

From: **Valerie Ashford** <[valerie.ashford@queensu.ca](mailto:valerie.ashford@queensu.ca)>  
Date: Tue, May 17, 2011 at 10:00 AM  
Subject: RE: Your letter of April 16, 2010 to NSERC  
To: Mort Shirkhanzadeh <[bluesky.shirkhanzadeh@gmail.com](mailto:bluesky.shirkhanzadeh@gmail.com)>  
Cc: [diane.kelly@queensu.ca](mailto:diane.kelly@queensu.ca)

Dear Dr. Shirkhanzadeh,

Thank you for your message below, which has been directed to Diane Kelly for her handling.

Valerie Ashford

Valerie Ashford | Information Management Coordinator | Office of the Principal | [valerie.ashford@queensu.ca](mailto:valerie.ashford@queensu.ca)

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**From:** Mort Shirkhanzadeh [mailto:[bluesky.shirkhanzadeh@gmail.com](mailto:bluesky.shirkhanzadeh@gmail.com)]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 16, 2011 2:17 PM  
**To:** [principal@queensu.ca](mailto:principal@queensu.ca)  
**Cc:** Names Removed

**Subject:** Your letter of April 16, 2010 to NSERC

Dear Principal Woolf:

I have now obtained a copy of your letter dated April 16, 2010 that you sent to NSERC in response to the letter of March 4, 2010 from Barbara Conway (NSERC Corporate Secretary). Ms. Conway asked you in her letter to respond to 4 allegations of institutional non-compliance that I lodged against Queen's University and she provided a summary of the allegations in that letter (see attached). As you are aware, despite my repeated informal and formal requests in 2010 for a copy of your letter, it was kept secret and I was denied the right to respond to your statements in a timely manner. Had I had access to your letter and your statements about me back in April 2010, I would have corrected the inaccurate statements and false claims in your letter at that time.

I am taking the opportunity now to respond to your letter of April 16, 2010 and I hope that I don't get yet another disciplinary letter in my Official File for telling the truth.

I would particularly like to comment on the following parts of your letter at this time:

In your letter to NSERC, you state: "We acknowledge NSERC's responsibility to respond to allegations of institutional non-compliance. However, we are concerned about the request that we respond to these recent institutional allegations from Dr. Shirkhanzadeh..."

You also state that, “the information upon which Dr. Shirkhazadeh appears to base his allegations was available to him (and to NSERC) in 2005 and 2006”. This statement is inaccurate: the four allegations of institutional non-compliance that I lodged against Queen’s in December 2009 and January 2010 are based on the information contained in the university investigation report that was only made available to me by NSERC on November 19, 2009. NSERC released the university’s report with the relevant NSERC files on November 19, 2009 as a result of my formal request (ATI Request 2009-05) for information that I submitted after reading an article about the case by Canwest News.

I had no access to the university’s report in 2005 and 2006. Back in 2005, Dr. Kerry Rowe (former VP (Research) refused to give me a copy of the investigation report because of the non-transparent system that was (and still is) in place at Queen’s. In his letter of December 2, 2005 to Ms. Lorraine Stewart (Research Ethics Coordinator, NSERC), Dr. Rowe wrote:

“I am concerned about the requirement that the university inform the complainants of the conclusions reached in the investigation.....”

Back in 2005, Dr Rowe concealed the truth about the outcome of investigation and instead of allowing me to comment on the report, he informed me in his brief letter of December 22, 2005 that there was no misconduct. I only learned about the scale of cover-up after reading the newspaper article and after NSERC released the university’s investigation report and other files in November 2009. My allegations of institutional non-compliance are based on the information and documents contained in the university’s report and relevant NSERC files, including letters and e-mail exchanges between the university officials, lawyers, the reviewer, and NSERC officials.

Here are some of the facts that we now know based on the information released by NSERC in November 2009:

1. On November 21, 2005, NSERC instructed Dr. Rowe to investigate the allegations of data fabrication and many other allegations (9 letters) that I had sent to NSERC. A copy of the NSERC’s letter dated November 21, 2005 describing the nature of allegations is attached and marked as Exhibit “A”.
2. Despite clear instructions from NSERC, allegations of data fabrication were not investigated by the university. This is confirmed by the university’s reviewer in his report where he clearly states that on 7 October 2005 he was instructed to assess “certain” allegations of data falsification and further confirms that, “This assessment is concerned only with allegations of data falsification...” He goes on to state that, “I have not considered other allegations of academic misconduct or questions concerning the scientific results and the analyses.” There is no record to show that allegations of data fabrication were examined in 2005 or at any other time after 2005. This represents a significant violation of MOU.
3. It is also clear from the reviewer’s report that he was denied access to a complete record of the data that he requested to examine the allegations of data falsification. As

stated by the examiner, "...a complete compilation of all the experimental results, including those deemed invalid, were not available for examination."

4. According to the reviewer, the accused researcher was not able to satisfy his request for a complete record of the data for all the samples produced and sent to the Canadian Space Agency (CSA).

5. Both Dr. Rowe and the accused researcher were fully aware of the report submitted to CSA in 2000 (PW &GS File No. 9F007-4-6028/01- ST "Diffusion in Liquid" Project 4-0026) that contained the complete record of the data requested by the reviewer. Despite this, it was claimed in a letter dated October 28, 2005 that the requested information could not be found. Critical data that were required to examine the allegations of data falsification were withheld from the reviewer, as if the university was not accountable to the public. This represents a significant violation of MOU.

