

# Research Councils' Management of UK Research Integrity

## Research Councils UK Context

**Glyn Davies**  
**Chair, RCUK Good Research Conduct Group**

(Director, International Affairs, ESRC and formerly Deputy Chief Executive)

www.rcuk.ac.uk



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# What are the Research Councils UK



---

---

---

---

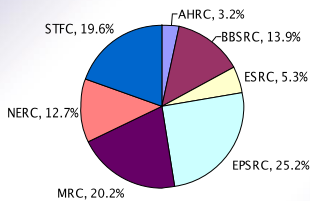
---

---

---

---

# We Spend £3 Billion Sterling



**Total budget:**  
08/09 £3.11 billion  
09/10 £3.24 billion  
10/11 £3.39 billion



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Researchers We Support

- Some 8,000 staff directly employed (including technical and support)
- Over 30,000 funded in Universities and other Research Organisations (ROs)
- Up to 20,000 PhD Students
- All “Sciences” from Arts & Humanities to Astro-Physics



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Developments in Research Conduct and Integrity in the Last Decade

- DGRC Guidance 1998
- MRC Policies Survey 2004
- CSA / COST Universal Ethical Code for Scientists 2005
- UK Research Integrity Panel in Health and Bio-Medical Sciences 2005
- RCUK Compliance Surveys 2006 & 2007



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Some Key Issues in the UK

- Many different codes and approaches
- No overall policy or supervisory responsibility
- No great awareness of major problems
- No Schön, Hwang or Sudbø



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### **RCUK Compliance Annual Surveys 2006 and 2007**

This raised issues of:

- Can information be passed from one employer to another
- Can information be passed to external agencies
- Do appointment references cover any issues of research mis-performance
- What constitutes misconduct or poor performance



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### **Consultation with Wider Bodies**

- Research Integrity Panel in Bio-Medical Sciences
- Universities UK
- Academies (Royal Society and British Academy)
- University Funding Bodies
- AMRC and the Wellcome Trust
- The Department of Health



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### **Need for A Consistent Code of Conduct**

- Not Just PFF: Plagiarism, Fabrication and Falsification
- Good Management to Avoid Poor Performance and Misconduct
- Misrepresentation: Data, Interests, Authorship
- Duty of Care: Risk, Confidentiality, Peer Review, the Environment, Subjects
- Data Preservation and Access



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Issues in Misrepresentation

- Misrepresentation of data: suppression of findings or data, or flawed interpretation of data
- Undisclosed duplication of publication
- Failure to declare interests of either the researcher or the funders of the research
- Misrepresentation of qualifications and/or experience,
- Inappropriate claims to authorship / attribution of work, or the denial of the same to others



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Good Management

- Starts with Policies, Training and Mentoring
- Stewardship Responsibilities of Heads of Department and Labs
- Positive Reporting Upwards and Annual Review of Continuous Improvement
- Research Governance Systems



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## But Can Single Employers Manage Alone?

- Is the UK System Too Reliant on “Gentleman and Ladies” (The Rules of the Club)
- Very limited data available: Is low level of reported occurrence in UK credible?
- No standard reporting or oversight by a Research Integrity body
- When People Move?



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Data Issues

- Preservation of relevant primary data and research evidence
- Accessibility to others for reasonable periods after the completion of the research.
- Shared responsibility between researcher and the research organisation
- But individual researchers should always ensure that primary material is available to be checked
- Data should normally be preserved for not less than 10 years, and for some projects up to 20 years,
- Permanently within a national collection, or as required by the funder's data policy.



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Duty of Care

- Breaches of confidentiality
- Taking all reasonable care to ensure that the risks and dangers are known
- Ensuring appropriate informed consent, obtained explicitly and transparently
- Observing ethical requirements of care for animal subjects and the environment
- Avoiding improper conduct in peer review
- Ensuring proper representation of material, and disclosure of clearly limited competence



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Other Key questions

- Relationship to UK RIO / National Advisory Body
- Procedures for Good Management (Not just investigating failures)
- Differentiating Levels of Poor Performance and Misconduct



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Initial response to consultation

- Only closed 24 October 2008
- Over 120 responses
- Thoughtful and detailed responses
- Still being reviewed – can only give an initial indication



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## On the Code of Conduct

From sample of responses so far, Over 80% support but ~

- More work needs to be done on the preservation of data, periods for data retention, etc.
- Issues re: interpretation (flawed or disputed) vs. improper data
- Clarification about whether code should apply to undergraduate work
- More definition in areas such as conflict of interest
- Need to distinguish statutory duties and liabilities
- Need to distinguish between unacceptable conduct and poor performance



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Management and investigation procedures

Majority support (little opposition) but key issues on:

- Distinction between misconduct and that below acceptable professional standards
- Procedures should not be overly complicated
- An advisory code on sanctions welcomed
- Priority attached to training and development needs: some central role and resources supported
- Query over central reporting of proven cases, but also support for this



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## A national advisory body?

Possibly half supportive, third doubtful.

- Should primarily be advisory: best practice, training and development, national standards
- Advantage of providing one national benchmark, if that were accepted as desirable
- Concern and confusion about how this would relate to UK RIO (What is this existing role?)
- Relation to the NHS and other sector organisations



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## A national advisory body?

- Could collate appropriate evidence and research
- Provide training resources and materials
- Promote stronger management approaches
- Should **not** be regulatory or take responsibilities from employers
- Should **not** have an investigatory role
- However might be able to advise and assist on investigations in smaller organisations



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Next steps?

- Analyse and review all responses
- Discuss responses with key stakeholders
- Can we build on UK RIO?
- Move from being overly dominated by bio-medical science issues, BMS prescriptive procedures
- Move emphasis to good conduct not just misconduct
- Ensure strong leadership and management
- Build a coalition to take this forward



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## But Be Aware!

- Concerns that bureaucracy leads to cover-up not exposure
- Also leads to avoiding problems not addressing them
- Research organisations must have lead responsibility
- Room for a national framework but it must be plausible and effective



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## There is a Real Debate

- However it is positive and addressing the issues
- Awareness of issues has increased enormously
- Our systems are being strengthened
- There will be positive moves in the coming year
- All key research funders are essentially signed up to moving forward



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Contacts

[glyn.davies@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:glyn.davies@esrc.ac.uk)

[ben.aubrey@rcuk.ac.uk](mailto:ben.aubrey@rcuk.ac.uk)



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---