

UK Committee on Research Integrity: Terms of Reference

1. Background and context

- 1.1. The principles of research integrity and goals to maintain, support and achieve high integrity are an essential component of the UK research system. Although this committee is being established by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) on behalf of the community, ownership ultimately resides with everyone working in and associated with the research system. The terms of reference reflect that imperative and set out that achieving co-ownership is an integral part of the committee's work.

2. Purpose of the committee

- 2.1. The UK Committee on Research Integrity has formal responsibility for promoting research integrity across the UK and building consensus and co-ownership across the system. The research system includes higher education institutions, research institutes, public, private and third sector organisations.
- 2.2. The committee will work with the sector to:
- maintain and support high integrity in all research environments and across all disciplines.
 - support good governance of research conduct.
- 2.3. The committee will comprise independently appointed leading experts, drawn from a range of research disciplines, types of research organisations and career stages.

3. Overall responsibilities of the committee

General responsibilities

- 3.1. The committee will:
- lead development of its strategy, ensuring it fulfils its role as a key component of the UK research landscape, addressing relevant issues across all disciplines and career stages.
 - develop a workplan that supports high quality research being conducted in a positive environment that attracts talent and skills to the full range of career options available in research.
 - ensure equality, diversity and inclusion is considered as part of all projects and embed these considerations throughout its workplan. Measures will be monitored to assess their effectiveness and to inform further action as required.
 - ensure the workplan considers bureaucracy and burden and strives to reduce these by working collaboratively across the sector, for example with other funders.

- advocate and champion its work domestically and overseas so that the UK and international audiences understand its role. This will ensure the committee develops high standing within the research community, builds our international reputation and promotes international collaboration.
- work effectively with the strategy and operations functions of UK research funders to provide support through advice and challenge on policies and procedures.
- convene and catalyse the research system, liaising effectively with stakeholders to increase discussion about how best to support and assure high research integrity.
- consider sustainability in all its work.

Specific remit

3.2. The committee will:

- develop a strategy and roadmap for the future position in relation to UKRI. To be developed in the first year, the strategy must reflect the need for collective ownership and action on research integrity across the sector. The roadmap will be developed on the basis of the strategy and describe the steps that the UK Committee on Research Integrity will take to achieve this.
- work collaboratively with existing local and national bodies to bring clarity to the composition of the current research integrity landscape thus enabling the identification of opportunities for further development.
- provide strategic input into policies, processes and guidance, including relating to regulation and assurance in the UK.
- identify opportunities across the research system to improve research integrity; build high quality evidence on the state of research integrity in the UK, and on the effectiveness of interventions to improve integrity.
- work with Universities UK (UUK) to operationalise the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.
- identify how systemic pressures contribute to research integrity.
- create opportunities for discussion across the sector, nationally and internationally.

4. Membership

- 4.1. The membership of the committee is:
 - one chair or two co-chairs
 - at least 6 but not more than 10 committee members
- 4.2. The members are appointed through an open and transparent recruitment process on the advice of the hiring panel and in agreement with the chair or co-chairs. Members will typically serve a three-year term, with the possibility of renewal for a second term. The maximum term a member can serve is six years.
- 4.3. Membership of the committee will comprise individuals from across the research sector, selected according to their quality, commitment and expertise. Membership will be selected through a transparent process with attention placed on diversity, including but not limited to discipline, geography, expertise, and career stage.
- 4.4. The committee has a strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion principles.
- 4.5. All members must declare any actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest and act in line with UKRI's conflicts of interest policy.
- 4.6. All members must uphold the seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

5. Meetings and attendance

- 5.1. The committee will meet a minimum of four times a year. Ad hoc meetings may be called by a chair.
- 5.2. Observers and guests can be invited to attend meetings, or for specific agenda items, at the discretion of a chair.

Quoracy

- 5.3. The quorum for a committee meeting is at least two thirds the number of its members, one of whom must be a chair or an appointed deputy. Members can be deemed to be in attendance via live tele or video conferencing as appropriate. Attendance at meetings cannot be delegated.
- 5.4. If a meeting is not quorate, its proceedings will not have any effect and the meeting will be rescheduled.

Reporting

- 5.5. The committee reports directly to the UKRI Chief Executive on its overall strategy and workplan. The chair or co-chairs provide an annual update to the UKRI Chief Executive on delivery against its workplan.
- 5.6. Any disputes of the committee should be resolved through the appropriate escalation routes.

Committee secretariat

- 5.7. The committee will be supported by a secretariat provided by UKRI.
- 5.8. The secretariat is responsible for arranging meetings and ensuring accurate meeting minutes are taken. Draft meeting minutes will be shared in advance of the next meeting and approved by the committee at that meeting.
- 5.9. To reflect the commitment to accountability and transparency, meeting agendas and minutes will be shared with the committee and published on the website.

Review of the terms of reference

- 5.10. This document will be reviewed on an annual basis by the committee and any amendments signed off by the UKRI Chief Executive.
- 5.11. This document was last reviewed June 2024.

UK Committee on Research Integrity: Code of Conduct

1. Background and definitions

- 1.1. The UK Committee on Research Integrity is a new type of entity, hosted by UKRI but free-standing from UKRI's internal governance structures. In creating the UK CORI code of conduct for committee members, best practice has been drawn from the UKRI Code of Conduct (for employees)¹, the Cabinet Office Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies² and the Nolan Principles.
- 1.2. The term 'member' refers to an appointed member of the committee, including the chair(s), unless a section specifies different roles or responsibilities.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. While representing the committee, all members' behaviour and actions are expected to be governed by the principles set out in this Code of Conduct. All members have a responsibility to ensure that they are familiar with, and adhere to, all the relevant provisions of the code.

