

**RESEARCH  
INTEGRITY**  
NATIONAL  
FORUM

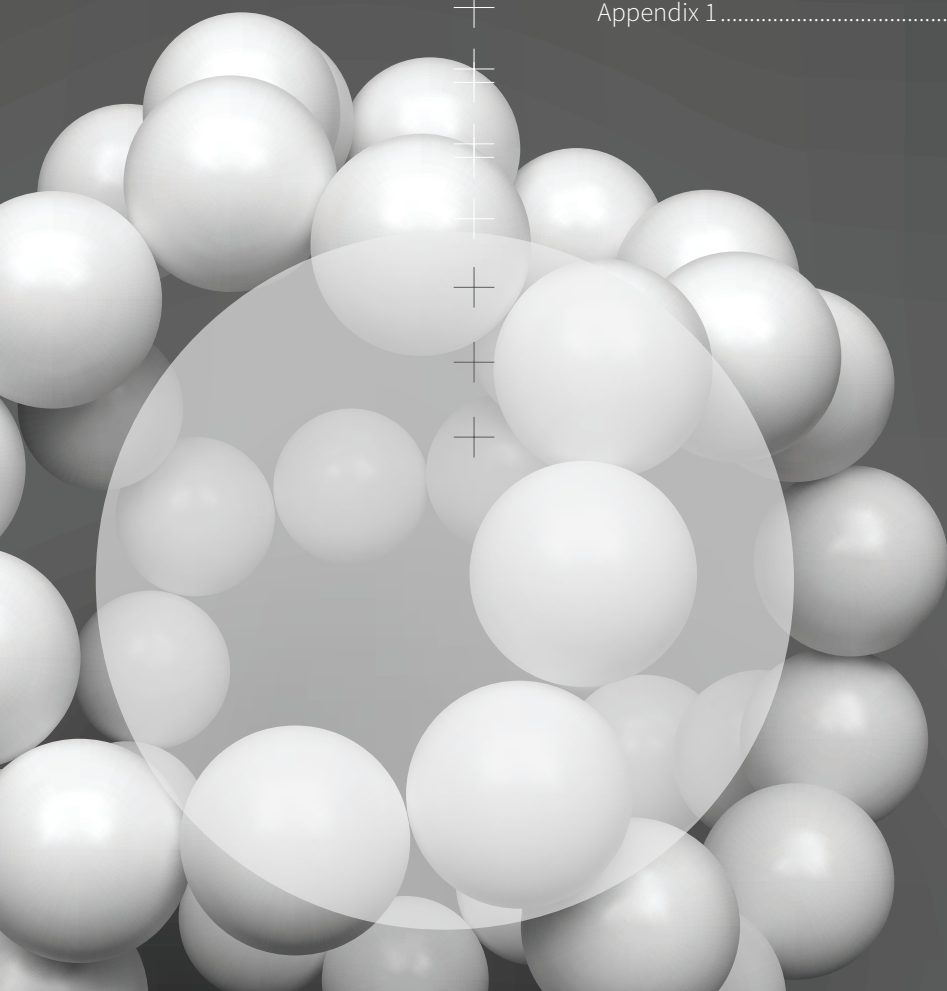
Research  
Integrity  
in Ireland

Second Edition



# Contents

Introduction.....	03
Commitments to foster and ensure research integrity.....	06
Commitment 1: Standards.....	07
Commitment 2: Good research practice.....	09
Commitment 3: Collaboration for continuous improvement .....	20
Commitment 4: Action to address misconduct.....	22
Appendix 1.....	31



# Introduction

Research in Ireland has undergone a period of rapid development and transformation since the mid 1990's and has reached the point where Ireland sits close to the world's top research performing nations, in terms of research quality and impact related to its size. The aim of this statement is to commit the main organisations in Irish research to the highest standards of integrity in carrying out their research so that partners, the public and other stakeholders, and the international research community have full confidence in the Irish research system.

Research integrity relates to the performance of research to the highest standards of professionalism and rigour, and to the accuracy and trustworthiness of the research record in publications and elsewhere. It is essential that the Irish research system as a whole protects its reputation for the quality and integrity of its research activity and outputs [1]. Therefore, research integrity is best ensured, in so far as possible, when individual researchers, institutions, publishers and funding bodies work together to create effective processes.

The Irish public research system comprises research performing organisations (RPOs) - mainly the universities, institutes of technology, other higher education institutions, state research organisations and the hospital system - along with the research funding organisations. The members of the National Research Integrity Forum (hereafter, the Forum) [2], which collectively represents this system (see Appendix 1), have long been committed to the highest standards of research conduct and integrity, and individual institutions have policies and procedures in place to underpin this.

In addition, the transparency of policy and practice are enhanced by this national statement, which clarifies policy and sets out agreed good practice in promoting and ensuring research integrity. This revised policy statement builds on the "Policy Statement on Ensuring Integrity in Irish Research" (2014) which has been adopted by all its signatories, and reflects changes that have happened in the research system, both nationally and internationally, since its original publication.

1 | Innovation 2020: Ireland's Strategy for Research & Development, Science & Technology, 2015, <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Innovation-2020.pdf>

2 | The National Research Integrity Forum was established in June 2015 to coordinate and facilitate implementation activities in this policy. It is co-chaired by the Irish Universities Association and the Technological Higher Education Association.





THE NATIONAL POLICY PROVIDES A ROBUST  
FRAMEWORK THAT CAN USEFULLY BE ADOPTED ACROSS  
ALL DISCIPLINES, BY ALL RESEARCH PERFORMING  
ORGANISATIONS AND FUNDERS IN IRELAND.



