

Research Integrity Annual Statement 2014/15

Background

In July 2012, Universities UK published the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* (July 2012), a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance. HEFCE, NIHR, RCUK and the Wellcome Trust are included among its signatories, and HEFCE in particular has stipulated that compliance with the *Concordat* is a condition of the HEFCE grant from 2014/15.

The *Concordat's* 5th commitment requires in particular that the University should present a short annual statement to its governing body that:

1. Provides a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues;
2. Provides assurances that the processes they have in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation;
3. Provides a high level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken.

To improve accountability, and provide assurances that measures being taken continue to support consistently high standards of research integrity, this statement will be made publicly available. The University of Surrey's Statements are published at <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/research/our-approach/governance>

Statement for 2014/15

1. Introduction

In response to the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*, the University of Surrey established the Research Integrity Committee (a sub-committee of the University Research and Enterprise Committee (UREC)).

The Committee membership includes representatives of; the University Ethics Committee, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, Quality Enhancement, Research and Enterprise Support (RES), Equality and Diversity, Legal and Secretariat, Higher Education and Staff Development.

The Research Integrity Committee met 4 times during the period; 24th October 2014, 5th Feb 2015, 29th April 2015 and 15th September 2015.

The Committee established an Action Plan addressing all areas of the *Concordat* and targeted actions in areas that could be improved. These primarily included; a research policies review, updating research misconduct procedures, reviewing research governance structures and considering the training and awareness needs related to research integrity across all audiences at the University of Surrey.

At the Research Integrity Committee in September 2015, the members discussed the make-up and function of the Committee and reinforced the need to take the opportunity to now review the scope of

the existing Research Integrity Committee and its relationship to other committees. Consideration is therefore being given to a new Research Integrity and Governance Committee with a broader remit than the previous Research Integrity Committee. The committee would be responsible for establishing Concordat for Research Integrity working groups to carry out actions articulated within the plans. The new structure for research committees, including the new Research Integrity and Governance Committee, will be introduced in 2015/16.

The Research Integrity and Governance Office (RIGO), which is part of Research and Enterprise Support (RES), has evolved over 2014/15 and is now a key resource which manages the University Ethics Processes and oversees Sponsorship and research governance.

2. Key Achievements

During 2014/15, the University has undertaken the following actions and activities to support and strengthen the understanding and application of research integrity issues:

a) New Policies introduced:

i. Export Control Policy (approved 6th October 2015)

This new policy describes the steps taken by the University and the responsibilities on individuals with regards Export Control regulations;

“The Export Controls policy is to ensure that the University, its staff and students remain in full compliance with all the export controls and sanction regulations that apply to their activities, through means which are both effective and proportionate to the generally low level of risk.”

ii. Ethics Policy (approved 17th February 2015)

This is an over-arching policy which sets out the University’s guiding principles of ethical practice in research;

“The University of Surrey ethics policy aims to safeguard and promote respect for the rights, interests and well-being of students, staff, research participants/subjects (human and animal) and fellow citizens and communities in local and global contexts. The ethics policy also aims to preserve the physical environment and social and historical artefacts engaged with by university staff and students.”

b) Revisions/Changes to Existing Policies:

i. Code of Practice on Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct Revised 17th March 2015 (previously annex of Code of Good Research Practice: Misconduct and Allegations or Complaints of Misconduct)

This new Code of Practice was introduced as a result of the analysis conducted by the University on the introduction of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. Prior to the new Code of Practice, the procedures for making an allegation and the personnel involved in reviewing the case were unclear and difficult to navigate. The new Code of practice was developed in consultation with the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), and their direct input was sought on the new document.

c) Training/Awareness

The Concordat to Support Research Integrity action plan was formally launched at an event on 20th March 2014 followed by a talk by the UKRIO Chief Executive James Parry.

During 2014-15, members of the Research Integrity and Governance Office (RIGO), attended the annual conference run by the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and a training session run by the Association for Research Ethics (AFRE).

One important aspect of maintaining a culture of research integrity is by the continued increasing of awareness, through discussions and open communication. The University of Surrey has a long-term view on this, and understands that it may take time to have a real impact on culture. Initial steps have been taken to review current training and development opportunities across the University and consider the best mechanisms for incorporating the Concordat to Support Research Integrity principles.

A number of ethics lunchtime sessions were run throughout 2014 and although the workshops were praised by attendees, the attendance rates were low, suggesting that this format was not a model to continue with.

d) Research Governance

Work began on the review of the committees related to research across the University with the aim of introducing a new research governance structure in 2015/16.

The Research Integrity and Governance Office also increased its expertise recruiting a Research Integrity and Governance Officer with a background in clinical research and an additional Assistant Research Integrity and Governance Officer.

3. Research Misconduct

a) The University provides assurance that the processes in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair and that they are appropriate to the needs of the organisation.

As described in “Key Achievements” the Code of Practice on Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct was introduced in 2015. The Code of Practice was developed with the involvement of a number of stakeholders including the University of Surrey Students Union, academic representatives from the University, UKRIO and the Legal and Secretariat team.

b) The University Statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken.

No formal investigations were undertaken during the academic year 2013-14 and no cases of research misconduct proved. For the academic year 2014-15, although there were no formal investigations of research misconduct, in the interests of being open and transparent, the University does further report that five preliminary investigations were undertaken in the period. All five cases were resolved at the Screening Stage or equivalent within faculty processes and did not progress to the Formal Investigation stage under our Code of Practice on Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct. The conclusion of the five investigations were as follows;

- Three were unfounded, and,
- Two were with substance but were a result of poor academic practice and advice was given.

PROFESSOR VINCE EMERY

(Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation)