

Research Integrity Annual Statement

1st Aug 2019- 31st July 2020

Background

In July 2012, Universities UK published “*The Concordat to Support Research Integrity*”, a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance. HEFCE, NIHR, RCUK and the Wellcome Trust were included among its signatories and, subsequently, UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) fully endorsed the Concordat. A revised and strengthened concordat was published in October 2019, in order to meet the recommendations of the Science and Technology Select Committee of the House of Commons, which concluded that the language of the Concordat should be tightened, so that compliance could be more easily assessed.

The Concordat lists the core elements of research integrity as: honesty; rigour; transparency and open communication; care and respect; and accountability. There are five commitments for researchers, employers and funders to uphold. Part of the Concordat’s 5th commitment requires that the University should produce a short annual statement, which must be presented to their own governing body, and subsequently be made publicly available, ordinarily through the institution’s website. This annual statement must include:

1. a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and the application of research integrity issues;
2. a statement to provide assurance that the processes the institution has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, timely, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation;
3. a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, which will include data on the number of investigations. If no formal investigation has been undertaken, this should also be noted;
4. a statement on what the institution has learned from any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, including what lessons have been learned to prevent the same type of incident re-occurring; and
5. a statement on how the institution creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct.

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 and a link to the statement will be sent to the secretariat of the signatories to the Concordat. The University of Surrey’s statements are published at

<https://www.surrey.ac.uk/research/excellence/integrity-and-governance>.

Statement for 2019/20

1. Introduction

At the University, we are committed to delivering the principles set out in the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and strive to incorporate these into our everyday research culture. We recognise that we cannot become complacent and must continue to place research integrity at the centre of our research endeavours. To this end, we are committed to implementing the requirements of the new version of the Concordat, which was released on the 25th October 2019.

2. Research Culture and Integrity

Research integrity thrives in a positive research culture and the University of Surrey is committed to enhancing the environment in which research integrity is maintained.

- In November 2019, following a competitive and open selection process, the University appointed Professor Emily Farran as the Academic Lead for Research Culture and Integrity with the remit of seeking to enhance a positive culture of research integrity and improve research practice across the University. In the same month, the University joined as a founder member the UK Reproducibility Network, now with 16 member universities, with Professor Farran acting as liaison. The UK Reproducibility Network is a national peer-led consortium that aims to ensure the UK remains a global hub for world-leading research by investigating the factors that contribute to robust research, promoting [training activities](#), and disseminating best practice. Related initiatives include the formation of the Surrey Reproducibility Society and the ReproducibiliTea journal club, in August 2019, and supporting the first Reproducibility conference held virtually at the University in July 2020.
- In July 2020, the University of Surrey was ranked 1st for research culture out of 38 other institutions in the AdvanceHE Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), which provides robust, benchmark data from institutions across the UK.
- On researcher development, [Vitae's HR Excellence in Research Award](#) was renewed for a further four years, giving the University continued accreditation since 2012. The associated action plan can be viewed [here](#)
- An Open Research Working Group has been formed and plans are underway to promote open research which will align to the "Open Research Position Statement". This statement was approved by the University in June 2020 and recommits the University to open principles in research.

3. Actions and activities to strengthen understanding and support application in relation to research integrity issues

During 2019/20, the University has undertaken the following actions and activities to support and strengthen the understanding and application of research integrity issues (per Point 1 above):

a) Ethics Process Review

- The University conducted an internal audit of its ethics review processes in 2018 which highlighted areas for improvement. In response to the audit, a new ethics committee structure was launched in October 2019, to harmonise the staff and student review processes, operating a risk-based three-tier system of ethical review, with level of scrutiny depending on the scale and complexity of the ethical issues raised by the research.
- In addition to the new ethics committee structure, the University introduced a Self-Assessment of Governance and Ethics (SAGE) process in October 2019 for academics and students. This process identifies which research requires university ethical review and was initially set up for research involving human participants and their data called 'SAGE-HDR'. During the course of summer 2020: SAGE-HDR was revised and updated after constructive feedback from users, the Steering Panel overseeing the University Ethical Review and the Research Integrity and Governance Office (RIGO). Additionally, 'SAGE-AR', was created and introduced in September 2020 for ethical review of all types of animal research reviewed by the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Board (AWERB) and Non- Animal Scientific and Procedures Act (NASPA) committee.

b) Training/Awareness

- RIGO deliver ethics and governance training to specific groups/departments of researchers or professional services staff.
- Researchers were additionally supported by c250 workshops, sessions and events during the year, provided through the Researcher Development Programme (RDP)

within the Doctoral College. This included training on statistical theory and a wide range of analytic techniques, publishing and peer review, and dealing with data collection and analysis.

