Concordat to support research integrity - 'Commitment 5'

RCUK annual narrative statement on research integrity, 2014

Background

RCUK is a signatory to the concordat to support research integrity[1], published in July 2012

Commitment 5 of the concordat (page 21) states:

> ***Funders of research***, ***employers of researchers*** and ***other organisations***
> *recognising the concordat should work together to produce an annual narrative*
> *statement on research integrity. This statement should be based on input from*
> *the signatories to the concordat.*
>
> *To provide assurance over efforts to strengthen research integrity, Research*
> *Councils UK will use its existing assurance mechanisms to garner feedback on*
> *activity across the sector. This information will be made available to other*
> *funders and provide an evidence base for the annual statement, thereby*
> *reducing the need for additional reporting requirements.*

This is the second annual RCUK narrative statement. The first was published on the RCUK
website early in January 2014: www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/researchintegrity/.

RCUK narrative statement on research integrity

The reporting period for this narrative is 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 though some more recent
information has been included where available.

The Research Councils work closely together through a formal RCUK Network: 'Good Research
Conduct Network' (GRECON) which meets about three times a year.

Since July 2013, RCUK has:

    i)   <u>Updated the questions asked as part of the RCUK Assurance Programme of Research
Organisations</u>

The RCUK Assurance programme[2] is an internal programme that provides assurance to the
Research Councils that the funding they provide to Research Organisations (RO) is used for the
purposes for which it was provided. The process is applied to 35-40 selected Research
Organisations a year. A set of questions is sent to the RO; these are answered in writing, and
then there is a visit from the Funding Assurance team. From August 2012, the remit of the
Programme was extended to include assurance on research integrity. A set of questions on
research integrity was agreed and these started to be used from 1st November 2012 as a pilot
in universities shortly to be subject to assurance. This was completed in two phases with Phase
1 being held in May 2013 and Phase 2 in October 2013. Following this pilot, the questions were
modified (<u>annex</u> 1) and the additional text and table to question 5 have been used from July
2014.

The Assurance team lets GRECON members know regularly of the schedule of ROs to be sent
questionnaires and to be visited, and reports to GRECON routinely every six months on the
assurance programme.

[1] http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/Theconcordattosupportresearchintegrity.aspx
[2] www.rcuk.ac.uk/about/aboutRCUK/aims/units/Pages/Assurance.aspx

RCUK already has a memorandum of understanding with the Wellcome Trust to share the findings from the assurance programme, subject to receiving the consent of the research organisation.

As reported in RCUK's first narrative statement, during the period 1st November 2012 to 31st March 2013, seven ROs were included in the pilot. In summary, the conclusions were:

- On the basis of the responses received, all seven were found to comply with the RCUK guidelines.
- In the past year, there had been two formal investigations (at different institutions). One was for plagiarism (upheld); and the second was for a breach of duty of care (upheld).

The reporting period for this report is April to March. From 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, 15 ROs were given assurance ratings for Research Integrity and of these 10 were given a "Satisfactory" Rating and 5 were given a "Substantial" rating. In summary, the responses of showed that:

- All 15 Research Organisations were complying with the RCUK guidelines;

- In the past year, there had been 24 cases of misconduct investigated at seven institutions;

- Of these, two cases were upheld, 14 cases were dismissed after investigation, three were still being investigated and there were five cases where the outcome was still to be notified to AASG.

In future years (April – March), we propose to continue to report trend data.

ii)   Strengthened RCUK's expectations for doctoral training regarding research integrity and good research conduct

The RCUK 'Expectations for Doctoral Training', published in June 2013[3], make a direct reference to the Concordat for Research Integrity and specifically state that "Students must receive training in the principles of good research conduct in their discipline, and understand how to comply with relevant ethical, legal and professional frameworks."

iii)   Participated in Science Europe (SE) activities in research integrity

RCUK has participated in meetings of the Science Europe General Assembly, including final approval (at the meeting on 21st November 2013) of the SE Roadmap[4] which includes a section on 'Research Integrity' (annex 2). This is being taken forward by a Working Group on Research Integrity, on which RCUK is represented. The Group is chaired by Dr Maura Hiney (Head of Policy, Evaluation and External Relations, Health Research Board, Ireland). There is a two-year work plan. The Working Group met on 25th-26th September 2013 in Brussels and on 28th-29th January 2014 in Madrid.