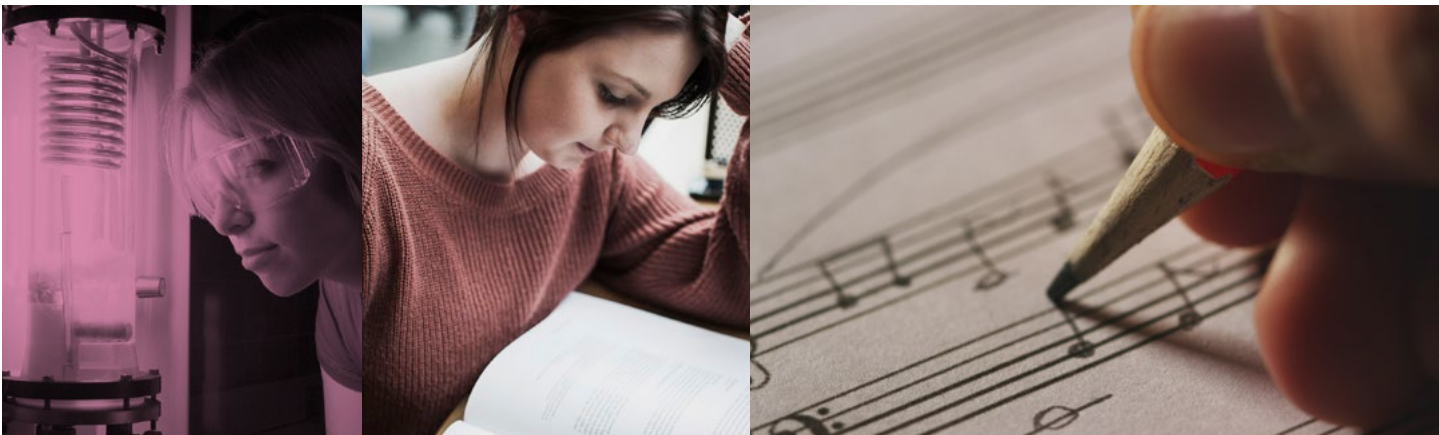
In order to ensure consistency and alignment with agreed international norms and best practice in managing research integrity, the Forum endorses the international definitions and principles agreed by the “European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity” [3].

While making this endorsement, we nevertheless recognise that a research integrity framework is required for Ireland that is appropriate to our specific national circumstances and the Irish legal situation.

In considering these issues, we draw heavily on the 2010 Royal Irish Academy discussion document “Ensuring Integrity in Irish Research” [4]. The policy is also influenced significantly by the “UK Concordat on Research Integrity” [5].

This national policy provides a robust framework that can usefully be adopted across all disciplines, by all research performing organisations and funders in Ireland. Implementation of the policy is the collective responsibility of the members of the Forum.

3 | European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, All European Academies (ALLEA), 2017, <http://www.allea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/ALLEA-European-Code-of-Conduct-for-Research-Integrity-2017.pdf>  
4 | Ensuring Integrity in Irish Research, 2010, [www.ria.ie](http://www.ria.ie)  
5 | UK Concordat on Research Integrity, 2012, <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/Theconcordatatosupportresearchintegrity.aspx>





# Commitments to foster and ensure research integrity

The sponsors of this policy statement make the following commitments:

+ + + **1** We are committed to ensuring the highest standards of integrity in all aspects of research in Ireland, founded on basic principles of good research practice to be observed by all researchers, research organisations and research funders.

+ + + **2** Education and promotion of good research practice are the foundations of research integrity. We are committed to maintaining a national research environment that is founded upon a culture of integrity, embracing internationally recognised good practice and a positive, proactive approach to promoting research integrity. This will include support for the development of our researchers through education and promotion of good research practices.

+ + + **3** We are committed to working together to reinforce and safeguard the integrity of the Irish research system and to reviewing progress regularly.

+ + + **4** We are committed to using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct when they arise.

In the sections which follow we expand on these commitments and show how we intend to fulfil them.





# Commitment 1: Standards

We are committed to ensuring the highest standards of integrity in all aspects of research in Ireland, founded on basic principles of good research practice to be observed by all researchers, research organisations and research funders.

The “European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity” (hereafter, the European Code) specifies four basic principles that underpin all research integrity and good practice in carrying out research, which we endorse here. These are principles that all scientific and scholarly researchers and practitioners should observe directly in performing their own individual research, and in dealings with research partners and the audience that receives their research reports. The principles are:

**RELIABILITY** We are committed to ensuring the highest standards of integrity in all aspects of research in Ireland, founded on basic principles of good research practice to be observed by all researchers, research organisations and research funders.

**HONESTY** in developing, undertaking, reviewing, reporting and communicating research in a transparent, fair, full and unbiased way.

