

Research and Innovation | Research Strategy and Services | Ethics, Integrity, and Governance

## Report from Panel

### Investigation of an Allegation of a Breach of Research Integrity against Dr Alex Arokiasamy

**2021.13**

August 2023

---

## 1. Executive Summary

1.1. It is alleged that Dr Alex Arokiasamy, formerly of the School of Business and Management, has:

1.1.1. [REDACTED]

1.1.2. conducted human research without ethics review and approval;

1.1.3. [REDACTED]

1.1.4. assigned authorship to those who had not made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution; and

1.1.5. fabricated research data and results.

1.2. Dr Arokiasamy is considered the respondent. Dr Arokiasamy is the common and lead author of all research outputs that are the subject of this complaint. Other RMIT co-authors include [REDACTED]

- 1.3. The complainants are the School of Business and Management, College of Business and Law, RMIT Vietnam and the [REDACTED].
- 1.4. A Panel of three members was established to complete an investigation into the alleged breaches of research integrity. The Panel members were:
- 1.4.1. Professor Brett Kirk, Dean, School of Science and Technology, STEM College, RMIT Vietnam (Chairperson);
  - 1.4.2. Professor Helen De Cieri, Department of Management, Monash University; and
  - 1.4.3. Professor Fuming Jiang, School of Management, College of Business and Law, RMIT University.
- 1.5. Professor Kirk was not available to chair the final meeting of the Panel and complete the work of the Chairperson. He was replaced by:
- 1.5.1. Professor Julia Gaimster, Dean, School of Communication and Design, College of Design and Social Context, RMIT University.
- 1.6. The Panel operated in line with its Terms of Reference and the principles of procedural fairness. The Panel considered evidence and made findings of fact on the balance of probabilities. The Panel met on three occasions.
- 1.7. The Panel considered the matter in accordance with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (2018) ('the *Australian Code*') and the [RMIT Research Integrity Breach Management Procedure](#).
- 1.8. The Panel found, on the balance of probabilities, that Dr Arokiasamy **breached** the principle of Honesty of the *Australian Code* (see section 6).
- 1.9. The Panel found, on the balance of probabilities, that Dr Arokiasamy **breached** the principle of Fairness of the *Australian Code* (see section 7).
- 1.10. The Panel found, on the balance of probabilities, that Dr Arokiasamy **breached** the principle of Accountability of the *Australian Code* (see section 8).

1.11. The Panel recommended six corrective actions (see section 9).

## 2. Background

2.1. The research outputs to which the allegations relate are:

2.1.1. [REDACTED]

2.1.2. [REDACTED]

2.1.3. [REDACTED]

2.1.4. [REDACTED]

2.1.5. [REDACTED]

2.1.6. [REDACTED]

2.1.7. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

2.1.8. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

2.1.9. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

2.1.10. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

2.1.11. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

2.1.12. Anantha Raj A. Arokiasamy, Philip Michael Ross Smith, Jayaraman Krishnaswamy, and Thanapat Kijbumrung, 'Knowledge Management and Firm Innovativeness: The Mediating Role of Innovative Culture on MNEs in Malaysia,' *Proceedings on Engineering Sciences* vol. 3, no. 3 (2021): 319-334. DOI:10.24874/PES03.03.008

2.1.13. Anantha Raj A. Arokiasamy and Jayaraman Krishnaswamy, 'Compatibility and Challenges of Implementing Total Quality Management in Education,' *Proceedings on Engineering Sciences* vol. 3, no. 4 (2021): 405-412. DOI:10.24874/PES03.04.004

2.1.14. [REDACTED]

2.2. The original complaint from the School of Business and Management (see section 3, below) related to papers 2.1.1. to 2.1.10..

2.3. A subsequent complaint from [REDACTED] related to paper 2.1.11..

2.4. Additional potential breaches were identified during this investigation related to papers 2.1.12. to 2.1.14..

2.5. The complaint relates to research conducted at RMIT University. Dr Arokiasamy was a researcher at RMIT Vietnam at the time these papers were published and has declared his affiliation to RMIT in the outputs.

### 3. Allegations of Breaches of Research Integrity

3.1. It is alleged that Dr Arokiasamy:

3.1.1. [REDACTED]

3.1.2. conducted human research without ethics review and approval;

3.1.3. [REDACTED]

3.1.4. assigned authorship to those who had not made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution; and

3.1.5. fabricated research data and results.

