Communication and Dialogue in RI: The Irish Experience

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R&I in Ireland

- Publicly-funded research activity in Ireland is concentrated within the 25 Higher Education Institutes and two specialist state research performing organisations (Agriculture and Marine Research)

- Rapid increase in R&I activity since ~2000

- Six main funding agencies

- EU Innovation Scoreboard 2017 classifies Ireland as a Strong Innovator, leading in:
  - Innovation in SMEs
  - Employment impacts of innovation

- Accords with government policy to invest in research for economic and societal benefit
  - Increased focus on supporting research activities in industry – often collaborative with higher education

Starting a Dialogue About Research Integrity

- 2010: Royal Irish Academy publication "Ensuring Integrity in Irish Research" – outcome of a policy workshop

- 2011: IUA established a working group of funders, research performing organisations (RPOs) and stakeholders
  - Led by Professor Ray O'Neill, Maynooth University

- 2014: Launched the "National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland" in June 2014
  - Currently being revised in line with European Code 2017

http://www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/National-Policy-Statement-on-Ensuring-Research-Integrity-in-Ireland-2014.pdf

National Research Integrity Forum

Established June 2015

- Chaired by Professor Anita Maguire, University College Cork

- Deputy Chair Dr. Jennifer Brennan, Technological Higher Education Association

- Funders, research performers and stakeholder organisations

- Voluntary body

December 2015

- Tasked with responsibility for research integrity in Irish Government R&I strategy 'Innovation 2020'

- Report annually to Innovation 2020 Action Group

INNOVATION 2020

EXCELLENCE TALENT IMPACT

Ireland's strategy for research and development, science and technology

https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Innovation-2020-Progress-Reports.html

Main Responsibilities

1. Supporting the implementation of research integrity policies and processes in a harmonised manner across the research performers;

2. Supporting national research funders in implementing harmonised research integrity statements in grant conditions and associated audit processes;

3. Agreeing a process and format for the public dissemination of the outcome of research integrity investigations

Main Responsibilities

4. Supporting the development and roll-out of research integrity training programmes for staff and students in the research performers;

5. Monitoring international developments and policy in the area of research integrity, and making appropriate recommendations for adjustments in research integrity policy and practice in Ireland;

6. Communicating the importance of research integrity to the Irish research community and to the general public.

The Forum is not involved in investigations – these are the responsibility of the RPOs

Early Communication Challenges

- Different expectations & levels of engagement around the table

- Making clear that the Forum is only for oversight and guidance – the RPOs are responsible and autonomous

- Lack of clarity around the interface between research ethics & research integrity

- Different ideas about what the role of Research Integrity Officer is and what type of person should take it on *i.e.* academic or management staff

- Making it clear that the Forum is not a place to discuss individual cases of misconduct

Solutions

- Devising and publishing clear Terms of Reference for the Forum, i.e., what we "do" and "don't do"

- Establishing sub-groups:

  1. Implementation Sub-Group (RPOs only) – a good place for an open discussion between RPOs and agreement on issues before discussion at the RI Forum. RPOs who had advanced their RI procedures shared their knowledge with all RPOs. Continuous process – lessons learned from cases are feeding back into the Forum's knowledge. This group's work is paused for now.

  2. Funders Sub-Group – harmonising RI clauses in funders T&Cs and call documents. This group has been less effective – differences of opinion among funders about the most suitable approach

Solutions

- The Forum has worked through a series of Position Papers:

    1. Research Ethics & Research Integrity Overlap
    2. Research Integrity Officer Role and Reporting Structure
    3. RI Statistics format for publication
    4. Guidelines for the Investigation of Research Misconduct

- Many of the RPOs have joined the UK Research Integrity Office

Current Challenges

- Ongoing debate on the "carrot vs. stick" approach to creating a culture of RRI in Ireland.
    - e.g. "carrot" = funders making RI training mandatory for all awardees and including a mandatory section on RI in proposals.
    - e.g. "stick" = funders auditing research projects to identify breaches of integrity

- Ensuring that the stakeholder representatives at the Forum are linked in with the leadership of their organisations

- Companies are important research partners – how to ensure that RI is to the fore in these collaborations, or when technology developed by RPOs is used by companies?

Awareness-Raising

- The Forum hosted its inaugural national event on 3rd February 2017

- Fully booked (130 attendees)

- Keynote Speakers:
  - Prof. Nick Steneck, University of Michigan
  - James Parry, UK Research Integrity Office

- Event on RI and Open Research took place on 8th March 2019

http://www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/National-Forum-on-Research-Integrity-Seminar-Report-Feb-2017-web-version.pdf

Training

- The Forum has put in place a minimum level of research integrity training (online provider) for research performers

- Three year pilot national shared service, starting January 2018

- Provides access for 15,000 users (>60% of those eligible)

- Each research performer is allocated a number of user access tokens

- The cost is underwritten by the research funders, with a contribution from the RPO's representative bodies

- Now all research performers have access to a minimum, high-quality level of training – some are rolling it out in a blended format with in-person workshops

Training events provide a great opportunity for dialogue with the research community

Dialogue

- Some universities have Research Integrity Champions in each faculty

- RI as a standing item on faculty research committees

- Many Research Integrity Officers have a role in dialogue with researchers

National Reporting

In 2016, the Forum committed to publish an consolidated annual national report of research misconduct investigations, to contain:

- The number of research misconduct investigations concluded in the calendar year;
- The number of said research misconduct investigations where the allegations were upheld;
- An overview of the types of misconduct (based on the definitions in the National Policy Statement).

The report for 2016 was published in February 2019 – data was gathered in 2018.

Challenging to implement. Concerns about the potential for release of the details of those investigated but acquitted to the media, particularly through Freedom of Information requests.

Communication Challenges

There are many challenges regarding informing external stakeholders about investigations:

- Right to confidentiality of the accused and the accuser and their right to be kept informed during the process – how much should be shared?

- When is the right time to inform funders, journals?

- Should you inform their research collaborators?

- When hiring new staff, should you check to see if that person has been investigated in the past? Would their previous employers be able to tell you?

Thank You!

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http://www.iua.ie/research-innovation/research-integrity/