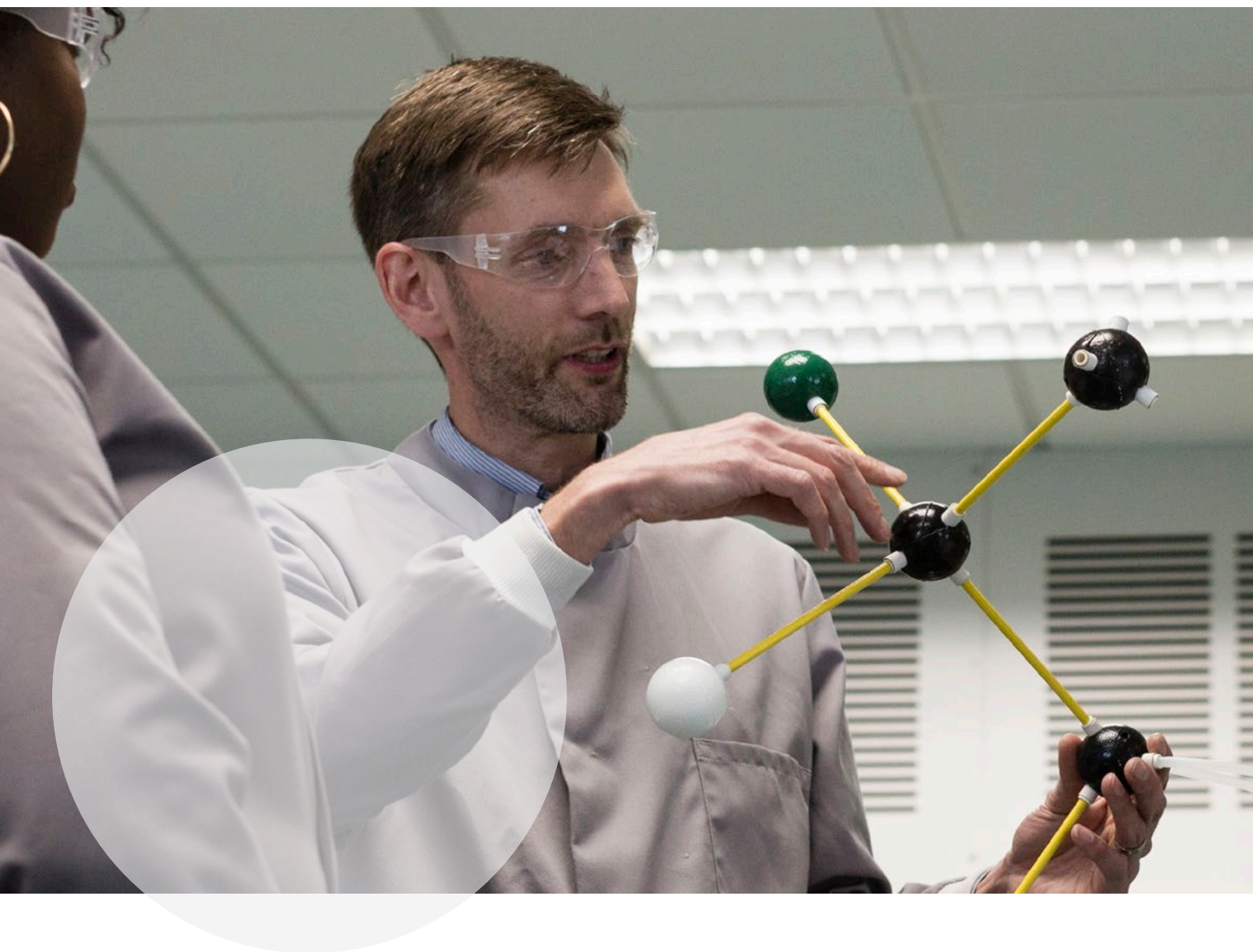
**RESPECT** for colleagues, research participants and subjects, be they human or animal, society, ecosystems, cultural heritage and the environment.

**ACCOUNTABILITY** for the research from idea to publication, for its management and organisation, for training, supervision and mentoring, and for its wider impacts.



In addition, we recognise that research must always be designed and conducted in accordance with ethical principles, with appropriate review processes in place to ensure adherence to those principles, and that it is allowed to develop independently of pressure from commissioning parties and from ideological, economic or political interests. Where interests exist that could present a real or perceived conflict of interest, these should be declared and managed appropriately.

These principles are also well aligned with the “Singapore Statement on Research Integrity” [6] and the “Montreal Statement on Research Integrity in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations” [7] which were developed during the 2nd and 3rd World Conferences on Research Integrity, in 2010 and 2012 respectively, and are intended as guides towards a global approach to the responsible conduct of research.



6 | Singapore Statement on Research Integrity, 2010, <https://wcrif.org/guidance/singapore-statement>

7 | Montreal Statement on Research Integrity in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations, 2012, <https://wcrif.org/guidance/montreal-statement>



## Commitment 2: Good Research Practice

Education and promotion of good research practice are the foundations of research integrity. We are committed to maintaining a national research environment that is founded upon a culture of integrity, embracing internationally recognised good practice and a positive, proactive approach to promoting research integrity. This will include support for the development of our researchers through education and promotion of good research practices.

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a white lab coat and clear safety glasses, is shown in profile, looking down at a red spherical object suspended by thin wires. The background is a laboratory setting with a tiled ceiling and a large ventilation hood.

WE RECOGNISE THAT RESEARCH MUST  
ALWAYS BE DESIGNED AND CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE  
WITH ETHICAL PRINCIPLES.

## 2.1: Training, Supervision and Mentoring

Effective education leads to enhanced awareness of research integrity issues, a positive approach to research integrity as central to the research mission, and a proactive approach to prevention of research misconduct. Where misconduct does arise, a transparent and objective approach is needed to deal with it and this is addressed in Section 4.2.

In order to embed the principles and practices of research integrity into the fabric and culture of research performing organisations, relevant education and training programmes should be in place. This is recognised in Section 2.2 of the European Code where it is recommended that there be:

- A Research integrity training for all researchers across their career path.
- B Training in rigorous research design, methodology and analysis for new researchers.

Offering research integrity modules as part of undergraduate and postgraduate education is a useful means of laying the foundations for promoting integrity in research practice. There is already a strong emphasis on the detection and prevention of plagiarism in coursework assessment. However, that is only one aspect of research integrity. Developing a common approach to training in research integrity principles and practices that can be applied across all higher education institutions (HEIs) and other research performing organisations as part of undergraduate and post-graduate training is desirable. In addition, there should be specifically tailored ongoing education and support for senior researchers and academics who may not be fully aware of issues and responsibilities, and who are key influencers in defining acceptable research practice for the next generation of researchers.



Arguably the most important period for inculcating research integrity is during doctoral training. This is recognised in the relevant national policies and guidelines: the “National Framework for Doctoral Education” [8] and “Ireland’s Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes” [9]. The “National Framework for Doctoral Education” recommends that there be an integrated programme of personal and professional development for all research students. “Ireland’s Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes” recommends that procedures are in place to make students aware of appropriate professional standards, including with respect to research integrity, and that they should be supported to exercise those professional standards via, for example, appropriate induction, training, and mentoring. Appropriate training and guidance should be provided in topics such as ethics, health and safety, good research practice (including avoidance of plagiarism and research fraud, and intellectual honesty in authorship), management of copyright and intellectual property, and data management.

The Deans of Graduate Studies across the seven universities agreed a “skills statement” for PhD graduates, now in its second edition [10]. This emphasises the skills that PhD graduates should have acquired during the course of their PhD (either through formal training and/or research experience). Specifically, PhD graduates should understand and apply ethical principles and good research practices in their research, including the use of appropriate methodologies, correct allocation of credit and authorship, and avoidance of research misconduct.