- The University's Open Research Unit provided training sessions and workshops covering: "Open Research: Research Data Management and Open Data" and "Open Research: Data Management Plans". Bespoke sessions were also offered.
- New data protection guidance notes, called "Data Protection and Security for UG and PG Students Guidance", were written, which cover basic data protection and information security considerations. Although primarily aimed at students, the guidance provides useful information for any researcher on ensuring data protection compliance. Every new staff member must complete a data protection induction module. Additionally, the Information Compliance Unit gave GDPR Primer workshops and Information Asset Owner workshops.
- Training on conducting research with human samples – Members of RIGO provided mandatory face to face and virtual training on 'The Use of Human Tissue in Research' to 194 staff and students during the year. A further 46 researchers completed e-learning on 'Introduction to online consent' and 94 researchers completed e-learning on 'Research that involves human tissue'.
- The University Ethics Committee members attended the annual training day in September 2019, as well as smaller group training sessions in reviewing applications and amendments during the year. New committee members were given induction training.
- RIGO continues to update its online guidance and templates for researchers.
- During 2019/20, members of RIGO attended the UKRIO 2020 Webinar series.

c) External Memberships

The University keeps abreast of developments in research integrity through its membership of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), Understanding Animal Research (UAR) and the Association for Research Administrators (ARMA). The University also attends the UKRI Stakeholder days and liaises with UKRI on a regular basis to have up-to-date information regarding research council requirements.

d) Data Protection and the Caldicott Guardian

Research work that proposes to make use of existing patient-identifiable datasets obtained from the NHS must have permission from the relevant Caldicott Guardian. A new Caldicott Guardian was appointed in 2020 and is a member of a number of committees and working groups, to ensure that the University fulfils its requirement for the NHS Data Security and Protection Toolkit.

e) Committees and Working Groups supporting research integrity

Research Integrity and Governance Committee (RIGC)

The Research Integrity and Governance Committee (RIGC) is responsible for ensuring that research activity at the University is carried out to the highest standards of rigour and integrity and to provide strategic direction on the development, implementation and evaluation of research policies to be compliant with the Concordat. The RIGC is a sub-committee of the University Research & Innovation Committee (URIC) and was chaired by the Vice-Provost, Research and Innovation during this time, meeting on 22nd November 2019, 18th February 2020 and 8th July 2020. The overarching research governance structure of the University has been reviewed by the Head of Research Integrity and Governance and an improved, more encompassing and efficient oversight structure has been established during 2019/20. This will enable the RIGC to meet its future responsibilities for overseeing all aspects of research integrity and governance as research activity continues to grow across the University.

University Ethics Committee (UEC)

Following on from the ethics process review, carried out during 2018, the new review structures have been operational since October 2019. The UEC Steering Group was established at the same time.

Research Data Governance and Operations Group (RDGOG)

The University continues to work on creating and improving facilities and guidance for GDPR compliance in research. The Research Data Governance and Operations Group (RDGOG) had been introduced to better align processes around research data management across the University. This includes joint working across several professional services teams, including the Information Compliance Unit, the Library's Open Research team, Data InfoSec Steering Committee (DISC) and Research Integrity and Governance Office (RIGO).

Human Tissue Research Operations Group (HTROG)

The University underwent an inspection by the Human Tissue Authority during 16-18 July 2019. In response to the subsequent report, the University has addressed the identified shortcomings. As a result, the University has established a more robust overarching governance structure for research using human tissue. An application process has been introduced for researchers to request use of human tissue, which ensures the University has the appropriate regulatory ethical approval and is compliant with the Human Tissue Act (2004). A new suite of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for research using human tissue have been introduced. HTROG was established, involving a large number of stakeholders across the University, to ensure working procedures are developed and effectively administered. HTROG oversees all human tissue research activity is compliant with the 47 standards required for Human Tissue Authority (HTA) Research Licence held by the University of Surrey.

Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

With the previous Chair completing their term, a new Chair was appointed to the University's Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) in October 2019. There was also a change in the place establishment license holder (PELH) to the Vice-Provost, Research and Innovation, in July 2019. The new AWERB Chair has revised existing processes and introduced new processes that are now integrated into the Self-Assessment for Governance and Ethics (SAGE) process. Additionally, a new process for NEER (non-Establishment Ethical Review) has been implemented. There has also been a re-incorporation of the Non-Animal Scientific Procedures Act 1986 (NASPA) processes into SAGE. Finally, a new Freedom of Information (FOI) request process has been introduced. These changes in processes reflect a more effective, transparent, and fair approach to ethical governance in relation to animal research.

4. Research Misconduct

- a) **The University provides assurance that the processes the institution has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, timely, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation (Point 2)**

The [Code of Practice on Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct](#) was introduced in 2015 and last updated in April 2019. The Code 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. The Code of Practice on Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct is currently under revision to ensure alignment with the updated 2019 Concordat.

- b) **The University Statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, including data on the number of investigations (Point 3)**

During the academic year 2019/20, the University received an allegation of plagiarism which went through a formal investigation. This case did not involve UKRI funding and the outcome of the allegation was upheld in part and concluded as poor academic practice. Annexe 1 shows the number of completed formal investigations over the last three years.

In addition, the University received seven other allegations for consideration and two of these were investigated up to the preliminary screening stage. Both allegations were upheld in part and concluded as poor academic practice and did not proceed to formal investigation stage and are, thus, not included in Annexe 1.

c) The University Statement on what the institution has learned from any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, including what lessons have been learned to prevent the same type of incident re-occurring (Point 4)

- The single formal investigation held during the 2019/20 academic year was upheld in part. Although there was evidence of plagiarism, this was the result of poor academic practice due to the respondent's lack of awareness of appropriate academic referencing practice. Researchers would benefit from strengthened training in this area, and this will be considered as part of the revision of the Code of Practice currently underway.
- The two screening investigations held during the 2019/20 academic year were both upheld in part with the finding that they resulted from poor academic practice. These investigations highlighted a gap in knowledge and awareness in storage (including archiving) and accessibility of research data between academic supervisors and PGRs. This will be addressed during 2020/21 by consulting with a number of relevant stakeholders to develop appropriate training and awareness to help prevent these issues reoccurring.
- RIGO received several queries during the year and the most common concerns reported were about authorship and publication issues. This has highlighted a potential lack of awareness or gap in knowledge (or both) in the research community regarding authorship and other publication issues. This will be addressed during 2020/21 by consulting with a number of relevant stakeholders to develop appropriate training and awareness to help prevent these issues reoccurring.

d) The University Statement on how the institution creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct (Point 5)

The University has a [Code of Practice on Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct](#) which includes clear principles and mechanisms to ensure that any investigations are conducted in a fair, thorough, objective and timely manner. All allegations received are treated with confidentiality. Any allegations concerning University staff can be reported at Faculty level by contacting the Faculty's Associate Dean Research and Innovation (ADRI), or by directly contacting the RIGO Team. Any allegations concerning PGR students can be reported by contacting the Director of the Doctoral College, or directly to the RIGO. As per the University's Code of Practice on Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct, all those raising concerns in good faith will be protected, supported and not penalised, in line with the University's Public Interest Disclosure Policy. Additionally, the University has introduced a ["Report and Support"](#) web-page and framework primarily aimed at students but available for all staff to report instances of abuse, bullying, harassment, hate crime and sexual misconduct.

**Professor David Sampson
Chair of the Research Integrity and Governance Committee
and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation**

Annexe 1. Research Integrity Statement 1st August 2019-31st July 2020

The table below is based on the former RCUK assurance questions as a model – and recommended that doing so could be considered as good practice. This table shows that by academic year, the number of formal investigations completed and of those, the number which were upheld (either in whole or in part)

- Figures are provided for the past 3 completed academic years with year 1 representing the most recently completed year.
- “Formal investigation” is as described in the [RCUK Policy and Guidelines](#)
- The date is when the formal investigation was completed
- Investigations should be split by Research Council, and by type (as defined in the [integrity section of the UKRI webpage](#))

	Year	Fabrication		Falsification		Plagiarism		Misrepresentation		Breach of duty of care		Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct		Other	
		Completed	Upheld	Completed	Upheld	Completed	Upheld	Completed	Upheld	Completed	Upheld	Completed	Upheld	Completed	Upheld
AHRC	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BBSRC	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EPSRC	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ESRC	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

MRC	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NERC	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
STFC	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	0	0	0	0	March 20	Upheld in part	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0