



## **Concordat to Support Research Integrity – ‘Commitment 5’**

### **UK Research and Innovation annual narrative statement on research integrity, 2019**

#### **Background**

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is signatory to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.<sup>1</sup>

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 first annual narrative statement of UKRI and supersedes the annual statements published previously by the research councils under the former Research Councils UK (RCUK).<sup>2</sup>

#### **Narrative statement on research integrity**

The reporting period for this statement is **1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019**. It covers UKRI’s activities in the period since the sixth (and final) RCUK narrative statement.

The nine councils of UKRI, alongside central strategy and policy colleagues, work together closely on research integrity through an internal ‘Good Research Conduct Network’ (GRECON), which meets currently between four and six times a year.

Activities undertaken by UKRI in this reporting period included the following:

i) **Revision of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity**

As a signatory, UKRI has worked closely with the Signatories Group in the revision of the Concordat<sup>3</sup>, clarifying the requirements across all areas, addressing issues highlighted by the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee research integrity inquiry, including the training on ethics and research integrity, and on the processes for surfacing and investigating misconduct.

ii) **Establishment of the new UK committee to support research integrity**

In response to the 2017-18 House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee Inquiry on Research Integrity<sup>4</sup>, UKRI and the Government have committed to the establishment of a Research Integrity Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2012/the-concordat-to-support-research-integrity-2012.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Available here: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/research-integrity/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/news/Pages/Updated-concordat-must-be-followed-if-research-is-to-be-trusted.aspx>. The revised Concordat was published on 25 October 2019, which is outside this statement’s reporting period.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/research-integrity-17-19/>

The Research Integrity Committee will support the system of self-regulation of research integrity in the UK. The Committee will champion best practice, oversee research organisation compliance with UKRI terms and conditions of grant and report on the health of the sector with regard to research integrity.

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

Data are recorded currently for the research councils of UKRI, in line with pre-existing policy.<sup>5</sup> The research councils' central research misconduct log is a spreadsheet that collates allegations of research misconduct reported to, or otherwise detected by, the research councils. It is based on individual research councils' spreadsheets, with identifying data of respondents removed.<sup>6</sup> The aim of the log is to provide a basis for GRECON members to learn from each other and identify possible duplicate notifications. It also helps discern trends within the data for strategic insight.

The research councils' policy sets out that where an allegation of research misconduct is about someone funded by, or engaged with, the research councils, even if it is about work not connected with a grant from a UK research council, the case should be reported to the relevant council. In accordance with the Concordat, and our policy for the research councils<sup>7</sup>, UKRI does not investigate allegations of research misconduct in the research performing organisations that we fund, unless those organisations are part of UKRI in legal terms. During this reporting period, there was one allegation related to researchers who were employed in an MRC Unit at the time the misconduct was alleged to have taken place but are not currently UKRI employees.

Summary information for allegations reported to the research councils, or otherwise detected by them, is given at **Annex 1** for Financial Year 2018-19. 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.

iv) 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 the UKRI Funding Assurance Programme.<sup>8</sup>

During Financial Year 2018/19<sup>9</sup>, there were 31 assurance assignments (comprising 19 site visits and 12 desk-based reviews). The ROs involved are listed at **Annex 2**. During the fieldwork, policies are reviewed against expectations within the research councils' current policy and guidelines; 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 that records any findings relevant to Research Integrity, Ethics or Misconduct.

The inclusion of international assignments to the annual programme is in response to the increase of UKRI funding to non-UK Organisations. The work surrounding research integrity in this area is in a development phase as we work with Organisations to understand the differences within the diverse landscapes.

v) UUK Working Group on Research Integrity

UKRI has been participating in the UUK Working Group on Research Integrity. The Working Group organised the second UK Research Integrity Forum in April 2019 in which representatives from UKRI participated.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/reviews/grc/rcuk-grp-policy-and-guidelines-updated-apr-17-2-pdf/>

<sup>6</sup> 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/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/reviews/grc/rcuk-grp-policy-and-guidelines-updated-apr-17-2-pdf/>, Section 4.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/funding-assurance-programme/>

<sup>9</sup> While this statement is for the reporting period of 01/04/18-31/07/19, total figures for FY 2018-19 are provided, in accordance with UKRI Funding Assurance data collection cycles.

vi) Other meetings

A series of working level and senior level stakeholder engagement meetings with a number of individuals and organisations including: Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, Scottish Funding Council, Department for the Economy Northern Ireland, Cancer Research UK, The Academy of Medical Sciences, The Association of Medical Research Charities, The Royal Society, The Wellcome Trust, UK Research Integrity Office, and Universities UK.