Continuing education on research integrity should also be provided through mentorship by senior investigators responsible for the supervision of postdoctoral and early career researchers. Mentors offer specific guidance and training to properly develop, design and structure their research activity and to foster a culture of research integrity. Mentors play a key role in helping the people they are mentoring to reflect on their current roles and identify areas for personal and professional development, to enable them deliver to their potential. “Ireland’s Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes” emphasises that staff education in research integrity should be facilitated as an integral component of continuous professional development, through relevant courses as they become available.

Ultimately, institutions should assume primary responsibility for delivering education and training programmes to their research staff. However, courses offered through the higher education institutions might usefully be made available to those in other state-funded organisations. Individual research performing organisations should monitor uptake of education and training by their researchers and staff.



APPROPRIATE TRAINING AND GUIDANCE SHOULD BE PROVIDED IN TOPICS SUCH AS ETHICS, HEALTH AND SAFETY, GOOD RESEARCH PRACTICE, MANAGEMENT OF COPYRIGHT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND DATA MANAGEMENT.

8 | National Framework for Doctoral Education, 2015, [http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national\\_framework\\_for\\_doctoral\\_education\\_0.pdf](http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national_framework_for_doctoral_education_0.pdf)

9 | Ireland’s Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes, 2019, <https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Pages/Ireland’s-Framework-of-Good-Practice-for-Research-Degree-Programmes.aspx>

10 | IUA Graduate Skills Statement, 2015, <https://www.iua.ie/publication/view/iua-graduate-skills-statement-brochure-2015/>









RESEARCH DATA IS A VALUABLE RESOURCE  
THAT SHOULD BE ORGANISED, CURATED  
AND APPROPRIATELY STORED.

## 2.2: Research Data Practices and Management

Research data is a valuable resource that should be organised, curated and appropriately stored. As used here, the term ‘research data’ generally encompasses the methodology used to obtain results, the actual research results and the analysis and interpretations by the researchers. Primary responsibility for observing good practice in the use, storage, retention and preservation of data sits with the individual researcher, supported by the institution, and should follow the principles below, which are in line with the “National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment” [11] and the “European Code”:

- Researchers, research institutions and organisations acknowledge data as legitimate and citable products of research.
- Research data should be recorded in a clear and accurate format. Particular attention should be paid to the completeness, integrity and security of these records.
- Research data should be stored in secure and accessible form and must be retained for a length of time in accordance with national, institutional, funder and/or publisher requirements.
- Researchers should publish results and interpretations of research in an open, honest, transparent and accurate manner, and respect confidentiality of data or findings when legitimately required to do so.
- Research data and records may be discoverable in the event of legal proceedings. This means that the research data and records can be accessed by the higher education institution (or other research performing institution) and its legal advisers, to determine their relevance to any legal proceeding.
- The “National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment” underlines the importance of making research data “as open as possible, as restricted as necessary”. Open access to research data should lead to greater integrity in the gathering, analysis and presentation of data as it may be open to scrutiny by peers, globally. It should also facilitate re-use of data for further research, contribute to public knowledge and inform policy and practice.
- Data access arrangements should take into account the applicability of data protection and intellectual property regulations. Clear governance and protocols should be developed on how such sensitive data may be accessed.



11 | National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment, 2019, <http://norf-ireland.net>



The “National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment” guides the development of Open Research policies in Ireland. Each principle outlines the responsibility of different stakeholders. The principles underline the importance of management of research data across all stages of the research process and recommend the use of Data Management Plans by researchers and research teams. They also recommend adoption of the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) [12] data principles in Ireland.

Proposals developed to enable Ireland to deliver on the EU Open Science agenda and to meet our EU objectives need to be achievable, sustainable, and appropriately resourced where necessary to facilitate research institutions and organisations in supporting the proper management and protection of data and research materials in all their forms (encompassing qualitative and quantitative data, protocols, processes, other research artefacts and associated metadata). Experience in Europe recommends that this be considered as a serious national investment in infrastructure and people within long-term budgetary cycles.

### 2.2.1 Statutory Obligations

Research institutions and research funders should remain abreast of current legislation pertinent to research and should ensure that they and their staff act in accordance with legal and ethical provisions and codes relevant to their discipline at all times. Researchers should be aware that under Freedom of Information legislation, a higher education institution or other research performing organisation is required to allow persons access to documents of the institution (documents that are in the institution’s possession) under defined circumstances.

Researchers must at all times be aware of the provisions of, and operate in accordance with, Data Protection legislation which, amongst other things, sets out the conditions for usage of sensitive and personal data in health research.

12 | FAIR Principles: <https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/>

## 2.3: Safeguards

The European Code sets out a number of recommendations on safeguards that researchers should be aware of when planning and conducting their research. These are:

- A Researchers have due regard for the health, safety and welfare of the community, of collaborators and others connected with their research.
- B Research protocols take account of, and are sensitive to, relevant differences in age, gender, culture, religion, ethnic origin and social class.
- C Researchers recognise and manage potential harms and risks relating to their research.







## 2.4: Supporting Good Practice

We are committed to supporting the continued enhancement of good practice through the progressive adoption of research integrity requirements in the schemes of the funding agencies, and promotion of awareness and a prevailing culture of research integrity in research performing organisations. Research performing organisations should take into account open and reproducible practices when hiring and in the promotion of researchers.

The European Code contains a number of recommendations on specific aspects of good practice, in particular collaborative working, the publication and dissemination of research outputs and the evaluation of applications for funding and research outputs. These are firmly based on guidelines on publication developed by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) [13].

