

RCUK Research Integrity

Glyn Davies

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

Director, International Affairs, ESRC

www.rcuk.ac.uk



Who Has Responsibility?

Everyone!

- Individual Researcher
- Research Team Leader
- Lab Manager / Departmental Head
- Director / Vice-Chancellor
- Funding Agency Programme Manager
- Funding Agency Chief Executive



RCUK Risk Management

- Issue of Codes 1998-2004
- Compliance of Policies Survey (MRC) 2004
- Risk Management Audit 2005
- Reliance on Self-Reporting and Management by Exception
- Advised as a Major Exposure if a Major Default Case Arose (Moderate Likelihood, High Impact)

RCUK Compliance Surveys 2006 and 2007

- Undertaken to gain assurance that policies were in place
- Also that policies were communicated and training in place
- That policies were complied with
- That cases were reported to Research Councils

Management and Reporting

- Evidence that HEIs and ROs also had systems in place for supervision and management of research projects so that poor research conduct was avoided or minimised
- And clear policies for reporting and whistle-blowing if bad practice was suspected

Key Issues from Compliance Surveys

- Queries over reporting of issues where RC grants not involved (even though individual may be involved in other RC grants)
- Knowledge of prior histories
- Reporting issues to other employers
- Issues suspended by resignation and not concluded



Data Protection and Public Protection

- When is poor conduct such that it merits reporting for public protection reasons
- Who needs to know and should know
- Who needs to know about sanctions and penalties

Need for an RCUK Standard Code

- Easier said than done
- Life sciences, engineering, social sciences / humanities
- However we have begun to try to develop this
- Also addresses “poor research practice” (QRP)
- Proto-draft in papers: welcome comments

Concerns about Adequacy of Current System

- When Serious “Prima Facie” Cases exist they should be pursued through to completion
- When sufficiently serious cases are found they should be known to other employers
- Cases should not be avoided through resignation or sweeping under carpet

Where Action May Be Needed

- More common agreement about what constitutes serious, less serious and more serious matters
- Common code on levels of seriousness
- Where misdemeanour is found proved and sanctions imposed should these not be known beyond the employer
- Where disciplinary processes are not completed how do we avoid escape by procrastination or change of employer

What Do We Do Next?

- Consider the case for a national framework to provide guidance and commonality across institutions
- Do not over-bureaucratise and leave as much with HEIs / ROs as possible
- But ensure a common information system about serious cases

Some Possible Solutions

- Re-inforce the role of something like the UK Research Integrity Panel to cover all research?
- Strengthen the role of the Research Integrity Office under the Panel?
- Ensure that all “prima facie” serious cases are reported to a national body

Next Steps

Subject to soundings at this conference should there be further consultation about:

- What is accepted as different levels of unacceptable conduct?
- Does the national governance framework need re-inforcing?
- Should serious cases be flagged and supervised beyond the employer?

Key Questions

- How do we ensure our system is robust?
- What systems do we need to minimise and eradicate poor research conduct
- How do we minimise the risk to research from one bad apple?
- How do we ensure that poor habits are not grown?
- How do we demonstrate to the public that we can manage our own house?