The main activity has been to undertake a mapping exercise during May/June. The outcome will be discussed at the next Working Group meeting in September 2014. The Working Group's five core activities are each led by a task group:

- Task Group 1 (Mapping) will provide inventory and comparative analysis of existing policies, codes and processes relevant to promotion, prevention and protection of research integrity in Europe that can inform all of the other Task Groups.

- Task Groups 2 (Training) and 3 (Awareness-raising) will concern themselves with current evidence on promotion of good research practice and prevention of misconduct through

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3 http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/media/news/130617/
4 http://www.scienceeurope.org/downloads

training and awareness-raising. These Task Groups will seek to identify best practice models for application by MOs and associated research performers in these arenas.

• Task Group 4 (Increasing knowledge) will review and consolidate the currently available baseline evidence on misconduct, behaviours, and lessons in order to gain a better understanding of the levels and drivers of misconduct but also what incentivises good research behaviours, and identify appropriate metrics and indicators for future monitoring of the success of research integrity initiatives.

• Task Group 5 (Strengthening collaboration) will look at the important issues of cross-border, inter-sectoral, inter-disciplinary collaboration and transparency of policies and procedures and seek to identify best practice approaches for application by MOs.

More details, including the Working Group membership, are at:
www.scienceeurope.org/policy/working-groups/Research-Integrity

   iv)   Heads of International (Biomedical) Research Organisations (HIROs) meeting, Shanghai, 2 July 2014

Sir John Savill (CEO, MRC) attended a meeting of HIROs on 2nd July. Issues discussed included:

- Definition of research misconduct. There were degrees of misconduct. The seriousness of an accusation of Research Misconduct and the consequences meant that only the most serious of instances tended to be identified and addressed as misconduct. It might be better to have systems that took a more graded approach. That way poor behaviour could formally be identified and managed without necessarily leading to the sanctions that a case of serious misconduct might require. A matrix approach might be useful.

- Prevention and training. There would be benefits in sharing materials used to train researchers on the topic of Research Misconduct; for instance in the US researchers often referred to the National Academy of Sciences' 'On Being a Scientist'.

- Privacy laws meant that funders sometimes could not tell each other, or research institutions, if they had applied sanctions to a particular researcher. This was a particular worry for HIROs due to the potentially serious consequences of misconduct in health research. It ought to be possible for cases where there was proof of serious misconduct to be made public.

HIROs would return to the topic at a subsequent meeting.

   v)   Nuffield Council on Bioethics project on the culture of scientific research

This project, which started in February 2014, is examining the culture of scientific research in the UK. The project invited comments from individuals from April-July to gather views on the pressures currently experienced by researchers, how this affects the behaviour of researchers and the research they produce, and debate what might be needed to maintain an ethical culture for scientific research in the future. The project is also holding various workshops during the latter half of the year. The Research Councils have participated in one of these. The report was published on 4th December 2014. (More detail at: http://nuffieldbioethics.org/project/research-culture).

   vi)   ESRC symposia on generic ethics principles

In considering the need to raise awareness of and promote adherence to good research practice, in 2012, ESRC, along with other partners (British Psychological Association and the British Sociological Association), supported the Academy of Social Science (AcSS) and the Association for Research Ethics Committees (AREC) to carry out a series of three symposia on the topic of 'Generic Ethics Principles in Social Science Research'. These successful symposia

were held in the spring of 2013 and resulted in a series of three professional briefings - see link to the third of these briefings: https://acss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Professional-Briefings-3-Ethics-r.pdf .