The recommendations from the European Code are as follows:

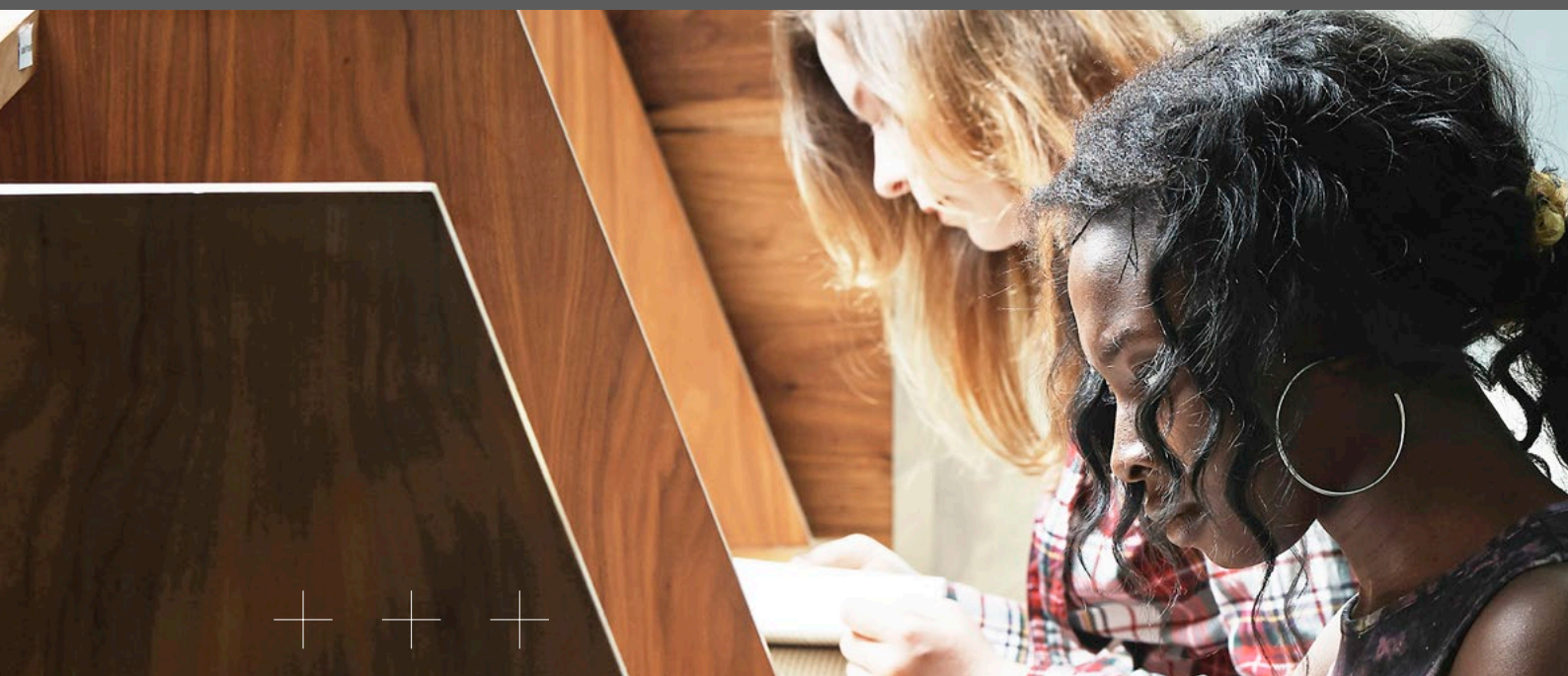


### Collaborative Working (Section 2.6 of the European Code)

- All partners in research collaborations take responsibility for the integrity of the research.
- All partners in research collaborations agree at the outset on the goals of the research and on the process for communicating their research as transparently and openly as possible.
- All partners formally agree at the start of their collaboration on expectations and standards concerning research integrity, on the laws and regulations that will apply, on protection of the intellectual property of collaborators, and on procedures for handling conflicts and possible cases of misconduct.
- All partners in research collaborations are properly informed and consulted about submissions for publication of the research results.

13 | Guidelines on Good Publication Practice (COPE), 1997, <https://publicationethics.org/files/u7141/1999pdf13.pdf>





## 2

+ + +

## Publication and Dissemination (Section 2.7 of European Code)

- All authors are fully responsible for the content of a publication, unless otherwise specified.
- All authors agree on the sequence of authorship, acknowledging that authorship itself is based on a significant contribution to the design of the research, relevant data collection, or the analysis or interpretation of the results.
- Authors ensure that their work is made available to colleagues in a timely, open, transparent, and accurate manner, unless otherwise agreed, and are honest in their communication to the general public and in traditional and social media.
- Authors acknowledge important work and intellectual contributions of others, including collaborators, assistants, and funders, who have influenced the reported research in appropriate form, and cite related work correctly.
- All authors disclose any conflicts of interest and financial or other types of support for the research or for the publication of its results.
- Authors and publishers issue corrections or retract work if necessary, the processes for which are clear, the reasons are stated, and authors are given credit for issuing prompt corrections post publication.
- Authors and publishers consider negative results to be as valid for publication and dissemination as positive findings
- Researchers adhere to the same criteria as those detailed above whether they publish in a subscription journal, an open access journal or in any other alternative publication form.



WE ARE COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING  
THE CONTINUED ENHANCEMENT  
OF GOOD PRACTICE.

## Reviewing, Evaluating and Editing (Section 2.8 of the European Code)

3

+ + +

- Researchers take seriously their commitment to the research community by participating in refereeing, reviewing and evaluation.
- Researchers review and evaluate submissions for publication, funding, appointment, promotion or reward in a transparent and justifiable manner.
- Reviewers or editors with a conflict of interest withdraw from involvement in decisions on publication, funding, appointment, promotion or reward.
- Reviewers maintain confidentiality unless there is prior approval for disclosure.
- Reviewers and editors respect the rights of authors and applicants, and seek permission to make use of the ideas, data or interpretations presented.

## Commitment 3: Collaboration for Continuous Improvement

We are committed to working together to reinforce and safeguard the integrity of the Irish research system and to reviewing progress regularly.

This statement represents a point on a journey towards a strengthened approach to ensuring research integrity in Ireland. To ensure continual development and adoption of good practice, the responsibilities of the Forum are to:

- Support the implementation of research integrity policies and processes in a harmonised manner across the research performing organisations;
- Support national research funders in implementing harmonised research integrity statements in grant conditions and associated assurance processes;
- Support the development and roll-out of research integrity training programmes for staff and students in the research performing organisations;
- Monitor international developments and policy in the area of research integrity, and periodically review the terms of reference of the Forum and research integrity policy and practice in Ireland in this context;
- Communicate the importance of research integrity to the Irish research community and to the general public;
- Share experiences on the number and type of instances of research misconduct that have been dealt with through formal mechanisms within the institutions;
- Engage nationally and internationally in forums considering research integrity and related issues and make recommendations as appropriate to policy development, review, and implementation.

