



Core Procedure to investigate breaches of Research Integrity

Workshop summary report

14 & 23 July 2026



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Executive summary

This report summarises the key themes from two virtual workshops held on **Tuesday 14 July** and **Thursday 23 July 2026** to support the co-development of a Core Procedure for investigating breaches of research integrity. This is a sector-wide framework designed to help research organisations investigate potential breaches of research integrity in a fair, proportionate and consistent way. It seeks to promote greater alignment in investigative approaches across the sector while supporting the needs of both research-intensive organisations and those with more limited capacity or less established investigation processes.

The workshops brought together stakeholders from across the research ecosystem. The majority were based at large universities and some were from medium-sized institutions and small specialist or non-university research organisations. The attendees were primarily responsible for research governance and integrity at their organisations.

The strongest feedback from the two workshops focused on the need to simplify and clarify the procedural stages, reduce duplication at the early stages, and support effective early triaging, so concerns can be resolved at the appropriate level from the beginning. Participants also highlighted the importance of clearly defining roles and responsibilities internally, particularly where research integrity processes interact with Human Resources (HR), legal, disciplinary, academic misconduct or whistleblowing processes.

In addition, participants highlighted that the Core Procedure should be supported by plain, non-punitive language and a constructive tone that encourages individuals to raise concerns without causing fear or anxiety. Visual aids in the form of flowcharts alongside supporting documents such as templates, checklists, case studies, and role-specific guidance were also valued as support for those managing concerns around breaches of research integrity. Participants were also keen to ensure that there was sufficient wellbeing support for everyone involved in investigations.

The feedback and recommendations provided will be incorporated in the final version of the Core Procedure to ensure it is usable in practice.

About the Core Procedure

Research is conducted across a diverse range of organisations, from universities, the NHS, government bodies, charities and private companies to collaborative research partnerships. As a result, there is significant variation in how organisations assess and investigate concerns about research integrity. While some organisations have dedicated procedures and specialist expertise, others – particularly those that conduct research less frequently or with fewer resources – rely on broader governance, complaints or disciplinary processes. This variation can lead to inconsistency, uncertainty and differing expectations about how concerns should be handled.

In addition, research organisations often face challenges when responding to concerns about potential breaches of research integrity and there is a growing demand for practical support in this area. This was highlighted in [UKRIO's Barriers to Investigating and Reporting Research Misconduct report](#), which identified a lack of clarity among those involved on the relevant procedures and processes, limited confidence that these procedures will be followed, and insufficient organisational support for handling such concerns effectively.

To help address these challenges faced by organisations, a Core Procedure for investigating breaches of research integrity will act as a streamlined companion to [UKRIO's detailed procedure for investigating breaches of research integrity](#). Intended for use across the research sector as a practical framework to handle concerns in a fair, proportionate and consistent way, while remaining adaptable to different organisational contexts.

About the workshops

UKRIO organised two virtual workshops which were held on **Tuesday 14 July** and **Thursday 23 July 2026**. Representatives from research organisations, who manage investigations of breaches in research integrity were invited to contribute to the co-development of the Core Procedure. You can find workshop attendees at the end of this report.

In advance of the workshops, attendees received a pre-read document, which outlined key information to support their participation in the workshops. This included background context, the agenda, discussion questions, and the draft Core Procedure. Attendees took part in an open discussion, which was guided by a set of questions and themes outlined below, and shaped by ideas submitted by attendees during the registration process.

The open discussion, which followed Chatham House Rule, focused on three main areas:

1. **Your organisation's current practice** and views on benefits and potential challenges of standardisation.
2. **Reflections on the Core Procedure**, including feasibility or operationalisation and areas for further development/clarity/improvement.
3. **Additional support or guidance** that may be needed to support widespread adoption and implementation.

Participants reviewed and discussed key elements of the draft Core Procedure and shared insights from their own organisational experience. In total, 48 individuals from across 46 research organisations attended the two virtual workshops. 18 participants attended the first workshop, and 30 participants attended the second workshop.

The two virtual workshops were recorded and transcribed to ensure accurate documentation of participant contributions.

During the workshops, participants were also invited to share their feedback and reflections via an online Padlet discussion board.

This report summarises the **key themes that arose from discussions** at the two virtual workshops and the comments provided via the online Padlet discussion board. This feedback will be incorporated into the final version of the Core Procedure.

Key recommendations

Participants supported the idea of a clearer and more consistent procedure for investigating breaches of research integrity, but emphasised that it must be practical, proportionate and adaptable to organisational needs.

