



**UK Research
and Innovation**

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Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Chair of the Science and Technology Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

14 July 2021

Re: Research integrity

Dear Greg,

Please find below an update on UKRI's research integrity activities, in particular on establishing a committee on research integrity, further to my predecessor's letter to you on this issue last year.

As you will be aware, the previous House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee undertook an inquiry into research integrity. The committee's 2018 report on this issue recommended that the Government ask UKRI to establish a new national committee on research integrity to have formal responsibility for promoting research integrity, to publish an annual report on the state of research integrity in the UK, to engage with industry, and to independently verify whether a research institution had followed appropriate processes to investigate misconduct.

Progress in setting up the committee has unavoidably been affected by the impact of the global pandemic on the research sector and UKRI's response to that. Nevertheless, with senior strategic guidance, support and leadership from the interim chair, Dr Helen Munn OBE, we have engaged extensively across the research system, including with Universities UK, the other signatories to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, other funders, representatives of research organisations, national academies, the Government office for Science, early career researchers and the UK Research Integrity Office, to develop a proposal for the research integrity committee. This proposal has now been approved by the UKRI Board.

We are confident that the approved proposal will lead to a committee that has the greatest positive effect on the integrity of UK research.

The committee will:

- Promote research integrity across the UK and internationally
- Create opportunities for discussion, build consensus and develop co-ownership of integrity issues across the sector
- Build and communicate the evidence base around UK research integrity
- Identify how systemic pressures affect research integrity, and harness opportunities for change and improvement



- Work with partners to enhance progress through the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, and advise on how oversight of UK research integrity should operate over the long term

UKRI will establish and host the committee for three years. An early priority will be, in collaboration with the sector and with key organisations, to develop a longer-term strategy for co-ownership of the committee. This co-owned body would sit within an evolved wider organisational landscape supporting research integrity in the UK, influenced by, for example, the Government's People and Culture Strategy and Bureaucracy Review.

During its time with UKRI, the committee will not independently verify whether a research institution had followed appropriate processes to investigate misconduct. If this role were pursued later, a body would be needed with appropriate legal powers and governance arrangements. However, we will continue to bolster UKRI's assurance procedures to check that those we fund comply with our expectations on research integrity, including on misconduct investigations, and we will revise our policies where necessary to ensure that those expectations are appropriate and clearly expressed.

The next steps in setting up the new committee are to recruit its chair and members, and to consult on its priorities. Recruitment will be open and transparent, and will include the use of a senior talent acquisition agency to reach the widest and most diverse range of potential candidates possible. The committee will have one independent chair and at least six but no more than 10 members. The UKRI Chief Executive will confirm the appointment of the chair, however the interview panel will include representatives from other organisations so that we build trust in and support for the committee from its inception. We expect the recruitment and consultation to take place during Autumn 2021, and the first committee meeting to be in early 2022.

The new committee on research integrity will be a major step forward, providing the UK research community with the leadership to address long-standing systemic pressures that can undermine research integrity. Alongside it, UKRI will continue to promote research integrity in the research it supports and in the wider system.

If the Select Committee require any further information on our work in this space, please do not hesitate to let me know. We would be happy to come and talk to the committee about this if committee members would find this useful.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ottoline Leyser', written in a cursive style.

Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser

Chief Executive, UK Research and Innovation