The Generic Ethics Principles in Social Science' project is a long-term programme, and in January 2014 the AcSS produced the following mission statement to guide their ongoing activities: "The Generic Ethics Principles in Social Science project of the Academy of Social Sciences was established in 2010. It is committed to working with social science learned societies, research funders, higher education establishments and participants in research. Its aim is to mutually advance the understanding and application of core ethics values that should inform and underpin social science research in all aspects from inception and review through data acquisition, analysis and management to dissemination and application".

   vii)   AHRC Early Career Fellow

AHRC Early Career Fellow Marie-Andrée Jacob of Keele University completed her study "Judging the Medics' Science: misconduct and research culture in disciplinary proceedings" and the MRC hosted a stakeholder workshop in September 2013 to help disseminate the findings.

[December 2014]

Research Integrity & Ethics - Assurance questions (modified, July 2014)

[On the RCUK website at: www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/researchintegrity/].

The Research Organisation is required to have procedures for governing good research practice, and for investigating and reporting unacceptable research conduct that meet the requirements set out in the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2012)[5] and the RCUK Policy and Guidelines on the Governance of Good Research Conduct (2009)[6] and any subsequent amendments.

The reasons for collecting the information are:

    i)   *Primarily to provide assurance to the RCs that HEIs are complying with the RCUK Policy and Guidelines on the Governance of Good Research Conduct;*

    ii)   *But also, to feed in to RCUK's narrative statement in meeting the requirements of the Concordat; and*

    iii)   *To allow RCUK to compare the data it receives from HEIs as part of the assurance programme with other information about research misconduct received by other routes, either from HEIs or from elsewhere.*

RCUK plans to make public annually:

- *Numbers of HEIs where the Assurance programme has revealed that the HEI has and has not complied with RCUK guidelines on statements/processes/name responsible persons etc.*
- *Numbers of formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken in the past three years which relate to researchers funded by or responsible for funding from Research Councils (including supervisors of postgraduate awards). (Q11.5)*
- *Trend data on the above (following year one).*

No HEI will be named. It is recognised that numbers will need careful explanation as increases may be 'good' as they may reflect better reporting.

NB The RCUK Policy and Guidelines requires Research Organisations to keep the relevant Research Council(s) informed of all allegations of research misconduct - at the time the allegation progresses to the formal investigation stage - wherever the case concerns individuals and/or research awards funded by the Council(s). (Page 10).

Questions

1   Please confirm that you have policies and procedures in place that meet the above requirements, including processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct. How often are these reviewed and when were they last reviewed?

2   Please provide the publicly accessible weblink to these policies and the name of the senior officer responsible for dealing with cases of misconduct.

3   How are these policies disseminated to staff? Please indicate if any special provision is made for new employees (including post-graduate students) and also how staff awareness is maintained.

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[5] www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2012/TheConcordatToSupportResearchIntegrity.pdf

[6] www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/reviews/grc/RCUKPolicyandGuidelinesonGovernanceofGoodResearchPracticeFebruary2013.pdf

4   Please outline any actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues (for example, postgraduate and researcher training, or process reviews).

5*   How many formal investigations of research misconduct have been completed in the past three completed academic years which relate to researchers funded by or responsible for funding from Research Councils (including supervisors of postgraduate awards)?

6   The Research Councils expect that the research they support will be carried out to a high ethical standard. Please explain the arrangements you have in place for reviewing that any research funded by the Research Councils is planned and conducted in accordance with such ethical standards.

* For question 5

- "Formal investigation" should be as described in the RCUK Policy and Guidelines (page 8).
- The relevant date should be when the formal investigation is completed.
- By completing the table below, please give by academic year (1 Oct – 30 Sept), for the past three completed academic years (starting with the most recent completed year), the number of completed investigations.
- And for each instance:
    o   Whether it was Fabrication, Falsification, Plagiarism, Misrepresentation, Breach of duty of care or Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct (all as defined in the RCUK Policy, pages 6-7), or other. (If 'other', please explain briefly); and
    o   Whether the allegation was upheld (in whole or in part). If in part, please give brief details in the final row.
- Names of individuals are not required.
- In terms of overall numbers, there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