Across both workshops, participants consistently highlighted the need to:

- Produce a **short, accessible and user-friendly document** that can be used by anyone;
- **Clarify and streamline the procedural stages** to reduce duplication, notably stages 1 and 2;
- **Support early triaging**;
- Have roles and responsibilities **clearly defined within organisations**;
- Use **plain, non-punitive language** and a constructive tone to encourage individuals to raise concerns without causing fear and anxiety;
- **Use visual aids** (e.g. flowcharts) and provide practical tools, templates and guidance documents such as:
 - Checklists;
 - Anonymised case studies of different types of concerns and examples of how concerns have been managed in practice.
 - Scenario-based training;
 - Reporting forms;
 - Role specific guidance.
- **Provide practical training** for those involved in investigating concerns around breaches of research integrity;
- **Support organisations to build wellbeing support** when implementing the Core Procedure.

Thank you

We would like to thank all the workshop participants for generously contributing their time, insights, and perspectives. Their input has been essential in the co-development of the Core Procedure, helping to ensure that it is a practical and supportive framework for those involved in investigating breaches of research integrity.

1. Current practice and challenges of standardisation

Current practice

Participants described a wide range of approaches to handling research integrity concerns, reflecting differences in organisational size, governance arrangements and levels of research activity. While many organisations have procedures based on or informed by [UKRIO's detailed template procedure for investigating breaches of research integrity](#), a number are currently reviewing, updating or developing procedures to better reflect their current practice and organisational needs.

A common feature of current practice was the use of central reporting routes, often through a dedicated or confidential inbox, to ensure concerns are received, recorded and directed through the appropriate process. Participants highlighted the importance of clear points of contact and central oversight, particularly where concerns may otherwise be managed within schools, departments or faculties. Central reporting was viewed as supporting a consistent approach to the management of concerns and enabling organisational learning. However, some participants noted that concerns addressed locally may not always be reported centrally, potentially limiting opportunities to identify recurring themes, monitor patterns of concerns and inform future improvements.

Approaches to the management of concerns varied considerably. In some organisations, concerns are initially reviewed by a named person, while in others responsibility sits with research integrity, governance or research office staff before escalation to senior decision-makers where required. Several participants described procedures that include stages such as initial assessment, preliminary review, screening panels and formal investigations, although the structure and terminology used varied between organisations.

Participants consistently reported that most concerns do not progress to formal investigation. Instead, issues are often addressed through advice, clarification, training, mentoring, mediation, corrective action or other informal approaches where concerns can be resolved proportionately. Some organisations also record lower-level concerns and questionable research practices to identify recurring themes and inform training and support activities.

“Our remit is incredibly broad; our resource is incredibly small” Workshop attendee

Significant variation was reported in relation to the involvement of Human Resources (HR) and legal teams. Some organisations manage concerns primarily through research integrity and governance processes, while others involve HR or legal services at particular stages or use them to undertake formal investigations. Participants discussed both the benefits and challenges of these arrangements, including concerns about duplication of effort, communication between functions and ensuring that attention remains focused on the research record alongside any employment-related processes.

Approaches also differed in relation to students and postgraduate researchers. Some organisations manage concerns relating to assessed work through academic misconduct procedures, while others use research misconduct procedures where concerns relate directly to research activity. Participants highlighted ongoing challenges where academic and research governance processes overlap, particularly for postgraduate researchers.

Across organisations, resource and capacity considerations were a significant feature of current practice. Many participants reported that responsibility for research integrity sits alongside broader portfolios including research ethics, governance, compliance, policy development and risk management. As a result, concerns were frequently raised about the availability of investigators and panel members, competing workload pressures, managing timelines and maintaining momentum in complex cases.

Participants also reflected on the practical challenges of operating procedures in changing organisational environments. Organisational restructures, changes to reporting lines and evolving governance arrangements were cited as reasons why some organisations were seeking more flexible procedures based on defined functions rather than specific job titles or organisational structures.

“If you don't follow the process, you're putting yourself in danger a little bit - which is why the process should be strong.” Workshop attendee

Benefits of standardisation

There was broad support for greater standardisation across the sector.

Participants felt that a common framework could improve consistency between organisations, particularly where concerns involve multiple organisations, collaborative research or researchers who move between organisations during a process.

Participants also highlighted the potential value of greater consistency in areas such as sanctions, remedial actions and informal resolutions. Standardisation was seen as particularly beneficial for smaller organisations and those with limited experience of handling breaches of research integrity.

The proposed Core Procedure was generally welcomed as a practical and accessible framework that could support greater consistency while remaining easier to navigate than more detailed procedural guidance.

