



Indicators of Research Integrity

Executive Summary



UKCORI
UK Committee on
Research Integrity

In this report, the UK Committee on Research Integrity presents our work on the development of indicators of research integrity for use by higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK.

The Committee undertook this project with two key objectives in mind:

- **to build the evidence base for research integrity on a UK-wide scale**
- **support HEIs to self assess and improve their support for research integrity**

To achieve these objectives, we worked collaboratively with diverse stakeholders across HEIs and the wider research sector. We convened discussions about quantitative and qualitative indicators of research integrity in the context of contributing to fairer and more inclusive approaches to evaluation of research integrity.

As we highlight in the Committee’s 2024 annual statement, it is of vital importance that we maintain and support the integrity of research conducted in the UK. Transparency about research integrity safeguards trust and confidence in UK research and helps to build the evidence base about research integrity across the UK. This evidence base can highlight exemplary practice and areas for further work.

We thank all those who contributed to this project, particularly stakeholders who took part in workshops and the project’s Advisory Group. We look forward to our continued collaboration with the sector as we work together to strengthen research integrity in the UK.



Executive Summary

The UK Committee on Research Integrity has responsibility for promoting research integrity in all environments and disciplines across the UK. Research has integrity when it is carried out in a way that is trustworthy, ethical, and responsible. The Committee’s work is framed by the UK’s Concordat to Support Research Integrity which contains five principles of research integrity: honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, care and respect, and accountability.

The Committee champions an evidence-based approach to research integrity efforts. Evidence is needed as the whole sector works to maintain and support research integrity. Despite the need for an evidence-base that can inform research integrity practice, ways of assessing the presence or impact of research integrity activities are neither fully developed, consistent, nor widely available. To address this need, we developed tools—indicators—that can assess conditions that underpin research integrity within organisations.

We focused on UK higher education as a vital part of our internationally connected and vibrant research sector. The UK’s HEIs are innovative and express interest in understanding their own practice in research integrity. Our work identified potential indicators to identify presence of conditions that foster research integrity in UK HEIs.

In 2023-2024, we carried out multi-stakeholder workshops with over 120 stakeholders from around the UK and received advice from a dedicated expert, external Advisory Group. These workshops generated and reflected on 115 potential indicators spread across five domains: leadership, strategy, procedures, practices, and skills. Through further consideration we developed a list of 16 potential indicators (shown below) identified as most important for HEIs to consider using. These reflect input from diverse stakeholders and recognise differences in institutional size, resources, and disciplinary focus.

The 16 potential indicators can be used to understand the status and trajectory of the conditions that support research integrity. The indicators include items that can be demonstrated through a range of approaches that might be qualitative, quantitative or a combination of the two.

We acknowledge that there may be unintended and unanticipated consequences relating to the use of the suggested indicators. Therefore, there is likely to be need for their further refinement and development of guidance on their responsible use.

Looking ahead, it will be important for the research sector to assess whether this prioritised set of indicators support recognition of the conditions that foster research integrity. Equally, it will be useful to understand the extent to which they provide an evidence-base about the UK now and into the future.

Shortlisted indicators and possible ways to evidence these¹.

Domain	Shortlisted indicators	Possible sources of evidence
LEADERSHIP	1. Research integrity is on the appropriate risk register or equivalent document at an HEI and the owner of that risk is clearly identified.	HEI can evidence on a risk register or appropriate document, and link or refer to it in their annual statement on research integrity ² .
	2. HEI provides infrastructure and staff with the appropriate expertise needed to support open research.	HEI can provide narrative account of open research provision and uptake by research staff and include it in their annual statement.
	3. HEI’s HR processes set expectations for research integrity, as laid out in policies, research-related job descriptions, recruitment, annual review, and promotion processes (including outcomes).	HEI can evidence research integrity is present in HR documentation and processes in these areas.
	4. Within HEIs, those in research leadership roles prioritise and advocate for research integrity.	HEI can gather evidence from existing or planned staff survey processes and from CEDARS ³ , if conducted. HEI can provide narrative account from research leaders about how they have advocated for and prioritised research integrity.
STRATEGY	5. A) HEI institutional strategy mentions research integrity, and (B) staff in research-related roles have high levels of awareness of, and confidence in, research integrity related strategies.	HEI institutional strategy can be referenced in their annual statement and evidenced with a link to the strategy. HEI can gather evidence from staff survey or equivalent.
	6. HEI institutional research integrity strategies have an associated action plan with clear lines of responsibility.	HEI institutional action plan for research integrity can be referenced in their annual statement and evidenced with a link to the plan.
	7. HEI regularly evaluates the quality, accessibility, appropriateness, and impact of research integrity-related training and generates recommendations for development.	HEI can gather evidence on quality, impact, appropriateness, and accessibility of research integrity training provision from staff survey or equivalent.
PROCEDURES	8. HEI has a published mapping of relevant codes of good research practice that applies to all research-active (internal and visiting) staff that includes as a minimum codes and guidelines on research ethics, research misconduct, authorship, open research, and data management.	HEI can evidence signposting to relevant codes of good research practice.
	9. HEI can demonstrate that procedures are in place to provide sufficient time for staff to perform their research with integrity.	HEI procedures can be referenced in their annual statement and evidenced with a link to the relevant procedures.
	10. HEI has published procedures for investigating allegations of research misconduct that align with Concordat expectations, publicly available, appropriately resourced, and regularly evaluated.	HEI procedures can be referenced in their annual statement detailing the number and outcome of cases investigated and lessons learnt.

1 Table 11 on page 30 and 31 in the main report.

2 Signatories to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity expect HEIs to complete an annual statement on research integrity as set out in Commitment 5 of the Concordat. These annual statements on research integrity are referred to as ‘annual statements’ throughout the report.

3 The Culture, Employment and Development of Academic Researchers Survey (CEDARS) is a biennial survey carried out by career and professional development organisation CRAC-Vitae, to seek the views and experiences of individuals engaged in research within UK universities. The question set is designed to support institutions’ evaluation of their progress in implementing the Principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

Shortlisted indicators and possible ways to evidence these cont.

Domain	Shortlisted indicators	Possible sources of evidence
PRACTICES	11. HEI can evidence that it undertakes continuous improvement in relation to RI-related practices, policies, training outcomes and procedures.	HEI can provide narrative account of support for continuous improvement in their annual statement. Evidence can be gathered from staff survey.
	12. HEI monitors compliance with institutional and external research integrity related requirements.	HEI can evidence internal audits, risk review or self-monitoring where appropriate.
	13. HEI provides, and clearly signposts for staff, best practice guidelines related to research integrity that are discipline specific where appropriate.	HEI best practice guidelines can be referenced in their annual statement and evidenced with a link to the relevant procedures.
	14. HEI showcases exemplary research integrity practice and related activities.	HEI can evidence this with research integrity-related awards or share narrative accounts internally and externally of exemplary research integrity-related practice.
SKILLS	15. HEI provides accessible, research integrity skills-related training and/or professional development to suit different roles, disciplines, and career stages, undertaken by all research-active students and staff.	HEI can gather evidence from staff survey, pre- and post-training evaluations. Evidence could include uptake of training (number/percentage of staff), reach of training (percentage of uptake by discipline/department/career stage). Qualitative and quantitative evidence can be referenced in their annual statement.
	16. HEI provides support, training and/or professional development for those conducting research misconduct investigations.	HEI can gather evidence from pre- and post-training evaluations. Quantitative evidence could include uptake of training by those on research misconduct investigatory panels (number/percentage of staff). Qualitative and quantitative evidence can be referenced in their annual statement.

