Developing research integrity for the long-term: the Concordat and beyond

UK Research Integrity Office - Annual Conference

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It is difficult to tell a short-sighted man how to get somewhere. Because you cannot say to him "*Look at that church tower ten miles away and go in that direction.*"

Ludwig Wittgenstein – *Culture & Value* 1e

Where are we trying to go?

Which route are we taking?

How will we know when we are getting there?

What sort of document is the Concordat? What is it for?

Concordat commitments

1: We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of rigour and
integrity in all aspects of research

2: **We are committed to ensuring that research is conducted according to
appropriate <u>ethical</u>, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and
<u>standards</u>**

3: **We are committed to supporting a research <u>environment</u> that is
underpinned by a <u>culture</u> of integrity and based on good governance,
best   practice and <u>support</u> for the <u>development</u> of researchers**

4: We are committed to using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal
with allegations of research misconduct should they arise

5: We are committed to working together to strengthen the integrity of
research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly

European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2010)

This Code of Conduct is not a body of law, but rather **a canon for self regulation**. It is a basic responsibility of the scientific community to formulate the principles and virtues of scientific and scholarly research, to define its criteria for proper research behaviour, and to set its own house in order in case scientific integrity is threatened.

cf: H2020 Model Grant Agreement:

"Beneficiaries must carry out the action... following the highest standards of research integrity." (For the standards of research integrity see the *European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*)

Which standards?

Cf: Godecharle et al (2013), Guidance on research integrity: no union in Europe. *The Lancet, 381* (9872), pp. 1097-1098

(clear) *policies*

(consistent) *regulations*

formal *standards*

formal guidance

'training' support

formal institutional practices

UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool

- Do your various policies on research integrity and related issues cross-reference each other?

- Do they contain consistent expectations and avoid contradicting each other?

- Do they fit in with student regulations? Are they consistent?

Learning from professional and corporate ethics

Ethical codification and policies

- Inspirational/aspirational   --   statements of ideals/standards

- Regulatory   --   rules to govern conduct/adjudicate

- Educational   --   support understanding of prescription

Evidence about *effectiveness* of codes is "unconvincing"   (Sims & Brinkmann 2003; Moore 2006)

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Farrell, B., Cobbin, D.M and Farrell, H. (2002) Codes of ethics. Their evolution, development and other controversies, *Journal of Management Development*, 21:2, pp.152-163.

Sims R.R. and Brinkmann, J. (2003) Enron ethics (or: culture matters more than codes)". *Journal of Business Ethics*, 45:3, pp. 243-256.

Moore, G. (2006) 'Managing ethics in higher education : implementing a code or embedding virtue ?' *Business ethics: a European review*., 15 (4), pp. 407-418