“Having something that's relatively straightforward and simple and is a sort of step-by-step process that someone who's not familiar with these things can use will be really, really helpful.” Workshop attendee

Potential challenges of standardisation

Participants emphasised that standardisation should not come at the expense of flexibility. Organisational structures, governance arrangements and available resources vary considerably across the sector, and procedures need to remain adaptable to local contexts.

Resource and capacity constraints emerged as a significant challenge.

Participants frequently referred to limited staff capacity, competing priorities, difficulties meeting procedural timelines and challenges in identifying suitably independent investigators and panel members.

Participants also highlighted challenges arising from organisational change, conflicts of interest, differing approaches to postgraduate researcher cases, and the interface between research integrity, HR and legal processes.

“One of the big challenges for us is the timelines... Dealing with something in 10 days and 30 days [is] really difficult”
Workshop attendee

2. Reflections on the Core Procedure and areas for improvement

Need for an accessible and practical framework for investigating breaches of research integrity

Participants were broadly positive about the Core Procedure and welcomed it as a more accessible and practical framework. Many felt it provided a clearer overview of the process and could form a useful basis for greater consistency across organisations, while remaining adaptable to different institutional contexts. Participants particularly valued its potential to support organisations with limited resource for research integrity or less experience of handling breaches of research integrity.

“The work you're doing on standardising the processes is really important.” Workshop attendee

A recurring theme was the need to balance simplicity with sufficient procedural detail. While participants welcomed a shorter and more accessible document, there was also recognition that complex cases require additional guidance. Several suggested that the Core Procedure would work best when supported by supplementary resources such as templates, role-specific guidance and practical examples.

Clarifying and streamlining stages

The most frequently discussed issue concerned the distinction between the early stages of the process, particularly reviewing a concern, initial investigation and full investigation.

“Stages one and two inevitably bleed into each other.” Workshop attendee

Participants consistently reported that these stages often overlap in practice. Many organisations described conducting substantial information gathering during the initial stages in order to determine whether a concern should proceed. As a result, some felt that the distinction between gathering information and gathering evidence was not always clear. Others noted that, by the time a case reached a full investigation, much of the relevant information had already been collected, creating a risk of duplication and unnecessarily prolonged processes.

Several participants suggested that the review and initial investigation stages could be merged, or that greater flexibility should be introduced to allow organisations to move directly to a full investigation when circumstances clearly warrant it. Others emphasised the importance of retaining separate stages but felt that their purpose and boundaries required clearer definition.

Effective early triaging

Participants strongly supported a proportionate approach to handling concerns and welcomed the principle that concerns can be resolved at different points within the process. There was broad recognition that not all concerns require progression to a full formal investigation and that opportunities for informal resolution can reduce the burden on both organisations and individuals.

However, participants also cautioned that any flexibility to exit the process early or bypass stages would need to be accompanied by clear criteria and safeguards. Some expressed concerns that, without clear justification, initiators could perceive concerns as having been dismissed rather than appropriately resolved.

Appeals

Participants raised questions about the role of appeals within the Core Procedure, particularly at the earlier stages of the process. While some organisations do not permit formal appeals following initial, participants noted that the Core Procedure currently provides limited clarity on how appeals should operate prior to a formal investigation. Appeals were also discussed in the context of procedural robustness, with participants emphasising the importance of following documented processes consistently and maintaining clear records to support decision-making where outcomes are challenged.

“I think that's definitely a challenge. Everybody wants to appeal, especially if it's unfavourable.” Workshop attendee

Consistent investigation outcomes

Participants wanted consistency in informal resolution and outcomes. They asked for clearer examples of possible outcomes, especially:

- informal outcomes;
- formal or disciplinary outcomes;
- actions to correct the research record;
- communication with funders, publishers or external parties.

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities

There was strong support for organisations to map named procedural roles to individuals, so that those involved clearly understood their responsibilities at different stages of the process. Clearer role definitions were seen as a means of improving consistency and reducing uncertainty for those operating the procedure.

Managing conflicts of interest

A recurring challenge was the management of conflicts of interest and independence. Participants described situations in which small research communities mean that "everyone knows each other", making it difficult to identify individuals who are sufficiently independent to act as investigators, panel members or decision-makers. As a result, some organisations had deliberately built flexibility into their procedures to allow for the use of external expertise or external investigators where required.

Scope of procedure

Participants discussed uncertainty about who and what should fall within scope of a procedure to investigate research integrity concerns, including:

- Former staff members;
- Research students;
- Independent consultants or contractors;
- Visiting researchers;
- Staff members on a joint or honorary contract;
- Research carried out under one organisation but published under another organisation;
- Research involving multiple organisations.

