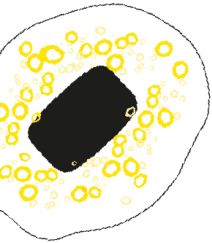


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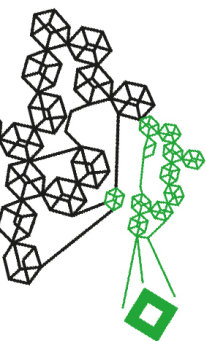
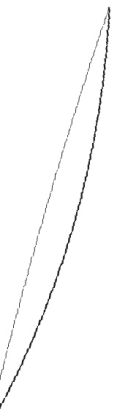


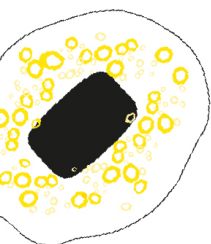
SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY COMMITTEE

translation of the Dutch version of the

Annual Report

January 2023 until September 2024





COLOFON

TRANSLATION OF THE DUTCH VERSION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY COMMITTEE (CWI)
CLASSIFICATION: PUBLIC

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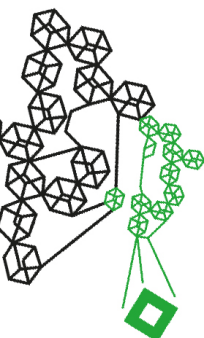
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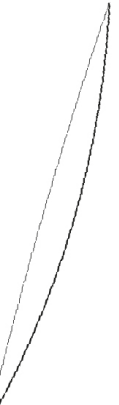




Introduction

The Committee on Scientific Integrity (here after CWI/the committee) advises the Executive Board (here after also: CvB) regarding complaints about suspected violations of scientific integrity by (former) employees of the University of Twente. On annual basis, the committee draws up a report of its activities. This report is public and will be published on the [CWI-website](#).

1. Annual reporting



According to the UT's Scientific Integrity Complaints Procedure, the CWI accounts for its activities to the Executive Board in retrospect in an annual report for the purpose of the university's annual report. Once adopted, the report will be published. The CWI, the relevant portfolio holder of the Executive Board and the confidants for Scientific Integrity meet at least once a year in an annual meeting to discuss the CWI casuistry, the annual reports of the confidential advisors and possible points of improvement. That meeting took place on September 19, 2024. This report outlines the topics discussed at that meeting. The confidential advisors for Scientific Integrity for complainants and defendants (separately) prepare anonymous annual reports on their activities. These are shared only with the Executive Board via the relevant portfolio holder and the scientific committee members, for discussion in the annual meeting and to appoint points of improvement. Aspects from those reports may be outlined in this annual report.

2. Composition CWI

Composition of the CWI is as follows:

- prof.mr.dr. M.A. (Michiel) Heldeweg, Chair
- prof.dr.ir. L. (Leon) Lefferts, member and per May 1, 2023, vice-chair
- em.prof.dr.ir. P. (Piet) Bergveld, member
- prof.dr.ir. G.J. (Geert) Heijenk, member
- prof.dr. A. (Armagan) Kocer, member
- prof.dr.ir. E. (Edwin) Zondervan, member
- em.prof.dr. J.M. (Jules) Pieters, member, appointment ended per August 2024.

Official secretary of the committee is J. (Jessica) Greven, LLB. The committee and official secretary are for practical matters supported by H. (Hèla) van Rijssen-Klaczynski, LLB. The secretariat can (also) be reached via cwi@utwente.nl.

The confidential advisers for the complainants are or were Em. Prof.dr.ir. O.A.M. (Olaf) Fisscher (whose appointment ended per medio May 2024) and Em. Prof.dr. J.C.T. (Jan) Eijkel. The confidential advisor for the defendant is Prof.dr.ir. A. (Alfred) Stein.



3. Way of working CWI

This paragraph describes the way of working of the CWI. Point of attention and lessons learned in previous years have been included in this procedure.

Complaints received

In the event of a suspected violation of scientific integrity, a complaint can be filed with the CWI. A complaint is usually filed with the CWI through the secretary, although a complaint can also be filed through the CvB, after which the complaint is forwarded to the secretary. Once a complaint is filed, contact occurs between the secretary and the submitter - or complainant - to assess whether the CWI complaint procedure is appropriate. The person mentioned in the complaint as the accused (or: defendant) is notified of receipt of the complaint, as are the CvB and the dean of the faculty where the person is employed. Both complainant and defendant are referred to, among other things, the availability of the relevant confidential advisor, the ombudsperson and the applicable rules and procedures in accordance with the complaints procedure. It is emphasized to both complainant and defendant, partly in response to Annual Report 2022, that submitting a complaint to the CWI leads to a formal complaints procedure, with an administrative final conclusion, in which the submitter acts as 'complainant'.