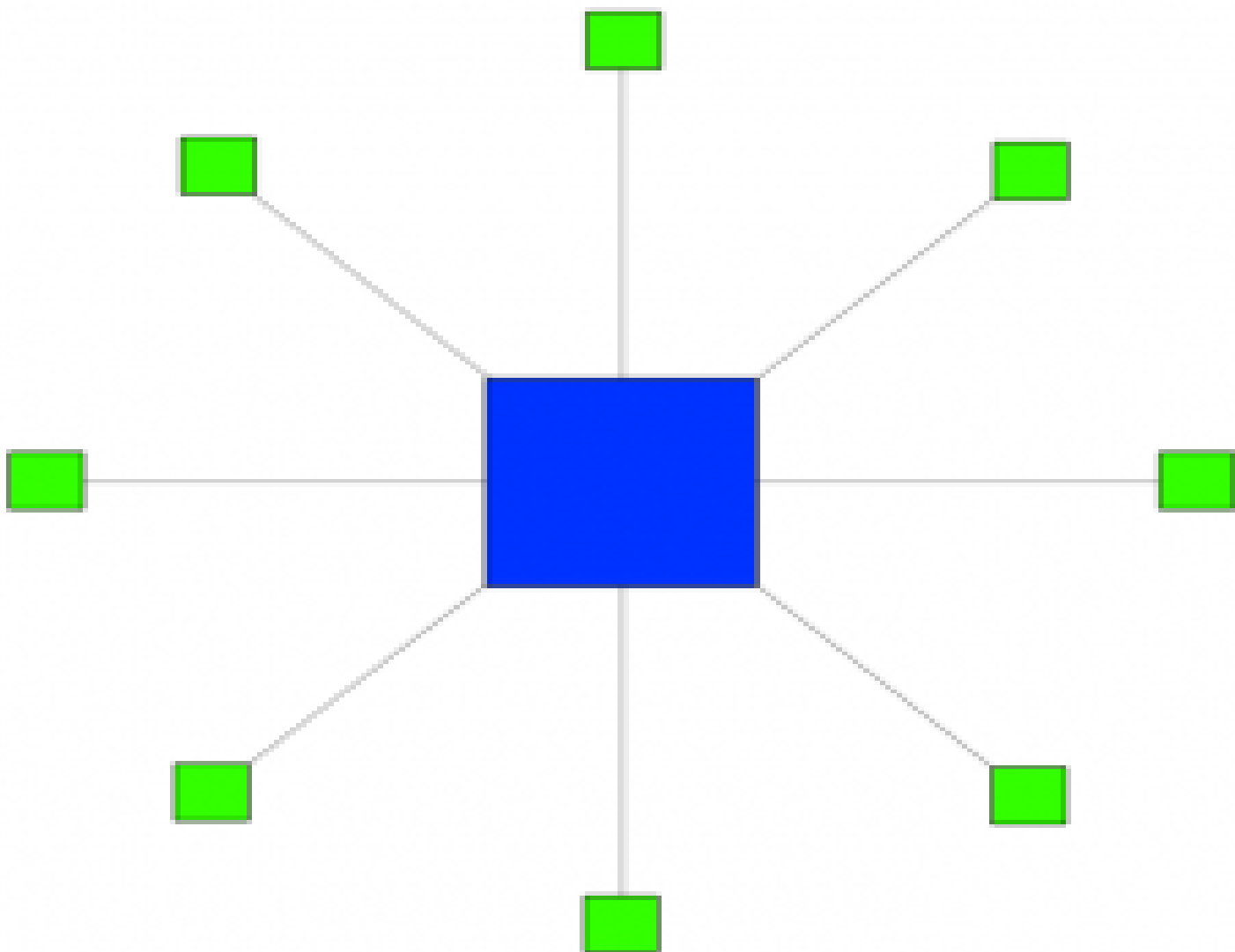# Learning from professional and corporate ethics

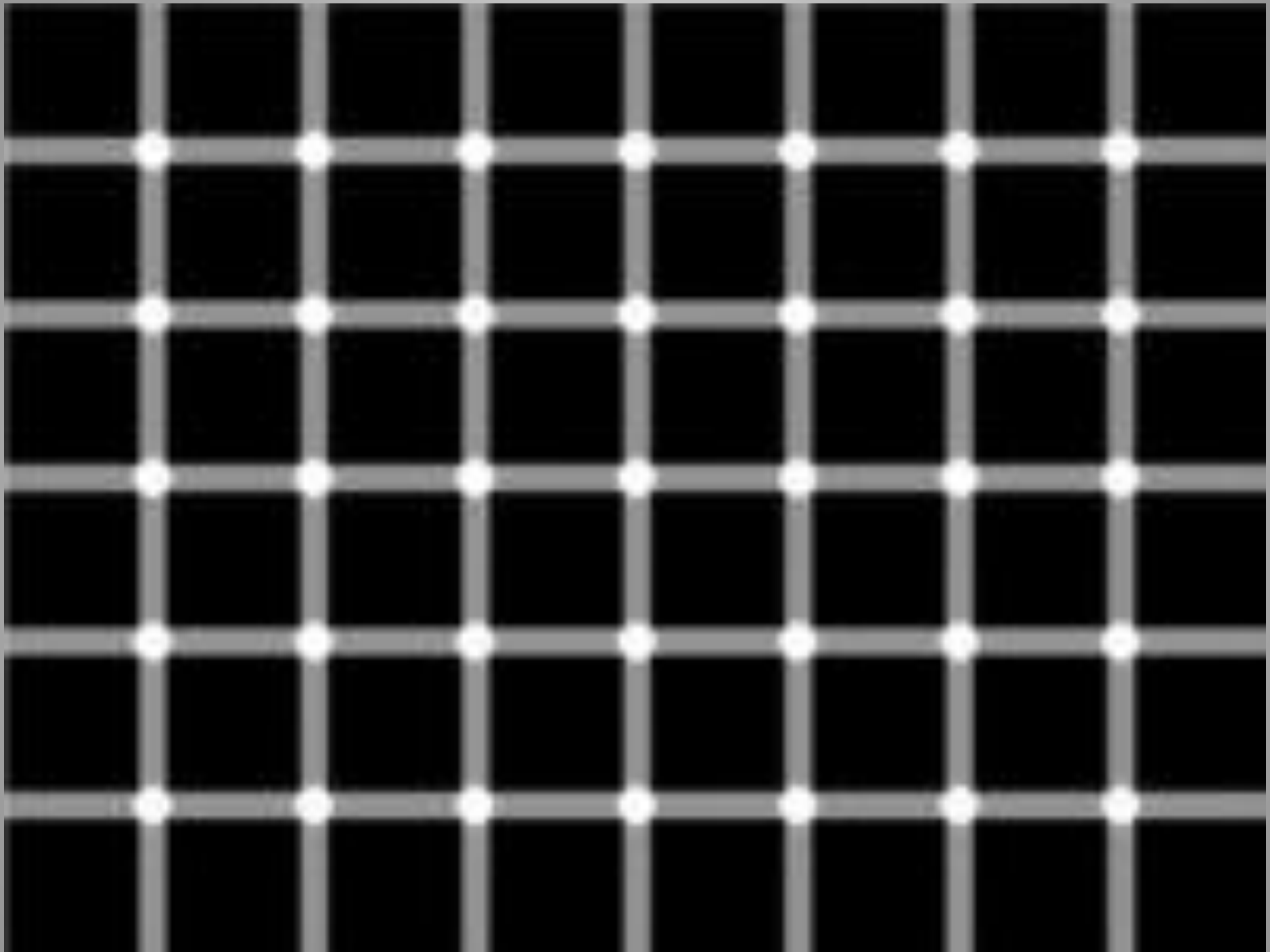- Codes of ethics/conduct are a *secondary* mechanism: <u>reinforcement</u>