Innovation 2020, Ireland's Strategy for Research and Innovation, Science and Technology tasks the Forum with facilitating and coordinating research integrity activities in Ireland [1]. This includes implementing a process and format for the public dissemination of statistics on integrity investigations in Ireland, having regard to existing regulations relating to misconduct and discipline in the research-performing organisations, and the Terms and Conditions of grants awarded by the research funding organisations.

The work and outputs of the Forum to-date are available at [www.iua.ie/research-innovation/research-integrity](http://www.iua.ie/research-innovation/research-integrity).





INNOVATION 2020, IRELAND'S STRATEGY FOR RESEARCH  
AND INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY TASKS THE FORUM  
WITH FACILITATING AND COORDINATING RESEARCH INTEGRITY  
ACTIVITIES IN IRELAND.





## Commitment 4: Action to Address Misconduct

We are committed to using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.



RESEARCH INTEGRITY IS INTRINSIC TO  
EXCELLENT RESEARCH.



## 4.1: Definitions of Research Misconduct

Research integrity is intrinsic to excellent research and forms the basis for researchers to trust each other as well as the research record. Research integrity also underpins society’s trust in research evidence and expertise. Where the principles and good practice underpinning research integrity are not followed, issues of research misconduct may arise. At the outset, it should be said that research misconduct does not include honest error or honest differences in the design, execution, interpretation or judgement in evaluating research methods or results, or misconduct unrelated to the research process. Similarly, it does not include poor research per se unless this encompasses an intention to deceive.

As regards the substance of research misconduct, we are guided by the OECD “Best practices for ensuring scientific integrity and preventing misconduct” [14] (see also Table 1 below) and the “European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity”. Breaches of research integrity take many forms and can be of varying seriousness. The most serious are:

- Fabrication of data, i.e. making up results and recording or reporting them.
- Falsification of data, i.e. manipulating research, materials, equipment or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
- Plagiarism, i.e. the appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit, including those obtained through confidential review of other’s research proposals and manuscripts.

Each one of these comprises an attack on the integrity of the research record and, as such, must be vigorously defended against. Fabrication and falsification are the most serious offences that can be committed, as the development of knowledge itself is undermined. Plagiarism may be seen as marginally less egregious than these two, since the knowledge core is not in itself damaged. However, the corrupting effect on the principle of open communication and sharing of knowledge for wider benefit means that repeated, significant plagiarism must be regarded as extremely serious.

While Fabrication, Falsification, and Plagiarism (FFP) represent the most serious examples of research misconduct, there are also additional types of unacceptable practices which, while not as serious as FFP in individual instances, may be present and therefore (in the aggregate) potentially as damaging to the overall reputation of research and the research community’s integrity.

These unacceptable practices include but are not confined to the behaviours described in Table 1:



14 | OECD, Best practices for ensuring scientific integrity and preventing misconduct: based on a workshop held on 22-23 February 2007, in Tokyo, Japan, submitted to the first World Conference on Research Integrity, Lisbon, September 2007; <http://www.oecd.org/science/inno/40188303.pdf>



Table 1: Description of core research misconduct and unacceptable practices by scientists and scholars, based on OECD definitions\*

<p>Core “Research Misconduct”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fabrication of data</li> <li>• Falsification of data</li> <li>• Plagiarism</li> </ul> <p>FFP includes, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Selectively excluding data from analysis</li> <li>– Misinterpreting data to obtain desired results (including inappropriate use of statistical methods)</li> <li>– Manipulating images in publications</li> <li>– Producing false data or results under pressure from a sponsor</li> </ul>	<p>Research practice misconduct, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Using inappropriate (e.g., harmful or dangerous) research methods</li> <li>– Poor research design</li> <li>– Experimental, analytical, computational errors</li> <li>– Violation of human subject protocols</li> <li>– Abuse of laboratory animals</li> <li>– Concealment of research misconduct</li> </ul>
<p>Data-related misconduct, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Not preserving primary data where appropriate</li> <li>– Bad data management, storage</li> <li>– Withholding data from the scientific community</li> </ul> <p>————</p> <p>NB: The above applies to physical research materials as well</p>	<p>Publication-related misconduct, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Claiming undeserved authorship</li> <li>– Denying authorship to contributors</li> <li>– Artificially proliferating publications (“salami-slicing” and “self-plagiarism”)</li> <li>– Failure to correct the publication record</li> <li>– Including authors without permission</li> <li>– Selective citing to enhance importance of finding</li> <li>– Establishing or supporting journals that undermine the quality control of research (‘predatory journals’)</li> <li>– Grossly exaggerating the importance and practical applicability of findings</li> </ul>
<p>Personal misconduct in the research setting, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Inappropriate personal behaviour,</li> <li>– Harassment, bullying</li> <li>– Inadequate supervision, mentoring, counselling of researchers</li> <li>– Insensitivity to social or cultural norms</li> <li>– Misusing seniority to encourage violations of research integrity</li> <li>– Delaying or inappropriately hampering the work of other researchers</li> </ul>	<p>Financial, and other misconduct, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Peer review abuse e.g., non-disclosure of conflict of interest, unfairly holding up a rival’s publication</li> <li>– Misrepresenting credentials or publication record</li> <li>– Misuse of research funds for unauthorised purchases or for personal gain</li> <li>– Making an unsubstantiated or malicious misconduct allegation</li> </ul>

\* | Reproduced and amended from OECD publication “Best practices for ensuring scientific integrity and preventing misconduct.” <http://www.oecd.org/science/inno/40188303.pdf>



## 4.2: Addressing Research Misconduct

Institutions will make best efforts towards education, promotion of good practice and prevention of misconduct. However, should a case of misconduct arise, an appropriate process of investigation and determination of the offence must be put in place.

The following principles for investigations are substantively based on those set out by the European Code and are endorsed here as guidance for organisations that will undertake investigations in accordance with their own detailed and individual procedures.