Composition of the committee and its independency

Each complaint received is, following the Annual Report 2022, reviewed anonymously, and discussed, as before, confidentially by the secretary with the chair or vice-chair (the latter, since May 2023, if the Chair is institutionally too close to the subject of or parties to the complaint - in accordance with the University Council's request) in order to assess what the composition of the handling committee may be. This handling committee shall be formed of at least three members, including the chair or vice chair of the CWI, in accordance with the complaints procedure. The committee shall be composed of CWI members who can fulfil their role in the handling of the complaint impartially and independently. In accordance with article 5 of the complaints procedure, members of the committee who are in any way involved with the persons or facts to which the complaint relates are not eligible to handle the complaint in question. This also applies to the chair, in which case the vice chair acts. In exceptional cases, this means that external members must be appointed. In Annual Report 2022 it was emphasized that the criterion that, by definition, a member may not be from the same faculty in which the complainant and/or defendant is or was employed, is not absolute. What is crucial is that the member be undeniably factually independent and impartial. Following the Annual Report 2022, the composition of the handling committee is reported to the complainant, defendant and the CvB with the notice that they may raise objections to it.



Assessment and advice

This handling committee will first assess whether the complaint is admissible. If the complaint is inadmissible, the committee cannot consider the substance of the complaint and will inform the Executive Board. If the complaint is admissible, the committee will assess the substance of the complaint.

As part of the substantive assessment, the parties can be heard at a hearing, unless obviously unnecessary for the committee. The committee considers what further information is necessary to make a proper assessment of the complaint. Finally, the committee prepares its advice, which is shared with the complainant and the defendant for verification of any factual inaccuracies. Convincing corrections may be incorporated into the final recommendation, after which the advice is shared with the Executive Board. The secretary elaborates on the advice with the rector, as the portfolio holder, and with the Executive Board. The Executive Board ultimately decides on the complaint with an intended decision, after which the parties may initiate proceedings with the National Organization for Scientific Integrity (LOWI). If the LOWI is requested to give advice, the CvB is to act as a 'party' and await the advice of the LOWI before making a final decision in the complaint at hand.



Correspondence

The secretary of the CWI handles correspondence with the Committee members, with all parties involved, also external, and with the Executive Board.

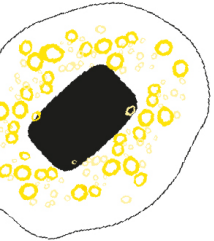
The secretary also handles correspondence with the LOWI on behalf of the Executive Board. All correspondence is confidential and is treated and archived as such. In processes of administrative handling within the University, it is also handled as such.

4. Complaints

During the period covered by this report, the CWI issued advices in three complaints (one in 2023, two in 2024). Because these complaints have not yet been finalized, they cannot yet be reported on in this annual report. All complaints that are substantively addressed are published anonymously on the [UNL website](#) after resolution. The [CWI-UT page](#) contains summaries of the complaints.

Complaints are usually related to topics such as intellectual property, funding, contracts, publishers, non-scientific interests, ancillary positions and the reputation of science being at stake. Frequently, complaints involve complex issues with a long history, sometimes accompanied by tensions regarding ethical views or in relation to a labour dispute, which may have damaged mutual trust between the parties.

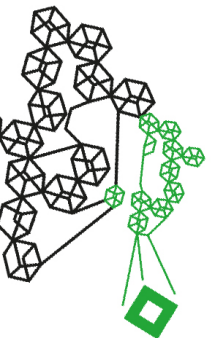
Not all reports made to the confidential advisor for the complainant result in a complaint. From case reports, whether formal complaints or not, the following can be noted:

- 
- the importance of the Graduate School. As in previous years, in the Annual Meeting of 23-24 it was emphasized that, given the hierarchical position of the doctoral student, it is important that the doctoral student be adequately supported. There is a mandatory course in Scientific Integrity for external PhD students. It will be examined whether the function of the CWI and the related procedure are sufficiently incorporated in that course.
 - the problems of doctoral students sometimes seem comparable to those of master's students and their supervisors during graduation, especially regarding the question of when the research is 'finished' (such as in terms of timeliness versus results achieved). This is also something that examination boards sometimes run into.
 - business interests and the mixing of public and private play an increasingly important role in scientific research - with consequent tensions between the interests involved.
 - there is good coordination between actors within 'the UT support structure'.
 - only a few reports made to the confidential adviser for complainants lead to an actual complaint.