- *Primary* mechanisms: **culture**

                                           leadership

Structural issues affecting effectiveness of integrity development

Subsidiarity

a larger and higher ranking body should not exercise functions which could be efficiently carried out by a smaller and lesser body; rather the former should support the latter by aiding it in the coordination of its activities with those of the greater community

Domenec Mele (2005) Exploring the Principle of Subsidiarity in Organisational Forms, *Journal of Business Ethics* 60: pp. 293–305

Research ethics review in HE

What works? What doesn't work?

Learning from 'research ethics review' in HE

- Procedural approach can lead to "box-ticking" *attitude*

- Ethics review *process* is not perceived as ***ethically-meaningful*** by many researchers, particularly outside bio-medical sciences

- RECs often report that researchers appear to have a poor grasp of ethical issues (as discerned from their REC applications)

- 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

The 'there is no problem' problem

- Researchers think that they _are_ ethical, understand the issues

- Researchers think that they _have_ integrity

- How to address problems not *perceived* to be there?
  - Ethics review relies on procedural 'rightness' as justification
  - Compliance rationale

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

- Compare: devolved or centralised criteria for ethical review

Elements to think about

- Central 'training' and support can only do the basics... that's all!

- Minimise reliance on compliance rationale

- *Engage* researchers' interest: expertise and relevance key

- Focus on the areas *researchers **care** about*

- Ethics and integrity is not about 'skills'

- If codes of ethics/conduct are a *secondary* mechanism…

  *… then 'training' is also *secondary* mechanism*

  … if not 'training', then what?

- *Primary* mechanisms: **culture**

  leadership

Singapore Statement on Research Integrity (2010)

Research Environments

Research institutions should create and sustain environments that ***encourage integrity*** through education, clear policies, and reasonable standards for advancement, while ***fostering*** **work environments** that **support** research integrity

(clear) *policies*

(consistent) *regulations*

formal *standards*

formal guidance

'training' support

formal institutional practices

tone from the top

formal institutional practices

Researcher(s) 'awareness'

researcher(s) attitudes   researcher(s) behaviour

customary assumptions

customary standards

customary practices

incentives

Montreal Statement on Research Integrity (2013)

"collaborations present special challenges":

- substantial differences in regulatory and legal systems
- organizational and funding structures
- research cultures
- approaches to training

Customary Practices and Assumptions:

Collaborating partners should **openly discuss** their **customary practices and assumptions** related to the research. Diversity of perspectives, expertise and methods, and differences in customary practices, standards and assumptions that could compromise the integrity of the research should be addressed openly.

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UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool

- How have you captured the interest of researchers in research integrity? Especially senior researchers?

- Engage senior researchers/managers as 'champions' to promote culture of research integrity amongst local research environment and to assist with implementation plan

- Incentivise engagement with research integrity through recognition in performance review, workforce/workload model planning and other relevant staff development processes

- Incentivise engagement with research integrity through implementation and dissemination of clear policies on authorship and intellectual property

- Presentations on the importance of research integrity by speakers who hold senior research or leadership roles at other institutions

- Highlighting of good practice in relation to research integrity and the benefits it can bring to researchers

- Do you encourage staff to support each other informally and share their perspectives and experiences?

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