### INTEGRITY OF THE PROCESS

- Investigations into research misconduct allegations must be fair, comprehensive and conducted expediently but without compromising accuracy, objectivity and thoroughness.
- Those parties involved in the procedure must ensure that any interests they have that might constitute a conflict of interest are disclosed and managed.
- Detailed and confidential records should be maintained on all aspects of the procedure.
- Measures should be taken to ensure that investigations are carried through to a conclusion.

### UNIFORMITY

- Procedures for dealing with misconduct should be spelled out in sufficient detail so that the transparency of the process and uniformity within one domain of jurisdiction from one case to another is ensured.
- Procedures for dealing with misconduct should be available on the websites of research performing organisations.



## FAIRNESS

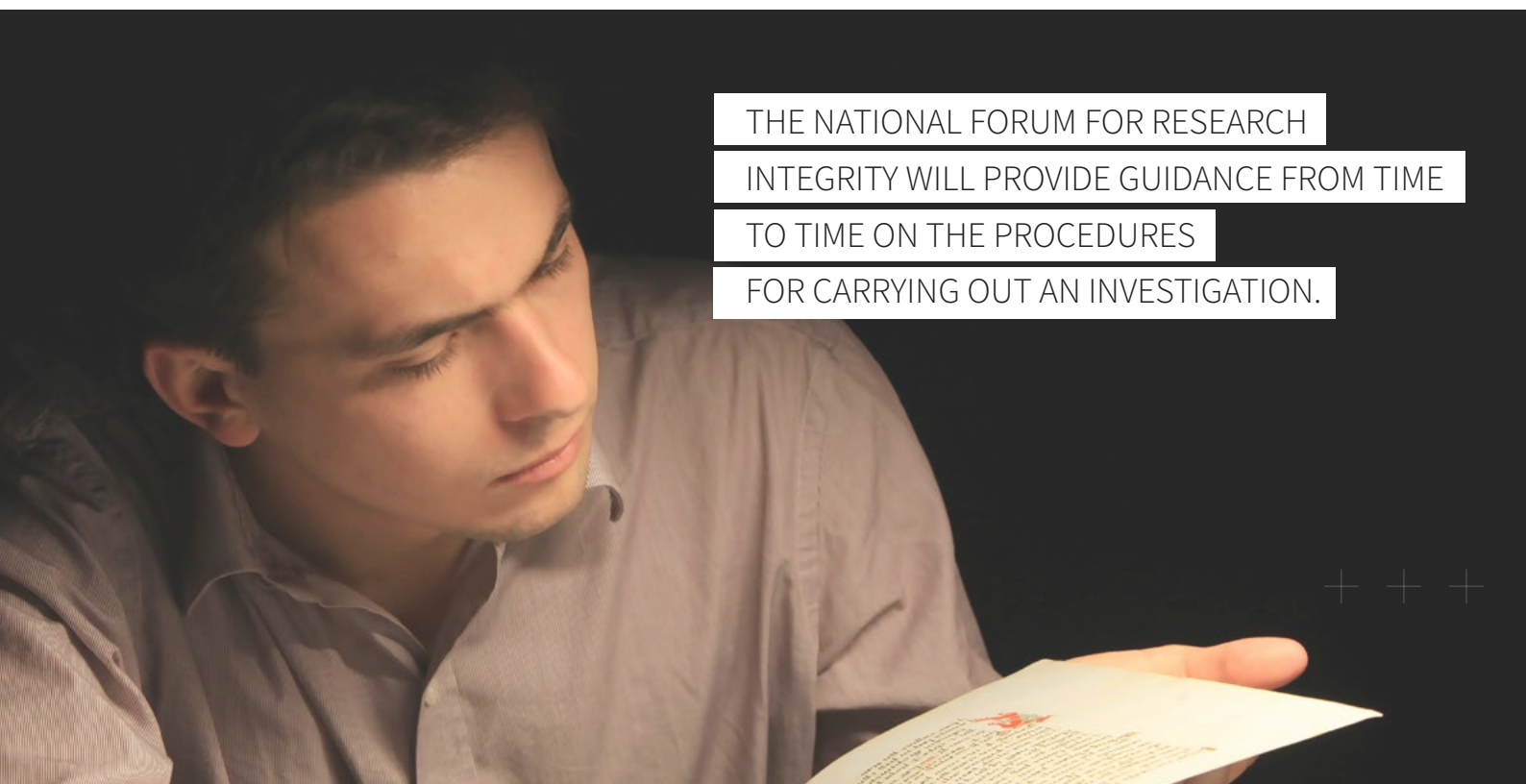
- + + + – Investigation of research misconduct allegations should be conducted in a manner that is fair to all parties and in accordance with relevant laws.
- Persons accused of research misconduct must be given full details of the allegation(s) in writing and allowed a fair process for responding and to have a representative or work colleague present for any meeting or interview associated with the investigation or disciplinary hearing.
- Proportionate action should be taken against persons found to have committed research misconduct.
- Any action(s) taken should be subject to right of appeal.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

- + + + – The procedure should be conducted as confidentially as possible, in order to protect those involved in the investigation. Such confidentiality should be maintained provided this does not compromise the investigation of the allegation, health and safety and the safety of participants in research.
- Where possible, any disclosure to third parties should be made on a confidential basis.
- If the organisation and/or its staff have legal obligations to inform third parties of research misconduct allegations, those obligations must be fulfilled at the appropriate time through the correct mechanisms.

## NO DETRIMENT

- + + + – Anyone accused of research misconduct is presumed innocent.
- No person should suffer any unnecessary penalty when accused of research misconduct before the allegation is proven.
- No person should suffer any penalty before, during or after an investigation for making an allegation of research misconduct in good faith, but action should be taken against persons found to have made allegations in bad faith.
- Appropriate restorative action is taken when researchers are exonerated of an allegation of misconduct, in consultation with the exonerated party.



THE NATIONAL FORUM FOR RESEARCH

INTEGRITY WILL PROVIDE GUIDANCE FROM TIME

TO TIME ON THE PROCEDURES

FOR CARRYING OUT AN INVESTIGATION.

### 4.3: Process for Addressing Research Misconduct

The European Code provides an extensive discussion of the seriousness of unacceptable research practices. In many cases the boundaries between unacceptable practices and serious misconduct may be quite thin, especially if the unacceptable practice is carried out repeatedly by an experienced senior researcher. In some cases, for example in those involving the misuse of research funds or intimidation of junior staff, the offence may be extremely serious, and should be dealt with by appropriate procedures within law. However, the offence itself may not constitute research misconduct, since it does not affect the integrity of the research record itself.

For such unacceptable practices, the internal mechanisms of the research community will, in many cases, provide effective remedies without the need for formal investigative actions. However, there are also intermediate categories of misconduct that may warrant more significant intervention.

Response to incidences of misconduct must be proportionate to the seriousness of the misconduct. Specifically, as a principle, it must be demonstrated that the misconduct was committed intentionally, knowingly or recklessly. Proof must be based on the preponderance of evidence.

Institutions or organisations protect the integrity of research by dealing properly with instances of misconduct and nurturing an environment supportive of integrity. The National Forum for Research Integrity will provide guidance from time to time on the procedures for carrying out an investigation, including the role and reporting structure of a Research Integrity Officer in each institution, to encourage consistency within the sector on incorporating the principles for raising complaints and conducting investigations [15]. In a European context, Irish Universities are quite extensively regulated by the primary national statute, the Universities Act 1997. Since an allegation of research misconduct implies the possibility of sanction up to and including suspension and dismissal, any sanction must be in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

15 | National Forum on Research Integrity Position Paper on Research Integrity Officer Role & Reporting, and National Forum on Research Integrity Guidelines for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research, 2016, available at <https://www.iua.ie/research-innovation/research-integrity/>

Subsection 25(6) of the Act is of specific relevance and states:

“the University may suspend or dismiss any employee but only in accordance with procedures, and subject to any conditions, specified in a statute [16] made following consultation through normal industrial relations structures operating in the University with recognised staff associations or trade unions, which procedures or conditions may provide for the delegation of powers relating to suspension or dismissal to the chief officer and shall provide for the tenure of officers.”

In practice, this means that any procedures for disciplining a staff member of a University must be specified in the statute of that University. Because of the possibility of sanction, this statutory process is the only process through which an employee of a University may be disciplined for any reason.

Similar legislative provisions or statutes will apply in other higher education institutions or public research performing organisations. With due regard to the statutory obligations upon institutions and staff, we wish to highlight the following specific commitments in regard to process:

**A** Prompt Action

We are committed to using proactive management and, where necessary, disciplinary procedures to quickly and effectively address research misconduct with due reference to the relevant institutional statutes.

**B** Avoidance of Conflict of Interest

We will take steps to ensure that any conflict of interest issues arising are declared and managed in accordance with the policy in place at the relevant institution, to ensure the objectivity of the process.



16 | i.e. a university statute



## C Transparency and Objectivity – External Expert Involvement

We are committed to transparency of the process with due regard to the statutes and the requirements of natural and constitutional justice. We also recognise that effective investigation of research misconduct may give rise to issues of a detailed scientific and technical nature and, as indicated previously, that breaches of research integrity can vary significantly in their seriousness. Where the suspected research misconduct is such that it warrants application of a full formal disciplinary process, institutions will seek assistance and input from an appropriate number of independent, external disciplinary experts of high standing.

## D Transparency and Objectivity – Reporting

It is recognised that a funding body supporting a programme of research has a very specific interest and role in ensuring the integrity of the conduct associated with that research. To safeguard the responsible expenditure of public funds, the research funding agencies may, in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of awards, request information related to the use of those funds. The research performing organisations are committed to reporting the findings of any proven cases of research misconduct arising from a formal disciplinary process to the relevant authorities including, for example, funding bodies and publishers. However, if the allegation of research misconduct is of a particularly serious nature and materially affects the running of a programme of research, it may be a contractual stipulation, or considered prudent in the circumstances, that the research performing organisation should advise the funder of the situation at an earlier stage. It is also envisaged that where a funding agency raises concerns regarding misconduct with a research performing organisation as a result of its evaluation processes or arising from its post-award management of a funded programme, that these concerns should be dealt with by that organisation in a manner similar to all other received allegations.

## E Sanction and Appeal

The purpose of a formal disciplinary action (e.g. disciplinary hearing) is to examine and evaluate all relevant facts to determine whether research misconduct has been committed, and to identify the responsible person(s) and seriousness of the misconduct. Serious research misconduct, and any sanctions that may be applied, must be dealt with through the statutory processes of the employing organisation.

The findings of the formal process will be reported in accordance with the statute, as will the recommendation on appropriate disciplinary measures to be taken.

There will be provision for an appeal against the determination and sanction, and this appeal will also be carried out under the statutes of the employing institution.

As a guideline, where a formal investigation has been carried out by an investigation committee, and where a disciplinary sanction has been imposed, then an appeal may be made in accordance with the statute.





# APPENDIX 1



This revised policy statement has been developed by the members of the National Research Integrity Forum, which comprises the following organisations:

- Irish Universities Association
- Technological Higher Education Association
- Health Research Board
- Science Foundation Ireland
- Department of Agriculture
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Teagasc
- Marine Institute
- Enterprise Ireland
- Irish Research Council
- University College Cork
- Dublin City University
- Maynooth University
- National University of Ireland Galway
- University of Limerick
- University College Dublin
- Trinity College Dublin
- Technological University Dublin
- Cork Institute of Technology
- Waterford Institute of Technology
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
- Mary Immaculate College
- Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies
- Royal Irish Academy
- Higher Education Authority
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland





[www.iua.ie/research-innovation/research-integrity/](http://www.iua.ie/research-innovation/research-integrity/)

IUA, Irish Universities Association  
Tel: + 353 (0)1 676 4948  
[www.iua.ie](http://www.iua.ie)

THEA, Technological Higher Education Association  
Tel: +353 (0)1 708 2900  
[www.thea.ie](http://www.thea.ie)

---

2019

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>