

# Vitae London Hub

**Research Integrity: How best to support ECRs within HEI training programmes**

***‘Virtues or skills:  
What has researcher development got to do with research integrity?’***

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**Can you train researchers in 'research integrity'?**

## RDF B1.3 Integrity

“Integrity is an aspect of *personal* character”

- Decision making and judgement
- Consistency, rather than arbitrariness
- Fundamental to positive interpersonal relationships

**Very difficult to ‘teach’ or ‘train’!**

**Does training in research integrity work?**

# ***'training'* is a *secondary* mechanism**

*Primary* mechanisms are

**personal factors**

**culture**

**leadership**

# The 'there is no problem' problem

- Researchers think that they are ethical, understand the issues
- Researchers think that they have integrity
- How do you address problems not *perceived* to be there?

# The 'ethical regulation is managerial' problem

- Procedural approaches lead to “box-ticking” *attitudes*
- Ethics review *process* is not perceived as *ethically-meaningful* by many researchers, particularly outside bio-medical sciences
- Researchers do not consider ethical issues relevant
  - “There are no risks in this project”
  - Do not think that ethical review raises the relevant ethical issues
- Ethical regulation perceived as threat to “academic freedom”

# The 'generic-specific' problem

- You can only get so far with *generic* training and development
- There are low limits to ***relevance***
- Beyond the basics, relevance for disciplines is key to success



*standards*

*regulations*

*policies*

**processes/procedures**

one-on-one guidance  
general guidance, documents  
RI and ethics training  
expertise-driven support

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**institutional ethics governance**

## The crux of the matter...

- Research integrity is a ‘hearts and minds’ issue
- Not about ‘skills’ but about *cultivation of virtues*
- Approached via compliance, will fail to be genuine change

Research integrity hinges on *balancing of interests* and is *inherently personal*, and yet underpins **academic standards** and the **public record of research**

# RDF domains, sub-domains

- C [Research governance & organisation]
- C1 [Professional conduct]
  
- **C1.2 Ethics principles and sustainability**
- **C1.5 Respect and confidentiality**
- **C1.6 Attribution and co-authorship**
- **C1.7 Appropriate practice**

## C1.2 Ethics principles and sustainability

*“Research ethics situates the pursuit of scientific or scholarly goals within a **broader frame of reference which includes human flourishing** as well as extending the boundaries of human knowledge or other applications to which such knowledge may be put... **the pursuit and application of knowledge is not an questioned good in itself.**”*

## C1.5 Respect and confidentiality

There are legal and ethical aspects to confidentiality

“The ethical duty to maintain confidentiality is rooted in the relationship between researcher and the researched, a relationship which is established on the basis of consent.”

Treating the researched as “persons” means a commitment of trust and, consequently, the researcher “taking something in confidence”.

## C1.6 Attribution and co-authorship

- Probably the most common problem area of research integrity, with applicability across *all disciplines*
- Lack of awareness by novice/junior researchers, where **conflict of interests** most likely to occur
- There are legitimate disciplinary differences (“commonly accepted practices”) but also abuses and lack of openness about standards

*“authorship attributed to those who did not contribute... or proper contributions that go uncredited, distort the research record and are... a form of deception.”*

## C1.7 Appropriate practice

- All about misconduct?

Data fabrication and falsification; plagiarism

- 'QRPs' → **this is the major area of concern**

- Researchers should:

- Familiarise themselves with expected standards
- Maintain vigilance of their own practice

**formal institutional ethical governance**

Researcher(s) 'awareness'

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researcher(s) attitudes

researcher(s) behaviour

customary assumptions

customary standards

customary practices