

Concordat to Support Research Integrity – ‘Commitment 5’

Research Councils’¹ annual narrative statement on research integrity, 2018

Background

The UK Research Councils (collectively as RCUK) are signatory to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity², 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 Research Councils’ sixth annual narrative statement. The first five were published under the former Research Councils UK (RCUK)³.

Narrative statement on research integrity

The reporting period for this narrative statement is **1 July 2017 to 31 March 2018**. It covers the Research Councils’ activities in the period since the fifth narrative (RCUK) statement, up to the formal legal establishment of UKRI.

The Research Councils work closely together on research integrity through an internal ‘Good Research Conduct Network’ (GRECON), which meets about three times a year. Since the formation of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), membership of the Network has been expanded to include Innovate UK and Research England.

Activities undertaken by the Research Councils, 1 July 2017 to 31 March 2018, included the following:

i) RCUK Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct

In January 2018, the Research Councils published a set of ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ for the RCUK policy⁴. Answers to the questions addressed matters such as information requirements for allegations, actions that Councils may opt to take at different stages of misconduct investigation processes, and how sensitive personal information is dealt with when cases are shared between the Councils.

From April 2018, all RCUK policy information that remains applicable, and other relevant background information, was transferred to the UKRI website under the heading of Research Integrity⁵.

i) Records of research misconduct allegations, as reported to individual Councils, or otherwise detected by the Councils

The Research Councils’ central research misconduct log is a spreadsheet that collates allegations concerning individuals funded by, or engaged with the Research Councils (including acting as a supervisor for a Research Council-supported postgraduate student, or engaged with our peer review activities), even if the allegation is about work not connected with a Research Council grant. It is based

¹ The Research Councils operated collectively as RCUK, which ceased to exist formally on 31st March 2018, following the creation of UKRI. This statement covers the period from the end of the last RCUK statement up to this date.

² www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/Theconcordattosupportresearchintegrity.aspx

³ Available here: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/research-integrity/>

⁴ <https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/documents/rcuk-grp-policy-and-guidelines-faqs-jan-18-pdf/>

⁵ <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/research-integrity/>

on individual Research Councils' spreadsheets, with identifying data of respondents removed⁶. In January 2018, oversight of this log transferred to then-shadow UKRI. It is now also shared with UKRI Policy Branch (within UKRI Strategy Directorate) and the research integrity leads of Innovate UK and Research England, as members of GRECON.

The aim of the log is to provide a basis for GRECON members to learn from each other, respond to external requests consistently, and identify possible duplicate notifications. It also helps discern trends within the data for strategic understanding.

Summary information for allegations held in the Research Councils' research misconduct log is given at **Annex 1**, for financial years 2015-16 to 2017-18⁷. It should be noted that any discernable upward trend in numbers of cases may reflect increased awareness of Research Councils' policy requirements and better reporting.

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

Research Organisations (ROs) that receive funding from the Research Councils are subject to a Funding Assurance Programme (formerly RCUK, now managed by UKRI).

During the financial year 2017/18⁸, there were 36 assurance assignments (comprising 18 site visits and 18 desk-based reviews). The ROs involved are listed at **Annex 2**. Assurance ratings take account of the fieldwork review of relevant local policies (e.g., Research Integrity, Ethics and Misconduct). During the fieldwork, policies are reviewed against the Research Councils' expectations within the RCUK Good Research Conduct policy; meetings also 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 any findings relevant to Research Integrity, Ethics or Misconduct.

iii) Oral evidence to the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee Inquiry on Research Integrity

RCUK submitted written evidence to the Inquiry on 22 March 2017 (in the previous reporting period)⁹. Following announcement of the 2017 General Election, the Inquiry was put into abeyance. It was restarted in November 2017, with the S&T Committee having been re-established in October under a new Chair (Norman Lamb MP). RCUK gave oral evidence to the Inquiry in January 2018¹⁰; the Research Councils also supported then-shadow UKRI's collective interactions with the Inquiry, within this reporting period¹¹.

iv) UUK Working Group on Research Integrity

The Councils of UKRI, alongside the UKRI Policy Branch, have been participating in the UUK Working Group on Research Integrity. The Working Group organised the first UK Research Integrity Forum in March 2018, in which Research Councils' and UKRI Strategy Directorate representatives participated.

v) Other meetings on research integrity

During this reporting period, the Research Councils participated in other meetings on research integrity, including the Russell Group's Integrity Forum meeting in October 2017.

⁶ Further details about how information on allegations is handled by the Research Councils are given in the RCUK policy FAQs: <https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/documents/rcuk-grp-policy-and-guidelines-faqs-jan-18-pdf/>

⁷ It should be noted that some cases may be duplicated, where reported to more than one Research Council. The Councils are working towards eliminating such 'double counting'.

⁸ While this statement is for a reporting period of 1/07/17-31/03/18, total figures for FY2017-18 are provided, as standard UKRI Funding Assurance data.

⁹ <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/science-and-technology-committee/research-integrity/written/48579.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/research-integrity-17-19/publications/>

¹¹ Sir Mark Walport gave oral evidence in March 2017: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/research-integrity-17-19/publications/>

ANNEX 1

MISCONDUCT ALLEGATIONS INFORMATION HELD BY THE RESEARCH COUNCILS

Financial years 2015-16 to 2017-18¹².

