University of Southampton Steering Group as part of the UK Reproducibility Network

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

The UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN) is a peer-led consortium that aims to ensure the UK retains its place as a centre for world-leading research. UKRN originated from activity across the UK seeking to understand the factors that contribute to poor research reproducibility and replicability, and to develop approaches to counter these and improve the quality of the research produced in the UK. UKRN's aims are investigating the factors that contribute to robust research, promoting training activities and disseminating best practice, and working to ensure coordination of efforts across the sector.

At the University level, the University of Southampton (UoS) is a formal member of the UKRN network and endorses its principles and ongoing efforts to address issues affecting the conduct and promoting of rigorous research in institutions across all disciplines. UoS also believes that participating in UKRN represents an opportunity to improve the quality of research we produce by changing research culture and practices for the better.

In light of this background, the Southampton Steering Group (RNSSG) has been formed with the primary aim of supporting the coordination and integration of relevant UKRN activities at UoS. Other key aims are to help develop and deliver a research improvement strategy internally, and to support different groups within UoS focused on research improvement, in particular in promoting greater transparency of research findings and methods (for example, through sharing examples of best practices). As such, RNSSG aims for broad representation from different parts of UoS and disciplinary representation to support the delivery of UKRN activities within the institution.

2. Purpose

The RNSSG will be formed of relevant academics, students, and professional services staff from the UoS research community who are mutually supportive of UKRN's mission. Some of these individuals will be responsible for the overall coordination of UKRN activity and strategy implemented at UoS (either directly or via other forms of support in kind, e.g. via undergraduate, postgraduate, postdoctoral and senior academic training programmes or workshops). This ensures that UoS activity is aligned with the strategy and activity of the UKRN network, and allows the exchange of ideas related to promoting the adoption of open and transparent research practices and other relevant initiatives. In addition, the relationship between the RNSSG and the UKRN provides members with a mechanism for obtaining feedback on new initiatives from the research community.

Formal UKRN Lead roles work closely but independently within UoS to promote the aims of the UKRN in alignment with activities of the wider UKRN community, in addition to representing UoS at UKRN meetings. They are:

- **The Institutional Lead** – This role holder is the institutional point of contact for UKRN at the UoS (either an academic lead for research improvement or similar based in Professional Services reporting to the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research). Institutionally appointed, the role holder is tasked with providing critical input into the senior management team on issues related to research improvement and research integrity. The Institutional Lead helps deliver institutional driven activities to enhance a positive culture of research integrity and improvement across all Faculties and organise related institutional efforts.

- **The local Network Lead** - This role holder is independent of the Institutional Lead and represents individual multidisciplinary researchers who come together informally at UoS at all career stages ('grass-roots' network) interested in issues of research reproducibility/Open Research and its improvement. Voluntarily appointed, the Local Network Lead takes the lead on facilitating communication on reproducibility-related issues between teams within UoS (for example, by establishing open research working groups, running training workshops, advocating for the wider adoption of best practice within the institution, etc.).

The RNSSG aims to support the work of the Institutional and Local Network Leads by discussing the work of UKRN and coordinating future related activities within UoS, and also between UoS and other members of the UKRN community. In particular, it may cover the following activities within UoS:

- Coordinating institutional and grassroots annual plans (including agreeing on strategy and direction, and formulating objectives for the forthcoming year).

- Developing a community focused on research improvement aligned with UKRN strategy (for example, through sharing examples of best practices and facilitating the promotion of learning materials related to improving research practice).

- Supporting development and delivery of a research improvement strategy, relevant infrastructure growth, and policies linked to UKRN activity at an institutional level (for example, in connection with training and development initiatives promoting the adoption of open research practices).

- Advocating the work of the UKRN and helping promote related activities going on elsewhere across the UKRN community to coordinate strategy.

- Collating information and views (for example, about UKRN events and new initiatives) to feed back to UKRN through the Leads.

- Creating dialogue around research improvement to help embed it into UoS research culture.

- Supporting less formal activities, such as creating or coordinating informal channels to discuss research improvements (for example, virtual seminars and journal clubs).

- Where appropriate, proposing related initiatives - including in respect of opportunities for new projects and funding - and forming sub-working groups (for example, open research working groups) as required to lead on these.

Membership

The RNSSG is internal to UoS. Membership includes:

- The Institutional Lead (Head of Research Integrity & Governance) - Dr Alison Knight

- The Local Network Lead (Associate Professor) - Dr Christian Bokhove

- Associate Director (Research Engagement) – Wendy White

- Lead Representative from the Southampton ReproducibiliTea journal club – Sophie Hall

- Other representatives with suitable in-role expertise from key groups within UoS either engaged in promoting Open Research (for example, relevant members of Library Services / Data Repository Team, Research Integrity and Governance Team,

Faculty Research Integrity Champions), or from related groups (for example, engaged with software design/supporting infrastructure, or relevant methodological design).

- Staff or students volunteers who support the UKRN's mission and values, and identified based on broad disciplinary representation (ideally at least one representing each Faculty), who have been nominated by at least one current RNSSG member, and whose appointment is agreed by the RNSSG.

Membership criteria for the RNSSG, and a process for appointing new members, will be developed in 2021.

The Panel will be quorate with three or more members in attendance, to include at least one of the Institutional Lead or the Network Lead.

From time to time, the RNSSG may invite people with a particular interest in UKRN activities, as needed, in order to provide information to support discussions.

3. Chairing

The RNSSG will have two Co-Chairs, the UoS Institutional Lead and the UoS Local Network Lead.

4. Accountability

The RNSSG will periodically provide a written or verbal update to the UoS Research Integrity and Governance Committee ('RIGC', which meet three times a year and is chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research). The RNSSG can request that RIGC consider particular papers, questions or activities. RIGC reports to the University Executive Board.

5. Responsibilities of members

The range of RNSSG members is intended to be diverse and multidisciplinary. Members are asked to contribute their thoughts and expertise as independent members and be respectful of different viewpoints and experiences.

6. Frequency

The number of RNSSG meetings per year will be determined by the need for advice. However, it is anticipated that there will be no more than three meetings a year (in person or virtually) approximately one month or less before the next RIGC meeting (typically taking place in March, August, and November), with some virtual work between meetings.

7. Working methods

Documentation will be stored on a Teams site. Meeting notes will be taken and made available on that Teams site.

The meeting organiser will aim to make papers for discussion available at least 48 hours before RNSSG meeting where possible, and members are expected to have read these papers before attending. If a member cannot attend a meeting, they should pass on their apologies in advance to one or both Co-Chairs, or a nominated administrator if appointed.

The primary means of communication between the RNSSG is email, supplemented by the Teams site described above.

8. Review

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed in May 2022, and thereafter annually or as needed from time to time.

Date Approved: **4 May 2021**