

Concordat to support research integrity - 'Commitment 5'

RCUK annual narrative statement on research integrity, 2016

Background

RCUK is a signatory to the concordat to support research integrity¹, 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 fourth annual RCUK narrative statement. The first three were published on the RCUK website in January 2014, in December 2014 and in December 2015:

www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/researchintegrity/.

RCUK narrative statement on research integrity

The reporting period for this narrative is 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 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 2015, RCUK has:

- i) Included questions asked about Research Integrity within the RCUK Assurance Programme of Research Organisations

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

During the financial year 2015/16, nine funding assurance assignments and eleven desk-based reviews were undertaken. The ROs involved are listed in the annex. Seven were given substantial assurance and thirteen satisfactory assurance. The assurance ratings take account of the fieldwork review of policies for Research Integrity, Ethics and Misconduct. During the fieldwork, policies are reviewed and meetings take place with Departmental staff to evidence the way Research Integrity, Ethics and Misconduct are managed and promoted within the Research Organisation. For each assignment report there is a section recording the findings for Research Integrity, Ethics and Misconduct.

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

Of the returns assessed in 2015/16, there had been one case of formal investigation completed at a university and this case was upheld. Details are given as a footnote to the table below.

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

Over the three-year reporting cycle, the following breakdown was received from the one formal investigation completed. The reporting years are shown when the ROs have completed their Questionnaire:

Reporting year of Self-Assessment Questionnaire	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Fabrication	0	0	0
Falsification	2	0	0
Plagiarism	1	1	0
Misrepresentation	1	1	0
Breach of duty of care	0	0	1*
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Details of any allegations upheld in part	0	0	0

Note: One University launched an investigation into possible research misconduct in respect of an ESRC-funded study. The findings of a preliminary investigation supported further investigation. Working from the preliminary report, the scope of the full investigation addressed the possible breach of a duty of care. This investigation concluded that the complaint of research misconduct was upheld, and that the respondent failed to duly inform research participants; notify the University of a Serious Adverse Event (SAE); and as a result placed researchers and participants at serious potential risk.

As reported previously, the cases for 2013/14 and 2014/15 were all not upheld apart from one case of "falsification" which was upheld.

A change to the Self-Assessment Questionnaire will take place to make it clear which year the formal investigations were completed.

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

RCUK is represented on the Science Europe Working Group on Research Integrity² (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 9th May 2016 in Dublin, and on 5th-6th July 2016 in Brussels.

Progress/activities during the year have included:

- Completion of the original three-year mandate for the Working Group

² www.scienceeurope.org/policy/working-groups/Research-Integrity

- Approval of the Working Group's report by the SE General Assembly at its meeting in Oslo on 4th May 2016, and publication of the report – "Research Integrity Practices in Science Europe Member Organisations"³ - on 5th July 2016
- Extension of the Working Group's mandate to March 2017
- Proposals for a Workshop to follow-up the report, to be held in early 2017
- Input to the consultation led by the All European Academies (ALLEA) on its review of the ESF/ALLEA European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity⁴
- An opinion piece in 'Euroscientist'⁵ – 28 September 2016

iii) A meeting with the UK investigators in the EU Horizon 2020 Programme "Promoting Integrity as an Integral Dimension of Excellence in Research" (PRINTEGER)

[PRINTEGER](#) is a three-year project funded under H2020 that started in September 2015. Its aims are:

1. Systematic review of integrity cultures and practices
2. Analysis and assessment of current challenges, pressures and opportunities for research integrity
3. Development and testing of tools and policy recommendations: how-to, IT, education directed at science policy makers.

Professor Ruud ter Meulen (University of Bristol) is one of the eight participating investigators/centres. At its meeting in February, GRECON met Professor ter Meulen to discuss how RCUK could contribute to the project; for example by:

- Helping in dissemination and communication, and making appropriate contacts in the UK
- Possibly participating in focus groups
- Contributing to case studies

iv) Internal audit: Fraud Management - Research Fraud and Misconduct

The RCUK's management of research fraud and misconduct was subject to an internal audit during 2015/16. The overall assurance opinion was 'moderate'. Follow-up actions have included:

- Developing induction material for all newly appointed Head Office staff (Completed)
- Establishing a single mechanism for reporting allegations of research fraud and misconduct (Completed)
- Consider changing the RCUK Policy and Guidelines such that Research organisations are required to notify the RCs of allegations at the time the RO takes the decision to move to a preliminary investigation, rather than, as now, at the time a full investigation is launched (Ongoing)

v) Participation in the Westminster Higher Education Forum Keynote Seminar: 'Ensuring integrity and rigour in UK research: best practice, open data and the impact of the REF', 7 July 2016

Tony Peatfield gave a presentation at the seminar: 'Research Councils/RCUK as funders and leaders', and participated in a panel discussion. Other RC staff also participated.

22 December 2016

³

[http://www.scienceeurope.org/uploads/PublicDocumentsAndSpeeches/SCsPublicDocs/Science%20 Europe Integrity Survey Report July 2016 FINAL.pdf](http://www.scienceeurope.org/uploads/PublicDocumentsAndSpeeches/SCsPublicDocs/Science%20Europe%20Integrity%20Survey%20Report%20July%202016%20FINAL.pdf).

⁴ http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/Public_documents/Publications/Code_Conduct_ResearchIntegrity.pdf

⁵ <http://www.euroscientist.com/shaping-tomorrows-research-integrity/>

**Funding Assurance Questionnaires were received from the following 20 organisations
for 2015/16**

University of St Andrews
University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne
University of Exeter
University of Liverpool
University of Cambridge
University of East Anglia
Aberystwyth University
King's College London
University of Edinburgh
University of Huddersfield
Coventry University
Liverpool John Moores University
The Open University
University of the West of England, Bristol
Goldsmiths College, University of London
University of Portsmouth
School of Oriental and African Studies
University of Bradford
Institute of Development Studies
University of Northumbria at Newcastle