Case Study

Strengthening research culture with *Research Integrity: Concise* at University College Cork

Motivation

As Research Officer in the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation at University College Cork, and under the oversight of the Vice President for Research and Innovation, Professor Anita Maguire, Dr Louise Burgoyne has been dedicated to fostering a culture of research integrity at all levels of her institution, recognising its importance not only for the university itself, but also for funding agencies and research partners.

As a member of the 'National Research Integrity Forum', University College Cork is able to utilise a nationwide licence for Epigeum's *Research Integrity: Concise* course, supported by the Irish Universities Association and national funding agencies. Drawing on the online resources, Louise and her colleagues Dr Aoife Coffey of the UCC Library, and Dr Brendan Palmer of the Clinical Research Facility Cork, have established a blended approach to training in this area, in order to ensure that researchers are aware of key developments in research integrity legislation and culture, and how these impact on specific disciplines.

Implementation

As part of a Fulbright Program exchange, Professor Phil DeShong and Professor Emeritus Robert Dooling from the University of Maryland met with administrators, senior management, and researchers to discuss and share best practice in responsible conduct in research. In particular, they explored the idea of bringing researchers together in regular team exchanges to examine issues and share experiences to help promote good research practice. Louise used these insights when thinking about how best to initiate training: "One of the key issues with research integrity is to get principal investigators and teams working together and meeting regularly, which keeps people working to best practices, so we wanted to get all levels of researchers in a room at one time to discuss key issues around their own disciplines".

Louise and her colleagues therefore instigated an inclusive programme of training whereby research teams are invited to participate in face-to-face workshops with a short, reflective exercise to be completed by the group as a whole, and Epigeum's online *Research Integrity: Concise* course, which is completed independently by each individual.

For Louise, the key to the scheme's success is its blended nature: "The online course is excellent, and it's a really useful way of learning about the fundamentals of research integrity, but I really think that it's important to discuss the issues in a group-based environment because one of the biggest problems with people who are committing misconduct is that they are doing it in isolation".

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Increasing Engagement

The two face-to-face workshops aim to raise awareness of possible integrity breaches and guide researchers in ways they can report and correct any potential issues, exploring the scenarios in relation to University College Cork's own Code of Conduct. Discussion is further developed by the reflective exercise, which encourages the research team as a whole to consider their position in relation to potential integrity breaches, as well as their responsibilities. Louise has found that these group experiences, coupled with the robust theoretical training provided by Epigeum's online course, encourage greater awareness of research integrity, and foster a more open, communicative culture: "The benefit to the increased awareness is that if you do see something and you aren't sure about it, you're better off talking to somebody about it rather than just not saying anything".

Evidencing Integrity

Following successful completion of the workshops, reflective exercise, and the Epigeum online course, each member of the team is presented with a digital badge – a micro-credential which can be added to their email signature, CV, or Linkedin profile, and shared with funding agencies to prove completion of the training. "At UCC, we have over sixty different types of digital badges", explains Louise, "you can get them in good practices in various domains, including wellbeing and health, as well as research integrity". To ensure the quality of any training that is associated with a digital badge, courses are overseen by the University College Cork Digital Badge Committee.

Made up of academics who are experts in teaching, the commitee advises on the design of proposed courses, and may require changes to be made before the badge is approved. The Digital Badge in Responsible Conduct in Research is valid for three years, ensuring that training is routinely refreshed and updated, and that researchers are trained regularly.

The Future

Approximately 120 people have successfully completed the digital badge since November 2019 with a positive impact on the institution's research culture: "There's a lot more awareness of research integrity at UCC, people are more engaged with the discipline of research integrity". Louise adds, "We get good feedback on the course, that is was really useful, that people really enjoyed it, that the principles of research integrity may have been something that they weren't sure of before, but they are now".

Louise has recently moved to a new role at the Tyndall National Institute at University College Cork. The institute engages approximately 500 active researchers and Louise has now started working with the institute's Human Resources department to support digital badge training in research integrity using the same blended approach, combining Epigeum's online training and face-to-face workshop sessions.

To discover how Epigeum's interactive online training could benefit your institution, email: **epigeum@oup.com**