National Research Integrity Forum: Structure and Terms of Reference

Introduction

The *National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity In Ireland,* 2nd Ed. 2019[1] set out the following four commitments on behalf of the Irish research community:

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.

The primary role of the National Research Integrity Forum (the Forum) is to promote and raise awareness of these commitments within the Irish research system and to external stakeholders, and to enable the actors within the system to align with those commitments. The Forum is also committed to supporting the mainstreaming of the *HEA Principles of Good Practice in Research* within *Irish Higher Education Institutions*.[2]

The Forum is divided into two elements:

1. A focused **Steering Group** where strategic issues related to Conduct of Research and Research Integrity can be discussed among key stakeholders at a senior level;

2. A broader **Community of Practice** (CoP) for sharing of information and good practice on training, policies and operational matters between a large group of stakeholder organisations.

In addition, the Research Integrity Officers across the research landscape will be supported to organise an annual informal meeting to share experience and good practice on managing research misconduct investigations.

An overall mailing list encompassing the members of the Steering Group, the Community of Practice, and the Research Integrity Officers will be established and used to disseminate relevant information.

The remainder of this document outlines the Terms of Reference for the Steering Group and the Community of Practice, including the relationship between the two.

1. Terms of Reference for Steering Group

Role & Responsibilities	The Steering Group will take a lead role in suggesting actions and changes within the research system to reinforce a culture of responsible conduct of research.
	Key responsibilities include:
	a) Supporting the implementation of research integrity policies and processes in a harmonised manner across the research performing and research funding organisations;
	b) Supporting the development of appropriate research integrity quality assurance mechanisms;
	c) Developing appropriate research integrity guidance documents and position papers;
	d) Ensuring continuity of online research integrity training provision for staff and students in the research performing organisations and encouraging the development and roll-out of in-person research integrity training programmes;
	e) Monitoring international developments and policy and engaging in international forums in the area of research integrity, and making recommendations as appropriate to policy development, review and implementation in Ireland;
	f) Communicating the importance of research integrity to the Irish research community and to the general public;
	g) Publishing annual statistics on the number and types of research misconduct that have been dealt with through formal mechanisms within the state-funded research performing organisations;
	h) Supporting the Community of Practice with their activities;
	i) Assisting the Research Integrity Officers in the organisation of their annual meeting.
Membership & Chairing	The Steering Group will consist of the following members:
	• One nominated person from each of the following organisations - DFHERIS, HEA, EI, IRC, SFI, HRB and RIA;
	• Two nominated persons from the IUA VPDOR Group;

	- Two nominated persons from the THEA RDIE Strategic Group; - One nominated person from the IUA DoGS Group; - The Directors of Research & Innovation from the THEA and IUA Executive Teams; - The Chair and Deputy Chair of the Community of Practice. Appointments to the Steering Group, both overall and within each category of membership, must be informed as far as possible by EDI principles. To provide continuity, for the first three years of the new structure the current Chair and Deputy Chair (Professor Anita Maguire, University College Cork and Dr Jennifer Brennan, Technological Higher Education Association) will continue in their roles. After this period, IUA and THEA will propose nominees from among their constituency for the Chair and Deputy Chair roles (in consultation with DFHERIS) and the appointments will be approved by the Steering Group. The typical term of office will be three years, with the potential to be renewed once.
Secretariat	The secretariat will be provided by THEA. This will be reviewed during 2022, following the publication of the revised national research and innovation strategy.
Frequency and Location of Meetings	The Steering Group will meet twice annually. The Chair may call meetings more frequently if deemed necessary or on the joint request from two or more members. Except in situations to consider matters of urgency, all meeting dates will be communicated at least one month in advance. Meetings will normally take place online unless the majority of members wish to hold an in-person meeting and this is possible within the prevailing public health guidelines. In that case, in-person meetings will be held between 11:00-16:00 to facilitate travel, and remote participation will also be facilitated. The Secretariat is responsible for identifying a suitable venue for any in-person meetings, which would generally take place on the premises of one of the member organisations.
Transparency and Communications	The membership, meeting dates, agendas, minutes and associated documents, and reports of the Steering Group will be held by the Secretariat. Documents will be circulated in advance of meetings via email.