3. Key principles of public life

- 3.1. The key principles upon which this code of conduct is based are the Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles). These are:

Selflessness

- 3.2. Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

- 3.3. Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

- 3.4. Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

¹ <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UKRI-081020-CodeOfConduct.pdf>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-conduct-for-board-members-of-public-bodies/code-of-conduct-for-board-members-of-public-bodies-june-2019>

- 3.5. Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

- 3.6. Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

- 3.7. Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

- 3.8. Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.
- 3.9. These principles should inform the actions and decisions of the members of the committee.

4. Responsibilities as a committee member

- 4.1. Members should play a full and active role in the work of the UK Committee on Research Integrity. All members should fulfil their duties and responsibilities responsibly and, at all times, act in good faith and in the best interests of the committee.
- 4.2. All members should promote an inclusive and diverse culture in the UK Committee on Research Integrity and the actions of members should help create an environment where different perspectives and backgrounds are encouraged and valued.
- 4.3. Members must not harass, bully, act inappropriately towards or discriminate towards others. Such behaviour is not consistent with what is expected of committee members and will not be tolerated.
- 4.4. All members should respect the principle of collective decision-making and corporate responsibility. This means that, once the committee has made a decision, all members should support that decision.
- 4.5. Members must not use, or attempt to use, the opportunity of public service to promote personal interests or those of any connected person, firm, business or other organisation.

- 4.6. The committee chair or co-chairs have additional responsibilities in leading the UK Committee on Research Integrity and in ensuring that the principles covered in this code of conduct for committee members are upheld.

5. General conduct

Health and Safety

- 5.1. Members of the UK Committee on Research Integrity have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and a responsibility for the health and safety of others who may be affected by their activities.

Contact with the media

- 5.2. Enquiries from the media related to activities of the UK Committee on Research Integrity should ordinarily be forwarded to the secretariat team as part of best practice.

Environmental sustainability

- 5.3. The UK Committee on Research Integrity should give due regard to environmental issues and carbon footprint in all of its operations. This includes minimising waste, reusing and recycling where possible and considering the carbon footprint of travel and consumables.

Allowances

- 5.4. All members must adhere to the rules set by UKRI regarding remuneration, allowances and expenses. It is members' own responsibility to ensure compliance with all relevant HM Revenue and Customs' requirements concerning payments, including expenses.

Gifts and hospitality

- 5.5. Members must not accept any gifts or hospitality which might, or might reasonably appear to, compromise their personal judgement or integrity, or place them under an improper obligation.
- 5.6. Members must never canvass or seek gifts or hospitality.
- 5.7. Members must comply with the UKRI Gifts and Hospitality Policy³. As a general rule, gifts and hospitality should be declined. Anything that is accepted should be declared to the committee secretariat who will ensure that, where a gift or hospitality is accepted, this is recorded in a public register in line with the rules set by UKRI.

³ <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/UKRI-050424-20240327-GH-policy.pdf>

- 5.8. Members are responsible for their own decisions on the acceptance of gifts or hospitality and for ensuring that any gifts or hospitality accepted can stand up to public scrutiny and do not bring their position on the committee and the committee itself into disrepute.

6. Communication sensitivities

- 6.1. [The Freedom of Information Act 2000 \(FOI\)](#)⁴ grants a public right of access to information. The UK Committee on Research Integrity is hosted by UKRI, which is subject to the [Freedom of Information Act 2000 \(FOI\)](#)⁵.
- 6.2. At times when the UK and/or the devolved nations are in a pre-election period (previously known as 'purdah') all members should discuss with the secretariat of the UK Committee on Research Integrity before publishing any communications externally. A pre-election period is the period of time immediately before elections or referendums when specific restrictions on communications activity are in place. The term 'heightened sensitivity' is also used.

7. Openness and accountability

- 7.1. The UK Committee on Research Integrity should consider how best to make information available to the public, particularly through the web, and work with other bodies as appropriate to place relevant information in the public domain.
- 7.2. The committee should aim to consult across the sector on a wide range of issues by means of questionnaires, public meetings and other forms of consultation, proportionate to its size and resources.

8. Communication of decisions

- 8.1. Only a chair, members, or the secretariat authorised to act on their behalf, may communicate decisions taken by the committee. In reporting committee business, special care should be taken to keep confidential any part played in discussion by individual members and to maintain the convention that any decision is the collective responsibility of the whole committee. All committee discussions should therefore be treated in confidence.
- 8.2. Strategy and spokespersons for wider communication of committee decisions – for example to the media – will normally be agreed during the meeting.

9. Social media

- 9.1. Social media is a public forum and the same considerations, including the provisions of this Code, apply as would to speaking in public or writing

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents>

⁵ <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/contact-us/freedom-of-information-request/>

something for publication, either officially or in a personal capacity. When engaging with social media, members should respect confidentiality, financial, legal, and personal information.

- 9.2. Where any personal social media accounts belonging to committee members reference or link to their committee roles, care should be taken to ensure that it is clear in what capacity the member is acting. Members should adhere to the guidance issued on personal use of social media in the UKRI Code of Conduct ⁶.

10. Raising concerns

- 10.1. All members of the UK Committee on Research Integrity should ensure that the committee has an open, transparent, and safe environment where members feel able to speak up and raise concerns, and complaints procedures are clearly communicated.
- 10.2. If any member has a concern about a possible breach of this Code, a concern that themselves or a member of the secretariat staff are being asked to act in contravention of their own code of conduct⁶, or a concern about misconduct or wrongdoing in any other areas, then all members have a responsibility to raise that internally with a chair of the UK Committee on Research Integrity or the UKRI Chief Executive Officer.

⁶ <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UKRI-081020-CodeOfConduct.pdf>