<u>Concordat to support research integrity - 'Commitment 5'</u>

<u>RCUK annual narrative statement on research integrity, 2015</u>

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 third annual RCUK narrative statement. The first two were published on the RCUK website in January 2014 and in December 2014: www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/researchintegrity/.

RCUK narrative statement on research integrity

The reporting period for this narrative is 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 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 2014, RCUK has:

i)   <u>Implemented the questions asked about Research Integrity within the RCUK Assurance Programme of Research Organisations</u>

Research Organisations (ROs) that receive funding from RCUK are subject to an Assurance Programme managed by RCUK staff.

During the financial year 2014/15, 25 Funding Assurance Questionnaires were issued to ROs, and all ROs were awarded a satisfactory assurance rating. The ROs involved are listed in the annex.

Funding Assurance scrutiny is focussed on compliance with the Research Councils' term and conditions. A component seeks confirmation that ROs have policies and procedures in place that meet RCUK's Research Integrity and Ethics requirements, including processes for dealing with allegations of research misconduct. Embedded within this is a requirement to provide evidence on how often and when these are reviewed.

The review team examines how these policies are disseminated to staff, not only to new staff but also how staff awareness is maintained for existing staff. ROs are expected also to draw attention to any initiatives that they may have undertaken to strengthen the understanding and application of research integrity culture.

---

[1]   www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/Theconcordattosupportresearchintegrity.aspx

Finally, research organisations are asked to report on how many formal investigations of research misconduct have been undertaken in the previous three years which relate to researchers funded by or responsible for funding from the Research Councils.

Of the returns assessed in 2014/15, there were seven cases of formal investigations completed at four of the 25 ROs. Following local investigation, six of the seven cases were dismissed and not upheld; one, however, was upheld for "falsification".

Over the three-year reporting cycle the following breakdown was received of the seven formal investigations completed:

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Fabrication			
Falsification		2	
Plagiarism		1	1
Misrepresentation	1	1	1
Breach of duty of care			
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct			
Other			
Details of any allegations upheld in part			

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

RCUK is represented on the Science Europe Working Group on Research Integrity[2] (see previous annual statements for more background). The Group is chaired by Dr Maura Hiney (Head of Policy, Evaluation and External Relations, Health Research Board, Ireland). The Working Group had further meetings on 23rd-24th February 2015 in Dublin and on 14th-15th October 2015 in Brussels.

Progress/activities during the year have included:

- Publication of a brochure, 'Seven reasons to care about integrity in research'[3] (22nd June 2015). This was signed off by SE Governing Board.
- Presentation by Maura Hiney of a paper: "Research Integrity: What it means, why it is important and how we might protect it?" to the Luxembourg Ministry of Science for their EU Presidency session on research integrity in July 2015. A paper based on this was published on 1st December 2015[4].
- Development of a paper on Best Practice in Research Integrity Training.
- A presentation by Tony Peatfield (MRC) at the 4th World Conference on Research Integrity, Rio de Janiero, 31st May - 3rd June, 2015, entitled, "Research Integrity: Processes and Initiatives in Science Europe Member Organisations". This was a brief report of the results of the survey undertaken by the Working Group in May 2014.

Further work is being done by the Task Groups. The WGRI will report to SE General Assembly by the end of 2015. A full report is expected to be published after that.

iii)   Symposium on reproducibility and reliability of biomedical research, 1st-2nd April 2015

One contributor to irreproducibility is research misconduct. In April, the Academy of Medical Sciences, Wellcome Trust, MRC and BBSRC held a 1½-day symposium to explore the challenges and opportunities for improving the reproducibility and reliability of pre-clinical biomedical

[2] www.scienceeurope.org/policy/working-groups/Research-Integrity
[3] www.scienceeurope.org/uploads/PressReleases/150622_Seven_reasons_Research_Integrity.pdf
[4] www.scienceeurope.org/downloads

research in the UK. While the symposium did not cover intentional fraudulent activity, such as falsification, fabrication and plagiarism, it did include other forms of research misconduct (as defined by RCUK). A report of the symposium was published[5] on 29th October 2015.

iv) Heads of International (Biomedical) Research Organisations (HIROs) meeting, Ottawa, 2nd June 2015

Following an earlier HIROs discussion (Shanghai, 2nd July 2014), HIROs had a follow-up discussion at their meeting in June. This focussed on reproducibility, which was seen a shared global issue with a role for publishers, funders and researchers, and specifically on measures to enhance reproducibility and rigour. The discussion was wide-ranging and included the importance of peer review and how to encourage/incentivise peer reviewers. Dr Francis Collins (Director, NIH) drew attention to the NIH website pages dedicated to rigour and reproducibility[6]. These include four video modules with accompanying discussion materials that focus on integral components of reproducibility and rigour, such as bias, blinding, and exclusion criteria.

v) Science Europe WG Workshop on research data, Brussels, 11th June 2015

In June, representatives from ESRC and MRC attended a Science Europe WG Workshop on 'ethical protocols and standards for research' in Brussels. The meeting drew together experts from across funding bodies, policy makers and academia to debate the state of play on ethical protocols and standards in relation the new challenges and opportunities such as Big Data and new forms of research data. An OECD led Expert group has also been undertaking work in this area, in conjunction with the ESRC.

vi) UKRIO annual conference, London, 13th May 2015

In May, Professor Linda Woodhead (ESRC Council member) spoke at the UKRIO annual conference in London on Research Ethics and scientific Misconduct. Professor Woodhead talked both about the RCUK perspective and from her own academic experiences on research integrity and what this issue means for the UK research community. Attendees were brought also up to speed with the changes being made to the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics. The underlying themes of the event were: how to support a culture of good research practice and provide appropriate researcher development; how to respond when problems arise; and stimulating debate on research integrity.

[December 2015]

---

[5] www.acmedsci.ac.uk/viewFile/56314e40aac61.pdf
[6] www.nih.gov/science/reproducibility/index.htm

Funding Assurance Questionnaires were received from the following 25 organisations for 2014/15

University College London
Institute of Fiscal Studies
University of Hull
University West of Scotland
Institute of Education
Aston University
University of Westminster
Strathclyde University
University of Brighton
Moredon Research Institute
Southbank University
Middlesex University
Natural History Museum
University of Leeds
University of York
London Metropolitan University
London University
University of Coventry
University of Southampton
St Andrews University*
Bangor University
University of Swansea
University of Plymouth
University of Newcastle*
University of Durham
University of Lancaster*
University of Oxford
University of Reading*
University of Huddersfield*
Royal Veterinary College*
City University
Goldsmiths*
University of Bradford*
Liverpool John Moores*
University of West of England*
Institute of Food Research*
University of Portsmouth*
De Montfort University*

* Questionnaires were received in the final quarter of 2014/15 but carried over to 2015/16 for reporting purposes