3.2. Per 2.1 iii. of the *Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, the allegations at 3.1 relate to:

3.2.1. 'not meeting required research standards';

3.2.2. 'fabrication, falsification, misrepresentation';

3.2.3. 'plagiarism';

3.2.4. 'authorship'; and

3.2.5. [REDACTED]

3.3. It is the responsibility of researchers in the *Australian Code* to:

3.3.1. Comply with the relevant laws, regulations, disciplinary standards, ethics guidelines and institutional policies related to responsible research conduct. Ensure that appropriate approvals are obtained prior to the commencement of research, and that conditions of any approvals are adhered to during the course of research (R17);

3.3.2. Ensure that the ethics principles of research merit and integrity, justice, beneficence and respect are applied to human research (R18);

3.3.3. Disseminate research findings responsibly, accurately and broadly (R23);

3.3.4. Ensure that authors of research outputs are all those, and only those, who have made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to the research and its output, and that they agree to be listed as an author (R25);

3.3.5. Cite and acknowledge other relevant work appropriately and accurately (R27); and

3.3.6. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## 4. Panel Deliberations

4.1. A Panel was established to complete an investigation into the alleged breaches of research integrity. The Panel was composed of four members as outlined at 1.4. and 1.5., above.

4.2. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

4.3. The Panel met on three occasions: 9 September 2022, 16 January 2023, and 3 August 2023.

4.4. The Panel considered evidence obtained for the preliminary assessment.

4.5. The Panel considered but did not identify or declare any potential conflicts of interest.

CONFIDENTIAL

## 5. Evidence

5.1. Documentary evidence considered by the Panel concerning the alleged breaches was provided by the Research Ethics, Integrity, and Governance team, including:

- 5.1.1. Papers listed at 2.1., above;
- 5.1.2. [REDACTED]
- 5.1.3. Investigation notes from the Informing Science Institute; and
- 5.1.4. Responses to requests for information from Dr Arokiasamy and co-authors of the papers listed at 2.1..
- 5.1.5. iTenticate similarity reports for papers listed at 2.1..

5.2. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5.3. In relation to the allegation that Dr Arokiasamy conducted human research without ethics approval, the evidence indicated that:

5.3.1. Papers 2.1.1. to 2.1.4., and 2.1.6. to 2.1.14, use human research methods and are based on human data.

5.3.2. No RMIT human research ethics network or committee has reviewed or approved an ethics application for the research projects described in these publications.

5.3.3. Upon request, neither Dr Arokiasamy nor any co-author provided evidence of ethics review and approval for these research projects.

5.4. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5.5. In relation to the allegation that Dr Arokiasamy assigned authorship to those who had not contributed to the research, the evidence indicated that:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5.5.3. The co-author of paper 2.1.10., 2.1.12., 2.1.13., and 2.1.14. was unaware of his inclusion in these publications and neither contributed to these research projects nor consented to their publication.

5.6. In relation to the allegation that Dr Arokiasamy fabricated data, the evidence indicated that:

5.6.1. Upon request, neither Dr Arokiasamy nor his co-authors could produce any research data for papers 2.1.1. to 2.1.4., or 2.1.6. to 2.1.14.

5.6.2. Secondary data and early manuscripts were provided for paper 2.1.5.

5.6.3. Dr Arokiasamy reported that all research data were kept on his laptop and lost due to a virus.

5.7. Further to the allegations framed in the terms of reference of the Panel, evidence collected during the panel's deliberations indicated that:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5.7.7. Paper 2.1.12. is 77% similar to other publications and indicates self-plagiarism or redundant publication.

5.7.8. Paper 2.1.13. is 54% similar to other publications and indicates plagiarism or redundant publication.

[REDACTED]

CONFIDENTIAL

## 6. Findings—Honesty

6.1. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## 7. Findings—Fairness

7.1. The second function of the Panel was to make a finding of fact—having regard to the evidence and on the balance of probability—as to whether Dr Arokiasamy breached the *Australian Code* and/or RMIT Policy by not meeting the principle of ‘Fairness’ and related responsibilities, including:

7.1.1. Ensuring that the ethics principles of research merit and integrity, justice, beneficence and respect are applied to human research;

7.1.2. Ensuring that authors of research outputs are all those, and only those, who have made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to the research and its output, and that they agree to be listed as an author; and

7.1.3. Citing and acknowledging other relevant work appropriately and accurately.

7.2. The Panel found that:

7.2.1. On the balance of probabilities, Dr Arokiasamy **breached** the *Australian Code* and/or RMIT Policy in regard to applying ethics principles to human research, authorship of research outputs, and appropriate acknowledgment.

