

Blog: Upholding Research Integrity in a Transnational and Interdisciplinary Research Landscape

*A blog post from the PIs and the collaborators of the project **TRAIN: Transnational Research and Interdisciplinary Networks**, sponsored by the ReCLAIM initiative funded by **UCD Research Culture and Wellcome Trust***

In today's research landscape, maintaining integrity is both more vital and more complex than ever before. As scholars increasingly collaborate across disciplines and borders, the idea of "research integrity" can no longer be taken as a fixed or universally understood concept. What constitutes transparency, accountability or ethical practice in one field or country may differ significantly in another.

The rapid growth of transnational and interdisciplinary projects has blurred traditional boundaries, demanding that researchers not only excel in their own areas but also navigate differing institutional expectations, ethical frameworks, and national regulations. In Europe, the **European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity** provides a shared foundation, but as collaborations multiply, the challenge lies in translating these principles into everyday practice, especially in projects that unite the humanities, sciences, and emerging technologies.

The Challenge of Shared Standards

Interdisciplinary research often brings together communities that operate under distinct traditions of evidence, data sharing, and authorship. A social scientist, for example, may approach consent and data privacy differently than a computer scientist or a biochemist. When teams extend across countries, additional layers of complexity arise: national legislation, language differences and institutional norms can all influence how integrity is understood and enacted. Against this backdrop, creating a culture of open conversation around integrity is essential. It requires spaces where researchers can discuss, compare, and reflect on their assumptions; spaces like **eTEAcally: Research Integrity Afternoon Tea**, an event held as part of the **TRAIN project** (Transnational Research and Interdisciplinary Networks) on Friday 3 October 2025 at the UCD Humanities Institute, in collaboration with the UCD Earth Institute.

eTEAcally: A Conversation Across Borders

The eTEAcally event brought together researchers and integrity experts from three different institutions: Dr. Irene Kavanagh (**University College Cork**), Dr. Shen Wang and Prof. Grace Mulcahy (**University College Dublin**), and Myrte Vos (**Leiden University**), in an atmosphere designed to encourage genuine dialogue. Over tea and pastries, participants explored what research integrity means in different institutional and national contexts, and how the European framework can guide collaborative work while allowing for disciplinary diversity.

The conversation highlighted how **Leiden University's** model – grounded in the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and supported by a robust ethics committee – offers a valuable case study for others navigating complex transnational research. Meanwhile, contributions from **University College Cork** reflected on emerging questions around integrity in the context of artificial intelligence and data-driven research. **University College Dublin** participants shared insights from ongoing efforts to build an ethical and equitable research culture across disciplines.

What made eTEAcally significant was not only the exchange of expertise but also the demonstration that **research integrity thrives through conversation**. The event underscored that fostering integrity is not about imposing one universal rule but about building mutual understanding across systems. Transnational collaboration can illuminate blind spots, encourage accountability, and strengthen shared commitments to responsible research. Events like eTEAcally remind us that integrity is not a static principle, but rather a living, evolving practice that must be constantly revisited as research itself changes. For projects operating at the intersection of disciplines and nations, maintaining ethical coherence means creating open channels of communication, respecting diversity of practice, and grounding all activity in transparency and care.

The **TRAIN project**, of which eTEAcally was a key component, continues to promote these ideals by connecting researchers from across Europe in ongoing dialogue about ethics, collaboration, and culture. Through its series of events, podcasts, videos and blog posts, TRAIN aims to make integrity not only a matter of compliance but a shared value underpinning all scholarly exchange. As research becomes more international, digital and interdisciplinary, the need for ethical reflection grows ever stronger. Building a culture of trust and accountability is not the work of a single institution, but a collective European endeavour. And sometimes, as eTEAcally demonstrated, it begins with something as simple as sitting down together over a nice cup of tea.