	The Secretariat will maintain an online presence for the Forum. Details of the Forum and any public documents which it creates will be published on this page.
Agreement of Recommendations	The Chair shall determine when consensus has been reached on matters discussed at meetings. However, where there is a considerable difference of opinion that must be reflected in the minutes of the meeting.
Working Groups	The Steering Committee may establish working groups as and when required, whether short-term or otherwise.
Link with the Community of Practice	To facilitate reporting of CoP events to the Steering Committee and of NRIF Steering Committee discussions to the CoP, the Chair of the CoP will have a seat on the Steering Committee for the duration of their term of office. The Steering Committee will receive a report from the CoP at each meeting. An update on the work of the Steering Committee will also be provided at CoP meetings. The Deputy Chair of the Steering Committee will normally attend CoP meetings.
Reporting	The Steering Group will report, as appropriate, to national R&I strategy oversight bodies. Steering Group members will report internally in their own organisations. Steering Group members from THEA and IUA will report to the THEA RDIE Group and the IUA VPDOR Group respectively.
Date of Last Review	16th February 2022

2. Terms of Reference for the Community of Practice

Role & Responsibilities	The Community of Practice will: • Provide staff with responsibility for research integrity matters within their organisation with a peer group with whom they can collectively consider research integrity challenges and priorities; • Develop a forum for the sharing of effective practice from different organisations;

	• Encourage knowledge and information sharing and learning between staff with responsibility for research integrity matters; • Support the roll-out of the online research integrity training programme - including appropriate engagement with the current external supplier - and other relevant training offerings; • Develop links with, and learn from, international peers; • Support the NRIF Steering Committee in the organisation and delivery of initiatives/events to raise the awareness of research integrity and responsible research conduct.
Membership	The membership will generally be drawn from the stakeholder organisations in the Irish state-funded research landscape: including research performing organisations, research funding organisations and relevant national agencies. Other research - active organisations outside this categorisation (e.g. companies, civil society organisations) are also welcome to join. At least one representative from the postgraduate research community and one early-career researcher should be invited to attend. More than one representative per organisation can attend, although consistent representation is encouraged where possible; organisations are encouraged to identify an attendee/s who will regularly attend. In line with best practice, diversity is encouraged within the membership.
Chairing and Secretariat	The Chair and Deputy Chair will be elected from among the membership and will hold the post for a 12-month period. The Chair and Deputy Chair must represent different organisations, and the roles must rotate among the participating organisations. The Deputy Chair will assume the role of Chair in the year following their term as Deputy Chair. Nominations for these roles will be submitted to the Deputy Chair of the Steering Group, who will organise any voting process that may be required. The Chair will be responsible for organising the meetings and will arrange for circulation of any action items after each meeting. The Chair will also manage communications of CoP business via a key contact email list.

Frequency and Location of Meetings	The CoP will meet two or three times per year, based on an annual schedule agreed in advance with the members. Meetings will normally take place online unless the majority of members wish to hold an in-person meeting <u>and</u> this is possible within the prevailing public health guidelines. In that case, in-person meetings will be held between 11:00-16:00 to facilitate travel, and remote participation will also be facilitated. The Chair is responsible for identifying a suitable venue for any in-person meetings, which would generally take place on the premises of the member organisations.
Link with the Steering Group	To facilitate reporting of NRIF Steering Committee discussions to the CoP, and allow reporting of CoP events to the Steering Committee, the Chair of the CoP will have a seat on the Steering Committee for the duration of their term of office. The Steering Committee will receive a report from the CoP at each meeting. An update on the work of the Steering Committee will also be provided at CoP meetings. The Deputy Chair of the Steering Committee will normally attend CoP meetings.
Date of Last Review	1st March 2022