

WHAT CAN INSTITUTIONS DO TO MAKE RESEARCH INTEGRITY EDUCATION A CORE RESPONSIBILITY? POLICY GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

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BACKGROUND

Research integrity (RI) is crucial for producing research of high quality. It is increasingly acknowledged that research institutions have a responsibility to support researchers in engaging in responsible practices. One crucial way that institutions can foster RI is by providing RI education and training. While there is increasing emphasis on providing

RI education by institutions globally, existing RI training programs are fragmented and there is a lack of guidance available on how to develop an institutional RI education and training policy. Such guidance is necessary to ensure that institutional RI education and training policies are coherent, comprehensive and sound.

AIM

In this study, we aimed to co-create institutional RI education and training guidelines together with various research stakeholders.

METHODS

We conducted four co-creation workshops with RI officers, policy makers, institutional leaders and researchers – from various parts of Europe – online. Each workshop was held with 4-5 participants and lasted 3-3.5 hours. In the first set of workshops, we asked participants to generate ideas about what should be included in RI education and training guidelines targeted at 1) pre-doctorate students (e.g. PhD and master students), 2) post-doctorate researchers (ranging from postdocs to full professors), and 3) RI personnel and teachers. After the first two workshops, we used inductive thematic analysis

of the visual outputs generated by participants and the workshop transcripts to interpret the data and merge insights from the two workshops. We presented a first version of the guidelines to the participants in the second set of workshops and asked them to refine the guidelines as well as to provide us with some considerations that are important for the implementation of the guidelines. We used deductive thematic analysis – using themes generated in the earlier workshops – to analyze the data from the second set of workshops, and create a second version of the RI education and training guidelines.

RESULTS

Our participants highlighted the importance of integrating RI training as a mandatory part of the research curriculum as early as possible – already at the bachelor level. For PhD students, they agreed that a combination of training formats would be suitable to provide RI training that addresses students' daily practice sufficiently, including standalone courses on RI basics, specialized RI courses (e.g. on data management), as well as informal meetings to discuss RI. Participants also agreed that mandatory RI training was necessary for post-doctorate researchers starting new positions across

seniority levels. However, they acknowledged the difficulty in motivating senior researchers to undergo RI training. Although not all participants agreed that the word 'training' is appropriate for this target group, they all stressed that providing intradepartmental meeting moments between personnel from various parts of the institution would be helpful for RI staff to discuss their roles and responsibilities regarding RI. Participants acknowledged that such a comprehensive education policy would require a strong institutional commitment to RI.

CONCLUSIONS

Together with various research stakeholders, we co-created three institutional guidelines on RI education and training of 1) pre-doctorate students, 2) post-doctorate researchers, and 3) RI personnel and teachers. These guidelines combined provide a comprehensive list of issues that institutions can address when developing RI education and training policies.

Institutions that already provide some RI training can use the guidelines to further develop and refine their policies on RI education, while those without existing training programs can use the guidelines to implement RI education over time. Further research might be required to help institutions prioritize which recommendations in the guidelines to begin with.