Research Integrity: the perspectives of the Universities

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Where should research integrity reside within University structures?

- ☐ Academic departments or faculties?
- ☐ Graduate schools?
- ☐ University research offices?
- ☐ Research Ethics committees?
- ☐ A separate research integrity office?

Universities and Research Integrity

- ☐ Who investigates misconduct?
  - ■ Current situation in Limerick
    - ☐ Fabrication / falsification / plagiarism to be investigated by faculty Deans.
    - ☐ Dean to initiate inquiry confidentially, with findings to be reported within 120 days
    - ☐ Findings to be notified to funding agency if necessary
    - ☐ If misconduct found, then sanctions to be taken via HR department

Views on current procedures

- Dean positions rotate on 3-year basis; Deans are likely to lack experience even to inititiate investigations.
- Investigations are likely to rely on goodwill of experimenters to provide information and data.
- Any serious misconduct would require a disciplinary hearing; likely to be contentious and prone to legal challenge.

Issues for University investigations

- How to establish experience in investigations within the University system?
- Protecting the innocent: how to maintain a balance and avoid threat to academics?
- Levels of response: HR process is serious and contentious. Are there other options?

How to improve investigation procedures.

- Information sharing and guidance on research integrity procedures and policies.
- Access to expertise for investigations.
- Inclusion of academic peers in the process rather than it being driven by management: a sense of ownership.

Research data storage and management

- There is much variation in practice between research areas and disciplines.
- A common code of practice is needed to ensure standard procedures such as data backup and long term storage.
- Data storage has to conform to good ethical practice on volunteer or patient anonymity, and conform to data protection legislation.

Research teams

- Research now commonly involves large research teams, interdisciplinary research and international collaboration.
- Who takes responsibility for ensuring accountability?
  - The PI?
  - The Department head?
  - Academic Deans or senior management?
  - The "lead" researcher in an international collaboration?

Research Supervision

- Many European nations are committed to an expansion in research postgraduate numbers. (Ireland is to double Ph.D. graduates by 2013)
- Do current supervision systems integrate research integrity?
- Are current procedures for investigation appropriate to Masters / Ph.D. researchers who are often not employees?
- Do postgraduate examination systems allow detection of plagiarism / fraud?

Integrating good research practice into teaching: Undergraduate and Masters level teaching.

- ☐ Already strong emphasis on plagiarism detection and prevention in coursework assessment.
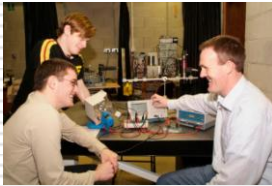- ☐ Good opportunity to lay the foundations for integrity in research practice.

Integrating good research practice into teaching: postgraduate research.

- ☐ Research integrity should be integral to research supervision and mentoring.
- ☐ Research mentoring at post-doctoral level should emphasise integrity and good research practice

Conclusions

- ☐ Many Universities are evolving policy to deal with research malpractice and to ensure high levels of research integrity.
- ☐ Policy development needs to be guided by international best practice.
- ☐ University policies need to be compatible and consistent.
- ☐ Universities have a critical role in instilling the values of research integrity in young researchers.

Thank You