University of Edinburgh
Annual Research Ethics and Integrity Report (2017-18)

Actions and activities undertaken to support and strengthen the understanding of research integrity issues

The examples given below illustrate the types of activities undertaken to support and strengthen understanding of research issues at College and School level as well as topics brought to the attention of REIRG through the annual review process.

Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS)

The College's Research Ethics and Integrity SharePoint pages are regularly updated with information supplied by Schools. The College has worked with the Institute of Academic Development (IAD) to produce a Facilitators' Guide which combined with discipline-specific material can be used by schools to deliver in-house ethics training.

Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (MVM)

The Edinburgh Clinical Research Facility's Education team continues to deliver a programme of courses covering all aspects of research best practice and upholding high standards in regard to research integrity. All the courses were updated in 2017/18 to take account of GDPR. To raise its profile further, the ECRF's Education team makes regular use of its twitter account. The team are working closely with ACCORD to develop a half day research integrity course, and are also discussing the potential to adapt the material to an online course in collaboration with the MSc Clinical Trials course administrators.

Science and Engineering (S&E)

Biological Sciences is carrying out a comprehensive training and development programme to ensure all its staff and students will know about and understand how to follow its new Project Ethics Approval System. Geosciences has introduced a Policy and Guidelines on Publication Ethics. The school's policy is intended address common issues that arise in regard to authorship of research outputs such as the order of authors, who should be included in a list of authors etc.

Central University Support Services

IAD launched its' LEARN online training module and available to all students and staff. This cover a wide range of issues relevant to research integrity including ethical approval; plagiarism; authorship; collaboration; and publication ethics. The course is intended to be a cross University introduction to this topic. Schools are incorporating the module into their more discipline-specific training. IAD also undertook a comprehensive survey of the provision of research integrity training across the University. REIRG is studying the report to identify cross University learning points.

Outline of processes for ethical approval of research proposals, dealing with allegations of misconduct and review of these processes

Processes for ethical approval of research proposals and dealing with allegations of misconduct

Those wishing to see details of the ethics and integrity governance arrangements at University, College and School levels are referred to the report for 2014/15. An update report was provided for sessions 2015/6 and 2016/17 and further update reports will be provided for sessions 2018/19 and 2019/20. It is likely that the scope and content of the annual report that the University has to produce will change in order to comply with the new UUK concordat and increased scrutiny from Research Councils and other key funders such as the Wellcome Trust. REIRG anticipates having to revise the University Research

Ethics and Integrity governance arrangements accordingly.

Review of processes

AHSS

Mindful of the steady growth in interdisciplinary research, the College is encouraging its schools to share 'areas of expertise' so that interdisciplinary research projects can be scrutinised to the same degree as projects with a scope that lies wholly within one school. The College has identified a need for a cross-University discussion about the issues arising from 'Big Data' and a cross-University knowledge base about ethical protocols in other nations to support trans-national research projects. AHSS has also developed a College wide online Research Ethics and Integrity review form.

MVM

The MVM report has also identified a need to provide more information, advice and guidance for those carrying out research with international partners in the light of the growth in funding to support global health projects. The ACCORD Medical Research Ethics Committee has reported a rise in the number of projects involving research that will be carried out overseas.

S&E

The School of Mathematics is take proactive steps to ensure that its staff and students in research groups that carry research with applications outside of Mathematics (e.g. mathematical Education and Statistics) are made fully aware of the school's procedures for the assessment of research projects. The School of Biological Sciences has carried out a root and branch review of its procedure for assessing new research proposals with regard to any ethical issues that may arise

University level.

The University's web pages on Research Ethics and Integrity are now hosted by the Edinburgh Research Office. These pages were developed as a REIRG working group identifying best communication practice in websites of other members of the Russell Group that could be applied to an Edinburgh context. The transition to the Edinburgh Research Support Office webpages from the former location on the GaSP webpages means that the University's Research Ethics and Integrity webpages now sit alongside other web resources for researchers.

High level statement about allegations of research misconduct and any formal investigations

AHSS

One case was identified and is the subject of formal investigation. Carrying out the investigation has identified a number of unforeseen issues with the UK Research Integrity Office Code of Practice on Research Misconduct that the University adopted with a glossary to map roles mentioned in the UKRIO CoP to UoE appointments. The issues relate to the fact that, in practice, the application of the UKRIO CoP is slower than one would wish for such a procedure and the informal and advisory stages need to be made more distinct

MVM

No issues to report. The ACCORD office has investigated a number of cases in which there were departures from approved protocols or trial documents. Of these, on investigation, none were due to research misconduct. Each case was formally rectified by

Corrective and Preventative Actions. In each case the necessary measures were promptly implemented.

<u>S&E</u>

The College has identified a need for support for staff and students who had worked in the same group as an individual who has been dismissed after an investigation so that they are not penalised by association. The College has also recommended that the University considers how to communicate information relating to the outcome of any future investigation so that there is as much transparency as possible within the necessary legal constraints.

<u>University Level</u>

REIRG is working with University HR services to determine how best to address the issues raised by AHSS and S&E. We have also used the above mentioned UUK consultation to flag up these issues and stress that the UKRIO Code of Practice (CoP), which was published in 2009, should be revised. The University offered its services to support UKRIO in revising its CoP.

Report annex

UNIVERSITY WEBSITES

[University Research Integrity homepage](#)

Links to the REIRG website; External online training resources; University policies relevant to Research ethics and Integrity; Research Funders' policies on Research ethics and Integrity.

[Research Ethics and Integrity - an Introduction](#)

Hosted by IAD, -this LEARN online training module is available to all students and staff Covers: ethical approval; plagiarism; authorship; collaboration; and publication ethics

College Research Ethics and Integrity websites

[College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences](#)
[College of Science and Engineering](#)
[College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine](#)

Academic and Clinical Office for Research and Development ([ACCORD)](#)

Covers clinical research-led involving human participants, tissues or data. This includes research falling within the scope of NHS Research Ethics Committee Review and all clinical trials covered by the Medicines for Human Use (Clinical trial regulations).Proposals put to these groups that is considered outside their remit is assessed by relevant University Research Ethics Committees.

Regulation of research involving animals

[Maintaining high standards of Animal ethics and welfare](#)
[Commitment to replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research](#)

EXTERNAL WEBSITES

Universities UK

[UUK concordat on Research Integrity](#)
The five commitments set out in the UUK concordat

- *We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research*
- *We are committed to ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards*
- *We are committed to supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers*
- *We are committed to using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise*
- *We are committed to working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.*

UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) (hardcopy of documents available from Edinburgh Research Office)

- [Code of practice for Research – Promoting good practice and preventing misconduct](#)
- [Self-Assessment tool for the Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#)

UK Research and Innovation (Umbrella body for UK Research Councils)

- [Policies and Guidelines on Governance of good Research Contact (pdf)](#)

These are described by UKRI as legacy documents and are valid until updated
House of Commons Science and Technology

[HoC Science and Technology Report from its inquiry into Research Integrity (pdf)](#)
[Responses to the report from Dept. for Business, Energy and](#)
[Industrial Strategy and UKRI (pdf)](#)