

In regards to the result of the investigation on Misconduct in Research Activities in UoA

1. Background for the investigation

On April 1st and 8th, anonymous emails which accused that two of papers (Case 1, Case2) written by the Chairperson of the board of executives, President Miyazaki Toshiaki had committed research misconducts such as “Self-Plagiarism”, “Double-Submission”, “Plagiarism” from papers written by students trained by him and etc., sent to faculty members, master students and etc. in UoA. After that, on June 4th and July 16th of the same year, an article was posted on the Google Groups anonymously.

Then the accusation was sent to The Japan Science and Technology Agency, and The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. The two organizations forwarded the accusations to UoA (And UoA received the accusations from the organizations on June 8th, 2020.)

Furthermore, on August 20th, 2020, another article was posted on the Google Groups anonymously and accused that Vice President Zhao Qiangfu had committed research misconduct in his paper.

As the response to these accusations, we administrative office conducted preliminary investigations. And as the result of the preliminary investigations, we reached the conclusion that we had to conduct the Full-Scale Investigation. Then the investigation committee including external members was established and started the investigation procedures.

2. Contents of the investigations

The committee carried out the investigations based on “The Regulations on the Prevention of Impropriety Concerning Research Activities, the Public University Corporation, the University of Aizu”.

According to the regulations, the President was supposed to be the Chief Executive Officer of the Investigation Committee but the Regent (Director General) was assigned as the Chief Executive Officer instead because the President was accused. And the Vice president was supposed to be the Chairperson but the Deputy Director General was assigned as the Chairperson because the Vice President was also accused.

(1) Investigation Committee Members

Chairperson: Suda Shinich, Deputy Director General of UoA
 (~March 31st,2021)
 Sato Hitoshi, Deputy Director General of UoA
 (April 1st, 2021~)

Vice Chairperson: BEN ABDALLAH Abderazek

Head of the Computer Engineering Division of UoA

Member: Paik Inchon

Chair of the Graduate Department of Computer and Information Systems of UoA

Member: OZAWA Yoshihito,

Adjunct Professor, Fukushima University

Member: FUJIWARA Masami

Professor Emeritus, Nihon University

Member: OCHIAI Hideya

Associate Professor, Graduate School of Information Science and Technology, University of Tokyo

Member: KOIKE Tatsuya

Lawyer, Aizukakujo Law Firm

(2) Period of the investigation

The investigation committee were held 9 times from February 4th , 2021 to December 7th, 2021.

(3) Target of Investigation

- 4 papers (Proceedings) written by Prof. Miyazaki Toshiaki(※)

- ※ Job title when the target ones were posted. Assigned to be the President in April, 2020.

- 1 paper (Proceedings) written by Prof. Zhao Qiangfu (※)

- ※ Job title when the target one was posted. Assigned to be the Vice President in April 2020.

(4) Investigation methods

The investigation committee sorted out the points of the contents of the accusation and the results of the preliminary investigations, verified the academic results of the target papers, confirmed the submission rules, interviewed the accused researchers and etc.,

3. The investigation and the Results of it

(1) Type of misconduct recognized and the researchers

Self-plagiarism caused by reusing some contents from the papers written by the same author in the past without appropriate citations: Prof. Miyazaki Toshiaki

On the other hand, any research misconduct was not found in Prof. Zhao Qiangfu's one.

(2) Involvement of co-authors

The roles of the co-authors were confirmed and it was determined that they

were not involved in Self-plagiarism.

(3) Outline of the cases

The target proceedings were those reporting on the progress of system development (Cases 1, 2, and 3), or on the construction of the same system but with different task settings (Case 4). Clear novelty was found in any of all the proceedings.

On the other hand, in all the target proceedings above, he reused sentences and diagrams to explain the common parts such as the concept or background of system in development process, from the proceedings which had been posted by himself before without appropriate citations. Therefore, these cases were judged to be Self-plagiarism.

(4) Measures to be taken by the university

Notifying each publisher that self-plagiarism has occurred

4. Causes of misconduct and measures to prevent recurrence

(1) Causes of misconduct

As for this series of accusations, they are all related to the reuse of sentences and diagrams from the proceedings posted by himself before. In the developmental process of a paper (submission to a scholarly publication, so-called “journal”, as a finished product after several proceedings), partial reuse of one’s own paper with appropriate citations is affirmed.

This research misconduct is due to the fact that the paper that identified Self-plagiarism was a proceedings, not a journal article, and also due to the recognition that when reporting on the progress of system development, the concept and structure of the base system would inevitably be described in the same way, so that Self-plagiarism would not be suspected even if there was no proper citation for that part, in his perception.

In addition, the University of Aizu newly established the “The Regulations on the Prevention of Impropriety Concerning Research Activities, the Public University Corporation, the University of Aizu ” on March 31, 2015, but prior to this, there were few unified efforts to prevent research misconduct as a university. Moreover, after the enactment of the regulations above, efforts have been made to provide research ethics training in person or through e-learning, but there has been a lack of active dissemination of information on research ethics. This kind of situation might cause

the fact that the target person did not have opportunities to change the style of writing for proceedings, at the time when Self-plagiarism was not as much of a problem as it is today.

(2) Preventive Measures against Recurrence

○ Review of the Regulations on the Prevention of Impropriety Concerning Research Activities

Revising the provisions to specifically categorize misconduct other than fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism, and adding provisions to ensure the effectiveness of research ethics education.

○ Enhancement of research ethics education

Providing research ethics education so that researchers (including students) can fully understand the specifics of misconduct. In addition, a system should be established to enable more careful checking among co-authors, such as the introduction of a plagiarism checking tool for the timing of paper submission.

○ Sharing of the latest information on research ethics within the university

Establishing the intramural system to share the latest information on research ethics, such as trends in the submission rules of publishers, examples of problems with submissions, and examples of research misconduct.