5. Lessons learned

This section summarizes specific points of attention, focus areas and points for improvement as a result of case histories or processes over the period January 2023 - August 2024.

a. Informal handling



It appears that many reports made to the complainant confidential adviser can be resolved without the need to submit a formal complaint and initiate a formal complaint procedure. This was already concluded in Annual Report 2021. This fits well within the basic principles of the UT (named in Annual Report 2022 and emphasized in the complaints regulation as of 2023), namely informal consultation regarding issues that are not for the CWI to assess, for which another route is appropriate (one could think of the intervention of the ombudsperson), or if a settlement in an informal setting is more desirable or appropriate (as advised by LOWI). In any case, this is investigated in the initial phase (prior to, at the time of, or immediately after submitting a complaint to the CWI). The issues discussed with the complainants' confidential adviser are also regularly resolved mutually and appropriately already at that stage. Possibly even in such a way that a feared future violation of scientific integrity could be prevented - although it is not always possible to say whether it would have come to a violation without mediation.

It is at least important to ensure that such informal discussions are always explicitly placed in the context that everyone has the right to submit a complaint to the CWI. The CWI must remain accessible to all so that, in the interests of those involved, of the university and of science, advice on issues of scientific integrity by the CWI is provided if required. It is important to guard the balance between formal and informal handling and to prevent informal handling from contributing insufficiently to institutional learning from case histories. Via the report of the confidential adviser for complainants, these casuistic issues with informal mediation will be reported more extensively in the future, obviously with respect for confidentiality, with descriptions of figures and categories, so that the Executive Board can determine which aspects or practices require (extra) attention within the UT.

b. Informing the defendant of the content of the complaint

Case histories have shown that consideration should be given to amending the complaints regulations when it comes to informing the defendant(s) immediately upon receipt of a complaint. Under the current complaints procedure, the defendant is only informed that a complaint has been received. The complaint and identity of the complainant is only shared with the defendant after positive admissibility assessment. This is not only unpleasant for the defendants, who remain in an uncertain and waiting position, but also undesirable because it deprives defendants of the opportunity to be able to spot (and if desired report) any statements made by the complainant(s) in the (social) media. The CWI will examine whether this change can be made in the next revision of the complaints procedure.

6. Continuation of previous lessons learned with a sequel

This section contains ongoing or updated focus areas arising from the [annual reports for previous years](#) published on the website, to the extent that the areas have not already been incorporated in Section 3 'Way of Working CWI'.

a. Follow-up recommendations UC-Oz 2023

During the previous review of the complaints procedure (2023), the UC-Oz provided advice on the procedure. Those opinions were not realizable during that review, so they will be considered for next review of the complaints procedure. The advice reads:

- “Investigate whether it is necessary, appropriate and desirable to expand the scope of the UT complaints procedure to include support staff.
- Investigate whether it is necessary, appropriate and desirable to make the submission of a certificate of good conduct [VOG statement] mandatory for the appointment of committee members or confidential advisers.”

b. Trust and Learning process

UT relies on the scientific integrity of its employees. In the CWI procedure, this is expressed in 'the presumption of innocence/scientifically ethical behaviour, unless proven otherwise', in accordance with the Dutch code of conduct and the complaints procedure. In doing so, 'learning lessons' will be the primary goal for all involved: a filed complaint does not necessarily mean a violation, violations occur in different degrees and not every violation justifies the imposition of sanctions. It remains a learning process, as the confidential advisors and the University Council also emphasized. The CWI has incorporated these principles into the complaints procedure and its way of working. [Annual Report 2022]

c. Intercollegiate resolution

UT encourages, before a CWI complaint procedure commences, the handling of issues in an intercollegiate setting. This was also the advice of the LOWI and the confidential advisors. Of course, everyone retains the right to actually file a complaint. [Annual Report 2022]

d. Formality CWI procedure

The CWI procedure is a formal complaints procedure, in which the task of the CWI consists of handling complaints received and giving advice on them to the Executive Board, as required by the Dutch code of conduct and the complaints regulations. This role is not compatible with the wish to have the CWI fulfil other roles (such as giving advice on a generic subject), particularly in view of the requirement of impartiality and independence. Thus, the CWI will refrain from fulfilling other (advisory) roles. [Annual Report 2022]