	Number of formal investigations completed			Number of allegations upheld (in whole or in part)		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Fabrication						
Falsification						
Plagiarism						
Misrepresentation						
Breach of duty of care						
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct						
Other (please specify)						
Details of any allegations upheld in part						

Extract from the Science Europe Roadmap, 21 November 2013 (pp 23 -24)

Research Integrity

Enhanced research integrity policies will contribute to:

- **Supporting borderless science** – by fostering the harmonisation of procedures related to research integrity across disciplines, institutions and borders;

- **Facilitating science –** by increasing the efficiency of the R&D system through increased trust between scientists and in scientific results, and by reducing the likelihood that funding is misused;

- **Communicating science** – by helping to build and maintain public support for science, and by reducing the risk of misinformation based on misguided research; and

- **Improving the scientific environment** – by reducing the risk of unfair career advancements based on fraudulent results, by cultivating good research practices and embedding them in an improved research culture, and by strengthening the global normative framework around research integrity.

What is the Issue?

Research integrity is intrinsic to research activity and excellence. It is at the core of science itself, and is a basis for scientists' trust in each other and in the scientific record, and, equally importantly, society's trust in science. Addressing research integrity requires a holistic approach, given the linkages with other aspects of the research system, such as access to publications and data, research careers, evaluation, peer review, and research collaboration.

Individual or collective research misconduct can cover a broad spectrum of acts, but its most detrimental forms are Fabrication or Falsification of data, including under-reporting of data (which can have potential effects beyond the sphere of science itself) and Plagiarism (which can distort the internal system of scientific evaluation) (FFP). Beyond FFP, other, and perhaps even more frequent, cases of research misconduct include questionable research practices, the misuse of research data, authorship-related misconduct, and inadequate personal or leadership behaviour.

Whilst the ultimate responsibility for good research practice lies with the individual researcher, it will only flourish in an environment that embraces both personal responsibility and an understanding that safeguarding research integrity is a shared task. Therefore, the research community as a whole, its institutions and research funding providers share the responsibility to raise awareness of, promote and support adherence to, and deal with infringements of good research practice, as well as dealing with infringements.

The Singapore Statement on Research Integrity issued in 2010 provided, for the first time, a foundational document on a global scale.

At a European level, the development and dissemination of the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity of March 2011, issued by the European Science Foundation and ALLEA (All European Academies), was an important step in creating a normative body around the issue, addressing a wide range of actors involved in the research endeavour.

On a national scale, many institutions around Europe, including Research Performing and Research Funding Organisations, academies, universities and ministries, have put in place structures to promote research integrity and to deal with misconduct. In many European countries, legislation and policies have been developed to address issues of research integrity. However, the decisions of research integrity authorities are still not sufficiently legally robust and therefore remain vulnerable.

Science Europe's Objectives

Science Europe Member Organisations will strive to consolidate the emerging normative structure around research integrity, to move towards a harmonised implementation in Europe, and to ease research collaboration. They will do this by:

- Promoting research integrity. This includes working with all relevant parties to articulate and promote the centrality of research integrity, most notably in the education and training of researchers.

- Increasing knowledge. Science Europe Member Organisations will seek to expand their common understanding of the types, frequency, causes and effects of research misconduct, Science Europe will facilitate the regular ex*chang*e of best practice and experiences, and will strive to promote research on research integrity.

- Preventing misconduct. This includes developing appropriate incentives for fostering a culture of integrity, and setting high standards for researchers and institutions. All aspects of the research process - from funding, through employment contracts, peer-review processes, and collaborative projects to handling research data and publications - should take integrity issues into account. All sanctioning measures must be underpinned and preceded by pedagogical efforts aimed at instilling a culture of integrity, and at preventing the occurrence of cases of research misconduct.

- Dealing with misconduct. This includes working towards removing potential incompatibilities in procedural frameworks for research integrity between different disciplines, organisations and countries. Within their own remit and capacities, Science Europe Member Organisations will aim to identify and promote good practices related to the protection of 'whistle blowers', the fairness of procedure (including presumption of innocence), the proportionality of decisions and sanctions, and the possibilities for appeal.