6. Allegations of data falsification lodged on September 12, 2005 and on October 12, 2005 against Ms. "R" and her supervisor were not investigated because the Graduate School was denied access to a report (Final Report. PW &GS File No. 9F007-4-6028/01- ST "Diffusion in Liquid" Project 4-0026 (2000)) that was the basis of my allegations. More alarming, the university did not send an investigation report to NSERC in 2005 for this particular case despite the fact that Dr. Rowe was instructed by NSERC to do so on November 21, 2005. This represents a significant violation of MOU. Huge and important sections of the thesis are copied from the old papers published either by the supervisor alone or with other co-authors other than Ms. 'R'. The paper in the Ann. NY. Acad. Sci. with the student's name as co-author is copied from earlier papers and is now retracted together with 4 other papers after I reported the problem to the editor. NSERC's Committee on Professional Scientific Integrity (CPSI) was not given the opportunity to see the report of the investigation for this particular allegation. This represents a significant violation of MOU.

7. According to the NSERC's files, "Despite the lack of thoroughness in the university's investigation report, the members of CPSI found the documents presented by the complainants provided sufficient evidence of misconduct to warrant that severe sanctions be imposed by NSERC..."

8. Both the internal assessor (Dr. McLatchie) and the external reviewer were selected with the approval of the accused researcher.

9. NSERC's Committee on Professional Scientific Integrity (CPSI) expressed concern in early 2006 that "the university investigation was not sufficiently at arm's length"

10. NSERC's Committee on Professional Scientific Integrity (CPSI) expressed "disappointment with the quality of the investigation report. More specifically, the report was found to lack thoroughness..."

11. NSERC Staff expressed concern on June 16, 2006 that “existing grants may have obtained on the basis of an exaggerated publication record”
12. There is no evidence whatsoever that the university officials took appropriate steps to correct the inflated publication record in grant applications after NSERC’s Staff expressed concern that “existing grants may have been obtained on the basis of an exaggerated publication record.”
13. There is no evidence whatsoever to show that the university took the appropriate steps to instruct the accused researcher to correct the research records in the relevant journals.
14. The remedial action taken by the university was found by NSERC staff to be “rather minor in light of many breaches of publication practices .....” (emphasis added).

In the last page of your letter to NSERC, you refer to the new allegations of data fabrication, data falsification and misuse of funds that I lodged recently in 2009-2010, and you state that, “From what we currently understand, the vast majority of his complaints are related to data originally collected in 1992, which was investigated in 2005, and for which there were no findings of falsification or fabrication”. This is not true: First, the new allegations lodged in 2009-2010 are concerned with papers published in 2007, 2008 and 2009 (these papers did not exist in 2005). Second, allegations of data fabrication have never been investigated by the university at any time (as I explained in item 2 above). Contrary to your assertion, the numerous allegations of data fabrication and data falsification lodged in 2009-2010 are related to space research and experiments internationally known as ‘Queen’s University Experiments in Liquid Diffusion (QUELD)’ that were conducted on board MIR in 1995-1996 (See “the Summary of QUELD II samples **assembled and tested by Queen’s University**” (Table V-1 in the Final report submitted to CSA in 2000)) and the data were analysed in 1996 - 1999. The research was directly funded by the Canadian Space Agency over many years through contracts with Queen’s University.

It is clear from the records released so far by NSERC under the Access to Information Act that the university administration swept the abuses under the carpet in 2005 and is now attempting to cover up the new cases of academic misconduct that have come to light in 2009-2010. The scale of the problem is colossal in terms of the size of the contracts and grants affected over years. Fabricated and falsified data are extensively used in thesis work, progress reports, and more than 15 journal articles and conference proceedings. There are over 22 pairs of duplicated papers with bogus authorship.

In the last paragraph of your letter, you state that, “the conduct of our institution with regard to the integrity matters brought forward by Dr. ShirkHzanadeh in 2005 has been dealt with by Queen’s University..” (!) I respectfully submit that you and the Chair of Board of Trustees should allow a credible and independent investigative committee, similar to NSERC’s Committee on Professional Scientific Integrity (CPSI), to look into the serious allegations

against Queen's University, especially when you have no intention of responding to the allegations of institutional non-compliance yourself. In fact, the conduct of the institution and the way the institution handled the research integrity matters were dealt with very effectively by NSERC's Committee on the Professional Scientific Integrity (CPSI) in 2006. CPSI members expressed disappointment with the quality of the university's investigation report. They expressed concern that the university investigation was not sufficiently at arm's length, and they recommended severe sanctions.

Important principles are at stake. Given the questionable conduct of the institution in 2005-2006, who is going to look into the new allegations that have not been investigated yet (not even by one reviewer)? Surely, you would agree that now that you are the Principal, you are responsible for correcting the scientific records for the research community.

Finally, I understand from Ms. Conway's letter of July 31, 2008 that was released very recently that in 2008 the Minister of Industry asked for an independent review to be conducted by Dr. Pierre-Gerlier Forest. I would appreciate it if you forward a copy of the documents that the university provided to Dr. Forest for that review.

Sincerely,

M Shirkhazadeh