There was no single approach, and participants felt clearer guidance was needed in this area.

Participants also discussed the challenges of investigating concerns involving former staff members or individuals who have left the research field entirely.

Cross-organisational collaboration

Participants highlighted the need for clear cooperation between organisations when concerns span more than one. [The Russell Group Statement of Cooperation in respect of cross-institutional research misconduct allegations](#) was mentioned as a helpful model that could potentially be shared or adapted more widely.

Importance of language and tone

Participants agreed that the terms “misconduct”, “investigation”, “formal” and “complainant” were seen as potentially intimidating and anxiety-inducing, which may discourage individuals from raising concerns. Participants suggested using softer or more neutral terminology that was less punitive, while still recognising the seriousness of the process. For example, they suggested using the terms “initiator” instead of “complainant” and “breaches of research integrity” in place of “misconduct”. The latter encompasses a broader spectrum of breaches in research integrity such as questionable research practices, culture issues, and training needs.

Importance of visual aids

Participants commented positively on the value of having flowcharts to illustrate the procedure, including the roles, responsibilities, decision points and the links between the stages.

3. Support and guidance for implementation

Practical tools, templates and guidance

Participants highlighted the value of practical resources that could be used alongside the Core Procedure such as:

- Checklists;
- Anonymised case studies of different types of concerns and examples of how concerns have been managed in practice, such as questionable research practices and authorship disputes;
- Reporting forms;
- Role-specific guidance.

Participants felt that standardised templates and case-based resources could support more consistent decision-making across organisations, provide reassurance to those managing concerns for the first time, and reduce the need for organisations to develop materials independently.

“We're not all reinventing the wheel. At the end of the day, we're all trying to achieve the same outcome.”

Workshop attendee

Training and development

Participants favoured short, practical, role-specific training that can be used by Named Persons, Investigators, Panel Members and others involved in managing concerns.

Participants recognised that many organisations do not have large pools of experienced investigators and that research integrity responsibilities are often undertaken alongside wider governance, ethics or research management roles.

As a result, there was support for flexible and accessible training approaches, including:

- Short training that can be provided quickly when required;
- Online or self-directed learning resources;
- Role-specific training and guidance;
- Scenario-based discussions and practical examples;
- Training on managing conflict and difficult conversations.

This would support and build confidence among individuals operating the procedure.

Participants emphasised the importance of making training available at the point it is needed, especially for those who may only occasionally be involved in a case.

Participants were signposted to [UKRIO's pilot training programme on investigating breaches of research integrity](#). This in-depth training is designed to strengthen knowledge, understanding, and confidence in assessing and investigating potential breaches of research integrity. It is aimed at individuals who oversee, manage, or contribute to investigative processes within their organisation.

Providing wellbeing support

A strong theme was the emotional impact of investigations on all involved parties. Participants recommended signposting individuals to wellbeing resources clearly and early. Suggested wellbeing resources include employee assistance programmes, union representation, peer support and safe spaces for practitioners to discuss cases and lessons learned. Participants were keen to ensure a more human, people-centred and supportive approach for everyone involved in the procedure.

“It is extremely distressing for individuals involved.”
Workshop attendee

There was also recognition that those managing or conducting investigations need support. They may carry emotional responsibility, manage sensitive information and deal with difficult conversations, often with limited training or support.

Research culture

Participants highlighted the importance of good communication, trust, transparency and support in reducing fear, encouraging reporting and improving confidence in the procedure.

Organisations should ensure that appropriate principles and standards are applied throughout the procedure to guide decision-making, manage conflicts and risks, and maintain confidence in the integrity and fairness of investigations.

Organisations can adopt (adapting as needed) the principles of **Fairness, Confidentiality and data protection, Integrity, Prevention of Detriment** and **Balance** as outlined in [UKRIO's detailed procedure for investigating breaches of research integrity](#).

Conclusion

The discussions from the two workshops summarised in this report demonstrate a strong need for the Core Procedure to investigate breaches of research integrity.

Participants were supportive of the Core Procedure and welcomed it as a positive step towards a more consistent, accessible and proportionate approach to addressing concerns about research integrity. Many felt that the Core Procedure strikes a useful balance between providing a practical common framework and allowing organisations flexibility to adapt the procedure to their own needs.

The strongest themes emerging from the workshops centred on a need for greater clarity regarding the relationship between the earlier procedural stages, as well as for practical tools, templates, guidance, and wellbeing resources to support consistent implementation across a diverse range of organisations within the research ecosystem.

