, and to suggest clearer conceptual delineation between them. To accomplish this task, it provides a conceptual analysis based upon definitions and general usage of these phrases and categorization of integrity-breaching behaviours in literature and guidelines, including clarification of the different domains and agents involved. In the first part of the analysis, following some initial clarifications, I explore the distinction between internal and external rules of integrity. In the second part, I explore the distinction between integrity and lack of misconduct, before suggesting a recategorisation of different types of integrity breach. I conclude that greater clarity is needed in the debate on research integrity. Distinguishing between scientific and research integrity, reassessing the relative gravity of different misbehaviours in light of this distinction, and recognising all intentional breaches of integrity as misconduct may help to improve guidelines and education.

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