

# Research Integrity Annual Statement 2015/16

## 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 2015/16.

The *Concordat's* 5<sup>th</sup> 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 2015/16

### 1. Introduction

#### Committees

The Committees governing research activity at the University have been reviewed over the last 12 months and a revised Research Integrity and Governance Committee was launched. The first meeting was held in September 2016.

In the interim updates and meetings have been held with the Head of Research Development and Governance to highlight any specific issues relating to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. Updates have continued to be provided to the University Research and Enterprise Committee (UREC). RIGO have also held internal meetings to deliver actions articulated in the action plan.

#### Action Plan

The action plan has been updated and discussed at the Research Integrity and Governance Committee in September 2016. The UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool has provided useful guidance and assurance about our ongoing commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

The University is a member of AfRE (Association for Research Ethics) and subscriber to UKRIO (UK Research Integrity Office).

## 2. Key Achievements

During 2015/16, the University has undertaken the following actions and activities to support and strengthen the understanding and application of research integrity issues:

### a) Revisions/Changes to Existing Policies:

- June 2016: The key ethics document 'Ethics Handbook for Teaching and Research', has undergone a major transformation from its previous incarnation known as 'Ethical Principles and Procedures for Teaching and Research'. This document provides guidance for all researchers at the University of Surrey, on aspects of ethics and ethical review.
- May 2016: Ethical Conduct Policy – New declaration forms.
- Dec 2015: Revised Hazardous Working Policy has been revised in line with the latest guidance and legislation

### b) Training/Awareness

- During 2015-16, members of the Research Integrity and Governance Office (RIGO) attended the annual conference run by the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO).
- Monthly RIGO surgeries held across the campus.
- Ethics leaflet has been produced to raise awareness with academics of the ethics process internal and external to the University.
- Nov 2015: Research Ethics online training provided (Epigeum as training provider) for all ethics committee members at the University.

### c) Compliance with Best Practice

- The University Ethics Committee carried out an audit during May 2016 on a random sample of research projects in order to highlight areas of best practice and issues in need of attention. Also, the audit was used as an opportunity for researchers to comment on their experience of the ethical review process and on training needs.
- April 2016. University of Surrey is a signatory to the Concordat for Openness in Animal Research.
- April 2016. The University is making a number of changes in order to support academic colleagues in meeting HEFCE's new Open Access requirements.

### d) Research Governance

The Research Integrity and Governance Office (RIGO) has expanded and recruited a Research Integrity and Governance Manager with a strong background in clinical research and an additional Research Integrity and Governance Co-ordinator.

## 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.**

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. Briefings to the HR department and Faculty Integrity Officers have ensured that teams that could encounter enquires requiring misconduct are aware of the code of practice and the role of the Research Integrity and Governance Office.

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

No formal investigations were undertaken during the academic year 2015-16 and no cases of research misconduct proved. Although there were no formal investigations of research misconduct, in the interests of being open and transparent, the University does further report that one preliminary investigation was undertaken in the period.

**MR ATTI EMECZ**

**Vice Provost Research and Innovation (Interim)**