7.2.2. The allegation that Dr Arokiasamy conducted human research without ethics approval is evidenced.

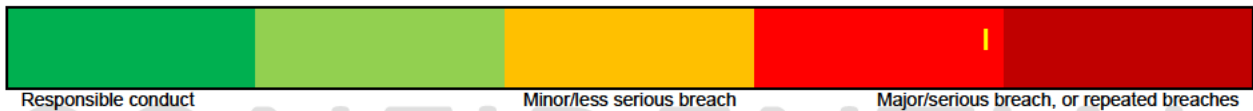
7.2.3. The allegation that Dr Arokiasamy assigned authorship to those who did not make a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution is evidenced.

7.2.3.1. The co-authors of papers 2.1.3., 2.1.10., 2.1.12., 2.1.13., and 2.1.14. were unaware of these outputs. Dr Arokiasamy appears to have used prominent scholars in field to add credibility to these papers.

7.2.3.2. [REDACTED]

7.2.4. On the balance of probability, evidence indicates Dr Arokiasamy has not cited other relevant work appropriately and accurately.

7.2.5. The breach of the principle of Fairness was **serious**.



CONFIDENTIAL

## 8. Findings—Accountability

8.1. The third function of the Panel was to make a finding of fact—having regard to the evidence and on the balance of probability—as to whether Dr Arokiasamy breached the *Australian Code* and/or RMIT Policy by not meeting the principle of ‘Accountability’ and related responsibilities, including:

8.1.1. Complying with the relevant laws, regulations, disciplinary standards, ethics guidelines and institutional policies related to responsible research conduct; and

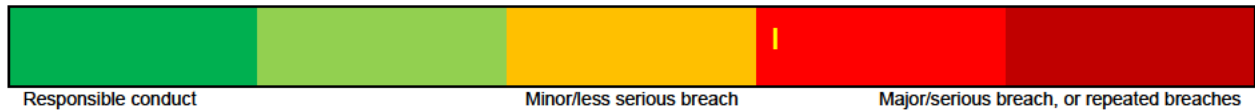
8.1.2. Ensuring that appropriate approvals are obtained prior to the commencement of research, and that conditions of any approvals are adhered to during the course of research.

8.2. The Panel found that:

8.2.1. On the balance of probabilities, Dr Arokiasamy **breached** the *Australian Code* and/or RMIT Policy in regard to obtaining appropriate ethics approvals.

8.2.1.1. See 7.2.2., above.

8.2.2. The breach of the principle of Accountability was **serious**.



8.2.3. On the balance of probabilities, Dr Arokiasamy **did not breach** the *Australian Code* and/or RMIT Policy in regard to complying with relevant standards.

8.2.3.1. It is more likely than not that research data was lost due to poor research data management practices. There is insufficient evidence to support the allegation that Dr Arokiasamy fabricated research data.

## 9. Recommendations

9.1. The fourth function of the Panel was, 'If a breach, or breaches, of the principles and responsibilities of the *Australian Code* and/or RMIT Policy are found, to recommend appropriate corrective and/or disciplinary actions.'

9.2. The Panel recommends that:

9.2.1. All papers listed at 2.1. should be retracted. The Research Ethics, Integrity, and Governance team should liaise with publishers regarding retraction.

9.2.1.1. The Panel agreed that co-authors of the relevant outputs should be informed of the corrective action and requested to remove these outputs from their record.

9.2.2. All outputs should be removed from RMIT systems (e.g., ResearchMaster, RMIT website).

9.2.3. Research data storage and management processes should be reviewed and further guidance should be provided to researchers regarding ownership and availability of research data after a researcher leaves RMIT.

9.2.4. To capture those researchers who do not complete research integrity training, the completion rates of the online research integrity module should be communicated to

research leaders. Research leaders may consider connecting annual staff appraisal and/or research allocation to completion of compulsory modules.

9.2.5. In implementing corrective actions, the Panel stressed that it is vital to support research students and educate staff. The Panel recommended offering institutional support to students (2.1.8. and 2.1.11.) and liaising with line manager of [REDACTED] (2.1.5., 2.1.12., and 2.1.14) to arrange a mentor to support his research practice.

9.2.6. This research integrity matter should form a de-identified case study for research integrity training and education.

## 10. Review

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Professor Julia Gaimster and Professor Brett Kirk (Chairpersons)**  
**Professor Helen De Cieri**  
**Professor Fuming Jiang**

With

Dr David Blades and Dr Daniel Barr  
Research Ethics, Integrity, and Governance  
Research Strategy and Services  
Research and Innovation Portfolio  
RMIT University

END