e. Personal approach

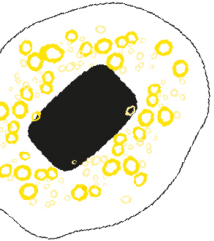
Despite the formal nature of the process as a complaint procedure, a “personal approach” should be pursued. The CWI has incorporated this into its way of working. [Annual Report 2021, 2022]

f. LOWI

The LOWI is an independent advisory body, not an appeal body. If the CvB has received advice from two expert committees (i.e. CWI and LOWI), then the content of the considerations of both advices is important for the final decision of the Executive Board. It is certainly not the case that the advice that is most favourable to the defendant is always followed; after all, a CWI advice that is favourable to the defendant would make it unnecessary for the complainant to go to the LOWI. Advice is always weighed in terms of content. [Annual Report 2022]

g. Breach of confidentiality

With regard to the possibility of dealing with a complaint that has previously been raised in the publicity, it can be concluded that the rule of confidentiality from the complaints regulations only applies once a CWI procedure has been initiated - including the complaint itself. If a party speaks

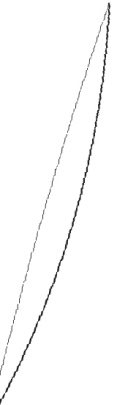


out in the media about the complaint or during the procedure of handling the complaint, this may burden the handling to such an extent that the CWI must decide that the handling cannot continue. Because the other party may still have an interest in continuing, such a far-reaching decision should not be taken too quickly. The CWI considers this in its deliberations. [Annual Report 2022]

h. PhD students

Signals regarding the more vulnerable position of doctoral students make the CWI extra sensitive in case of any future complaints. The importance of the Graduate School is mentioned. It is stressed in Annual Report 23-24 that, given the hierarchical/subordinate position of the PhD student, it is important that the PhD student is adequately supported. There is a mandatory course in Scientific Integrity for external PhD students. It is being investigated whether the mandatory course on Scientific Integrity for external doctoral students also adequately mentions the CWI and the related procedure. [Annual Report 2022 and 23-24]

i. Investing in (after)care



In all complaint processes, parties involved can be emotionally affected. As a point for improvement, the steps for aftercare in the process of handling a CWI complaint have been explicitly discussed in the Executive Board. Part of this is that the rector engages with the parties after the CvB has made a decision. This form of aftercare is viewed positively by those involved and will be continued. Aftercare in the broadest sense of the word (by the Executive Board, confidential advisors or HR) remains an ongoing focus area, at least in the context of scientific integrity, and is the subject of discussion in, for example, UT-wide meetings such as the 'UT help structure'. [Annual Report 2021]

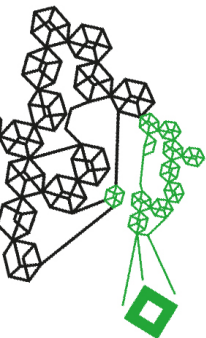
j. Appointing additional confidential advisors

Confidential advisors are extremely important and valued in the CWI process. The Executive Board and CWI are making efforts to appoint additional (internal and possibly external) confidants. [Annual Report 2021]

k. Transparency and website

To promote transparency to the UT community, also on advice of the University Council, [the CWI website](#) will be updated on an ongoing basis to include case histories and lessons learned from the annual report. [Annual Report 2022]

l. Attention to turnaround times



On an ongoing basis, the feasibility of the turnaround times as stated in the complaints regulations is examined, as well as on whether it is sufficiently clear what possible reasons there may be for delay (such as: a hearing, an additional investigation or a LOWI procedure). [Annual Report 2021]

m. Media policy

Complaints are posted anonymously on the UNL website and the UT website. Communication to outside UT about complaints is through the CvB spokesperson. Messages, in any sense or manner, must be weighed on an individual basis, taking into account the nature and sensitivity of the matter. Part of this is coordination between CWI (chair and/or secretary) and spokesperson of the Executive Board. Care will have to be taken when sharing information about the content of the complaint. In a national context (CWI meetings, rectors' meetings), case histories are discussed anonymously and confidentially for awareness and learning. The CWI website has been updated accordingly. [Annual Report 2021]

n. Complaints procedure

The scientific integrity complaints procedure will be amended when necessary on topics identified in annual reports.