Research Council	Type of misconduct ¹³	Date first informed	Allegation proceeded to formal investigation?	Outcome
2015/16				
BBSRC	Falsification	21/02/2016	Yes	Allegation upheld
ESRC	Breach of duty of care	24/07/2015	Yes	Allegation upheld
NERC	Plagiarism	27/08/2015	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Misrepresentation	24/09/2015	No	No formal allegation made
2016/17				
AHRC	Plagiarism	28/10/2016	No	Allegation not upheld
	Other	08/02/2017	Yes	Allegation not upheld
BBSRC	Breach of duty of care	31/08/2016	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Misrepresentation	30/08/2016	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Other	21/12/2016	No	Allegation not upheld
	Misrepresentation	31/03/2017	Yes	Allegation not upheld
EPSRC	Plagiarism	18/10/2016	No	Allegation upheld
	Plagiarism	28/10/2016	No	Allegation not upheld
	Plagiarism	04/02/2017	Yes	Allegation not upheld
	Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	15/02/2017	No	Ongoing
ESRC	Plagiarism	31/08/2016	No	Allegation not upheld
MRC	Falsification	06/07/2016	No	Allegation not upheld
	Falsification	17/08/2016	No	Allegation not upheld
	Other	13/01/2017	Yes	Allegation not upheld
	Fabrication	17/02/2017	No	Allegation upheld
	Fabrication	22/02/2017	TBC	Ongoing
NERC	Fabrication	22/07/2016	No	Allegation not upheld
	Breach of duty of care	05/12/2016	Yes	Allegation not upheld
	Misrepresentation	31/10/2016	Yes	Allegation upheld
2017/18				
AHRC	Plagiarism; improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	20/06/2017	Yes	Allegations not upheld
BBSRC	Plagiarism	31/05/2017	No	Allegation not upheld
	Misrepresentation	10/05/2017	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Misrepresentation	06/07/2017	Yes	Allegation upheld

¹² It should be noted that some cases may be duplicated, where reported to more than one Research Council. The Councils are working towards eliminating such 'double counting'.

¹³ Classified according to the categories of research misconduct set out in the RCUK Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct.

	Fabrication	06/07/2017	Yes	No relevance to RCs
	Falsification	01/07/2017	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Misrepresentation	19/07/2017	No	No relevance to RCs
	Plagiarism	10/10/2017	Yes	Allegation not upheld
	Plagiarism	15/12/2017	Yes	Ongoing
	Falsification	12/02/2018	Yes	Allegation not upheld
	Breach of duty of care	15/12/2017	Yes	Ongoing
	Breach of duty of care	08/03/2018	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Breach of duty of care	08/03/2018	TBC	Ongoing
EPSRC	Breach of duty of care	03/04/2017	No	No formal allegation made
	Plagiarism	14/04/2017	Yes	Ongoing
	Plagiarism	03/05/2017	No	Allegation not upheld
	Plagiarism	12/06/2017	No	No formal allegation made
	Other	23/06/2017	No	Allegation not upheld
	Plagiarism	01/09/2017	No	Allegation not upheld
	Plagiarism	25/09/2017	No	Allegation not upheld
	Plagiarism	03/10/2017	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Fabrication	13/10/2017	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Plagiarism	05/10/2017	Yes	Allegation partially upheld
	Plagiarism	20/10/2017	No	No formal allegation made
	Plagiarism	19/01/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
	Other	22/02/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
ESRC	Plagiarism	30/11/2017	Yes	Allegation not upheld
MRC	Falsification	19/04/2017	No	Allegation upheld
	Falsification	08/05/2017	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Falsification	07/06/2017	No	Allegation not upheld
	Breach of duty of care	09/06/2017	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Fabrication	21/06/2017	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Plagiarism	15/08/2017	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Other	30/08/2017	Yes	Ongoing
	Fabrication	04/09/2017	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Plagiarism	26/10/2017	Yes	Allegation not upheld
	Plagiarism	05/12/2017	Yes	Allegation not upheld
NERC	Breach of duty of care	26/04/2017	No	Allegation not upheld

FUNDING ASSURANCE QUESTIONNAIRE RETURNS, 2017/18

Questionnaires were received from the following 36 organisations for 2017/18:

	Research Organisation
Visits	London School of Economics
	Queen's University Belfast
	University College London
	University of Kent
	University of Surrey
	Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
	Rothamsted Research
	Swansea University
	University of Strathclyde
	University of York
	National Oceanography Centre
	University of Essex
	University of Leeds
	University of Southampton
	Durham University
	Lancaster University
University of Oxford	
University of Reading	
Desk-based reviews	EMBL:- European Bioinformatics Institute
	Keele University
	Open University
	Plymouth Marine Laboratory
	University of Stirling
	University of Worcester
	Institute for Fiscal Studies
	Marine Biological Association
	Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research
	Scottish Association for Marine Science
	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
	National Institute of Agricultural Botany
	Overseas Development Institute
	James Hutton Institute
	National Institute of Economic and Social Research
	University of Plymouth
Francis Crick Institute	
University of Hertfordshire	