AHRC's Executive Chair, Professor Andrew Thompson, was a keynote speaker at the UK Research Integrity Office's 2018 Annual Conference (May 2018)<sup>10</sup>, where he spoke about 'Research integrity in the arts and humanities'.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://ukrio.org/events/2018-annual-conference/>

MISCONDUCT ALLEGATIONS INFORMATION HELD BY THE RESEARCH COUNCILS<sup>11</sup>Financial Year 18-19<sup>12,13</sup>

Research council	Type of alleged misconduct <sup>14</sup>	Date first informed	Allegation proceeded to formal investigation?	Outcome <sup>15</sup>
AHRC	Plagiarism	13/12/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
BBSRC	Misrepresentation	08/05/2018	No	No formal allegation made
	Fabrication	27/07/2018	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Falsification	03/08/2018	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Falsification	23/10/2018	Yes	Ongoing
	Misrepresentation	13/11/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
	Misrepresentation	11/01/2019	No	Allegation not upheld
	Falsification	22/01/2019	No	Allegation not upheld
EPSRC	Plagiarism	26/04/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
	Plagiarism	08/05/2018	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Plagiarism	24/05/2018	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Breach of duty of care	28/09/2018	Yes	Allegation not upheld
	Plagiarism	13/11/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
	Plagiarism	13/11/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
	Other	12/03/2019	No	Allegation not upheld
	Breach of duty of care	29/03/2019	Yes	Allegation upheld
ESRC	Plagiarism	23/05/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
	Plagiarism	10/12/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
MRC	Falsification	24/06/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
	Plagiarism	15/07/2018	Yes	Allegation not upheld
	Falsification	27/07/2018	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Falsification	03/08/2018	Yes	Allegation upheld
	Falsification	19/08/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
	Falsification	13/09/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
	Falsification	29/09/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
	Plagiarism	09/10/2018	Yes	Ongoing
	Falsification	11/10/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
	Falsification	17/10/2018	Yes	Ongoing
	Falsification	09/11/2018	Yes	Allegation upheld in part
	Plagiarism	31/11/2018	Yes	Ongoing
	Falsification	29/12/2018	No	Allegation not upheld
	Falsification	02/01/2019	Yes	Allegation not upheld

<sup>11</sup> UKRI data are restricted to the research councils, since Research England and Innovate UK did not collect data directly on research misconduct allegations in this reporting period.

<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that some cases may be duplicated, where reported to more than one research council. UKRI is working on eliminating such 'double counting'.

<sup>13</sup> Data on misconduct allegations information held by the research councils of UKRI from Financial Years 2015-16 to 2017-18 are available on the UKRI website: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/research-integrity/>

<sup>14</sup> Classified according to the categories of research misconduct set out in the RCUK Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct.

<sup>15</sup> None of the upheld allegations led to the withdrawal or recall of research council funding; it is also important to note here that, in some cases, allegations reported to the councils may not relate directly to research council funding (see p.7 at <https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/reviews/grc/rcuk-grp-policy-and-guidelines-updated-apr-17-2-pdf/>)

	Breach of duty of care	28/01/2019	Yes	Ongoing
	Breach of duty of care	30/01/2019	Yes	Allegation not upheld
	Falsification	15/02/2019	No	Allegation not upheld
	Plagiarism	06/03/2019	Yes	Allegation upheld in part
	Falsification	24/03/2019	No	Allegation not upheld
<b>NERC</b>	Breach of duty of care	11/04/2018	Yes	Allegation not upheld
<b>STFC</b>	Plagiarism	19/06/2018	Yes	Allegation not upheld

**NOTE:**

In accordance with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018, we are unable to disclose the identity of any individuals involved in any research misconduct allegations reported to UKRI, as this would contravene the first data protection principle; the individuals concerned would not have an expectation that this information would be made publicly available. Information relating to the amount of funding in **Table 1** also cannot be provided, as to do so may result in individual award holders being identified.

**FUNDING ASSURANCE QUESTIONNAIRE RETURNS**

Questionnaires were received from the following organisations for 2018/19:

<b>Visits</b>
British Antarctic Survey
British Geological Survey
Meteorological Office
University of Edinburgh
University of Manchester
Bangor University
Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
University of Cambridge
University of Liverpool
University of St. Andrews
Pirbright Institute
University of Exeter
University of Newcastle upon Tyne
Birmingham City University
Durham University
Stellenbosch University
University of Cape Town
Moorfields Eye Hospital
South African Medical Research Council
<b>Desk-based reviews</b>
Babraham Institute
University of Greenwich
University of Ulster
Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS)
Harper Adams University
Institute for Cancer Research
University of Salford
Courtauld Institute of Art
Manchester Metropolitan University
Aston University
University of Hull
University of Lincoln