While several areas for further clarification and refinement were identified, there was broad consensus that the Core Procedure provides a strong foundation for supporting organisations to respond to concerns more confidently, fairly, consistently, and effectively, while maintaining trust, fairness and integrity in the procedure across the research sector.

By drawing together the shared experiences and challenges faced by organisations across the research sector, this report aims to inform the development of the Core Procedure and support those involved in managing research integrity concerns to act with greater confidence, clarity and consistency.

UKRIO hopes that the insights and recommendations presented in this report will contribute to ongoing discussions across the sector and inform future guidance and practice in this important area.

“The idea of the Core Procedure really is that it's something that works for everyone.” Workshop attendee

Additional resources

- [UKRIO Detailed template procedure for investigating breaches of research integrity](#)
- [UKRIO Barriers to investigating and reporting research misconduct](#)
- [UKRIO Train-the-Trainer Pilot Programme Investigating breaches of research integrity](#)
- [The Concordat to Support Research Integrity \(2025\)](#)

List of workshop attendees – Tuesday 14 July 2026

Full name	Organisation	Job Title
Matthew Billington	University of Liverpool	Research Integrity and Research Ethics Manager
Martin Brooks	Liverpool John Moores University	Head of Research Excellence and Research Strategy
Mateja Celestina	UWE	Research Integrity, Governance, and Ethics Manager
Elizabeth Christopher	University of Chester	Director of Research & Innovation
Orla Govers	Cardiff Metropolitan University	Research and Innovation Officer
Jackie Green-Smith	Loughborough University	Research Governance Officer
Florence Heath	University College Birmingham	Research Administrator
Lisa Fisher	Aberystwyth University	Research Governance Advisor
Charlotte McMahon	Leeds Beckett University	Research Integrity and Ethics Manager
Alexander Miller Tate	King's College London	Research Integrity Manager
Tithi-Rathindra Modak	University of Portsmouth	Research Candidate
Nathan Street	University of Bristol	Research Integrity officer
Stacey Wagstaff	Newcastle University	Research Integrity and Compliance Manager
Antony Walsh	London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine	Head of Research Governance and Integrity
Emma Webster	University of Hull	Research Governance and Quality Officer
Karen Wise	Guildhall School of Music & Drama	Research Fellow
Jennifer Wright	University of Law	Academic Developer - Research Lead

List of workshop attendees – Thursday 23 July 2026

Full name	Organisation	Job Title
Murrium Ahmad	Nottingham Trent University	Research Governance and Policy Manager
Rebecca Anderson	Lancaster University	Research Governance Officer
Noémie Aubert Bonn	University of Manchester / Hasselt University	Research Associate / Postdoc
Marie Bovell	University of Surrey - Research Innovation and Impact - Assurance	Senior Assurance Officer
Becky Case	University of Birmingham	Head of Research Governance and Integrity
Helen Castley	The Open University	Senior Manager Governance and Integrity
Tegan Coleman	University of Kent	Senior Research Ethics and Governance Officer
Alexandra Davey	Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh	Deputy Director of Science (Research)
Dawn Foster	University Of Aberdeen	Research Policy & Governance Officer
Rachael Gibson	University of Salford	Research Governance Manager
Ross Goldstone	The Health Foundation	Senior Research Manager
Emily Goodall	University of Leeds	Researcher Development Consultant
Richard Greenham	University of St Andrews	Head of Research Policy, Integrity and Governance
Sam Grierson	University College Birmingham	Director of Higher Education Quality
Coral Hanson	Edinburgh Napier University	Principal Research Fellow
Carole Harris	University of Warwick	Associate Director (Research Culture, Governance and Compliance)
Julie McCarroll	Ulster University	Head of Research Governance & Integrity
Devon McHugh	University of Strathclyde	Research Policy Manager
Nicole Palmer	University of the Arts London	Research Ethics and Integrity Manager
James Patterson	Queen Mary University of London	Research Integrity and Assurance Lead

Rachel Port	University College London	Governance Manager: Research Integrity
Jon Rees	University of Sunderland	Associate Professor
Leona Reid	Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)	Peer Review Manager
Rebecca Rogan	Robert Gordon University	Research Integrity Officer
Nicola Sainsbury	Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance	Research Manager
Chantelle Simpson	University Of Edinburgh	Research Ethics and Integrity Officer
Ramona Statache	Manchester Metropolitan University	Research Ethics and Governance Manager
Filipa Vance	University of Bath	Director of Research Policy, Governance and Integrity
Lisa Webster	Leeds Trinity University	Reader in Psychology
Catherine Winchester	CRUK Scotland Institute	Head of Research Integrity



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