

# Research Integrity Annual Statement

1<sup>st</sup> Aug 2020- 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021

## 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 2020/21

### 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.

- Since November 2019, the University has been a member of the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN), which 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 Surrey Reproducibility Society and the ReproducibiliTea journal club.
- Our local network lead represents Surrey as the UKRN local network lead at the recently formed 'West London Open Research group', comprised of local network leads from UKRN affiliated universities in the West London area. This group aims to work more closely together to enhance open research activities within and between our universities.
- The Science and Technology Committee recently launched an inquiry into research reproducibility (<https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/562/>). UKRN want to ensure our collective voice is heard and are preparing reports from the constituent parts of the network (local networks, institutions, and external stakeholders). Our network lead collaborated with other local network leads to collect and summarise the views of researchers and staff at Surrey, which will form part of the response.
- The Surrey Reproducibility Society helped organise the inaugural Open Research showcase event in March 2021.
- The ReproducibiliTea journal club is organised by our UKRN lead, as part of the Surrey Reproducibility Society. The club meets virtually once a month, where topics related to Open Research are discussed. Also, the society hosts a Monthly Mini Hack session which provides a platform for researchers to discuss code and data related issues within the open science framework.
- Alongside the ReproducibiliTea journal club, we host monthly open science workshops that are led by internal and external parties. Each of these workshops has been focused on an area of open science, such as machine learning approaches in open science, pre-registrations, and registered reports.
- In July 2021, the University of Surrey was ranked 13<sup>th</sup> for research culture out of 89 other institutions in the AdvanceHE Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), which provides robust, benchmark data from institutions across the UK.

## 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) Revisions/Changes to Existing Policies

- The **University Policy for Teaching and Research Ethics** was approved by Senate in June 2021. This policy was re-named to ensure that it was clear it encompassed research dissertations and other teaching-related interactions with human participants or animals. Also, the policy underwent some minor updates, including a new section on protecting the environment and a section on situations where there may be a breach of confidentiality.
- The **Ethics Guide** is a new document approved by Senate in June 2021. It is currently undergoing branding and will be released early in the 2021-22 academic year.
- The **Open Access** policy has been reviewed and approved by Senate in June 2021.
- The **Research Data Management Policy** has been reviewed and approved by Senate in June 2021.

## **b) Training/Awareness**

- Researcher Development & Employability (Doctoral College)
  - Researchers were supported by 304 workshops, sessions and events during the year provided through the Researcher Development and Employability Programme 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.
  - Researcher Development & Employability (RDE) also worked collaboratively with RIGO in their development of a bespoke PGR training workshop which will form part of the core Researcher Development Programme from September 2021. RDE also rolled out this year a new certificated blended Virt2ue Research Integrity programme for researchers to inspire virtuous behaviour and create a space to discuss personal challenges within research culture.
- The Research Integrity and Governance Office (RIGO) delivered virtual ethics and governance training to several groups/departments of researchers during the academic year.
- 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" which were also given last year. New sessions of training this year included Data Management Plan (DMP) training delivered to Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) faculty supervisors and Data Management for Online Research for FASS faculty researchers. Data Management Plans are now part of the PhD confirmation process.
- The Open Research team also provides the following training either via the Doctoral College programme or scheduled directly with the faculties:
  - Introduction to Open Research: as open as possible, as closed as necessary;
  - Open access to research publications;
  - Open Research web pages have been revised and updated;
  - Increasing the visibility of your research;
  - Open licences; and
  - Introduction to research metrics.
- A new online module about Open Research in practice has been designed and piloted and will be launched in the next academic year. It will introduce many aspects of Open Research relevant to different disciplines. On completion of the module, researchers will earn the Open Research badge: a verifiable, portable and shareable digital micro-credential with embedded information about the training.
- New data protection guidance notes, "Third Party Research Platforms Guidance", were produced, 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 Governance Unit delivered Data Protection 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 17 staff and students during the year. A further 23 researchers completed e-learning on 'Research that involves human tissue' and one researcher completed e-learning on 'Introduction to online consent'.
- RIGO continues to update its online guidance and templates for researchers.
- During 2020/21, members of RIGO attended the UKRIO 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.

The University is a member of Task Force Open Science within CESAER, a European initiative which has a strong voice in the discussion and implementation of open science.

#### **d) 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 Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation during this time, meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> Sept 2020, 24<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021, and 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

##### **Open Research Working Group (ORWG)**

Open research practices make research more accessible, transparent and reproducible. This engenders research improvement and ensures public trust in research. We are building an Open Research culture at Surrey.

This year, the University ran its inaugural Open Research case study competition. This recognised and rewarded researchers who use transparent practices and showcased these practices and their benefits to the wider community. As a result of the competition, we now have a suite of Open Research case studies on our website. These were showcased at our Open Research showcase event in March 2021.

Representatives from Wiley publishers were invited to run a workshop on the topics of “Data sharing” and “Your profile”, both of which are highly relevant to transparency and research integrity.

A new initiative was the launch of the Surrey Open Research Community in TEAMS, a place to exchange opinions, news and documents related to Open Research.

Other initiatives include:

- the launch of the responsible research assessment implementation plan;
- the migration of the institutional repository to a new platform Esporo, to house the University’s research outputs, including publications and datasets.

##### **University Ethics Committee (UEC)**

- **Ethics Process Review** - The School of Hospitality and Tourism and Events Management has led on the first Standard Study Protocol (SSP) being approved and signed off. SSPs are singular overarching protocol applications which prevent numerous smaller and similar proposals going through on an individual basis. These are to be used in areas of low-risk areas of research with large cohorts.
- **Researcher training** - The Chair of the University Ethics Committee has delivered several virtual ethics training sessions to specific groups/departments of researchers during the academic year.
- **Committee training** - The University Ethics Committee members (65) attended up to three virtual group training sessions in reviewing applications and amendments during the year, in October 2020, January 2021 and July 2021. New committee members were given virtual induction training at various sessions throughout the year.

##### **Research Data Governance and Operations Group (RDGOG)**

The University continues to work on creating and improving facilities and guidance for Data Protection 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 Governance Unit, the Library's Open Research team, Data InfoSec Steering Committee (DISC) and the Research Integrity and Governance Office (RIGO).

- Cyber Essentials Plus certification has been awarded to the University. This is a self-assessment process which is used to say certain data-storage areas of the University are sufficiently secure.
- Researchers using highly confidential data sets will now go through a new Confidential Research Data Assessment (CRDA) process. This will ensure that sensitive and confidential data is stored in a Trusted Research Environment. A new CRDA form will assist us in identifying research projects that are processing highly confidential data requiring external and internal control.

#### **Human Tissue Research Operations Group (HTROG)**

- HTROG oversees all human tissue research activity across the University.
- HTROG assists the Designated Individual (DI) in ensuring that the University is compliant with the 47 licensing standards required for Human Tissue Authority (HTA) Research Licence for the storage of relevant material held by the University of Surrey.
- HTROG helps ensure that all human samples (relevant material under the Human Tissue Act 2004) are either held under the authority of the HTA Licence, Health Research Authority (HRA) via favourable ethical opinion by NHS Research Ethics Committee (REC) or are exempt from either HTA or HRA licensing or approval, respectively.
- HTROG oversees that, for all human samples used for research purposes, the appropriate consent has been obtained.

#### **Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)**

- A new Chair of the University's Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) was appointed, and their term started in July 2021. The recruitment of a new Chair for the AWERB non-ASPA subcommittee is currently ongoing.
- The new AWERB Chair has updated the AWERB Terms of Reference. After approval by the Research Integrity and Governance Committee, they will be made accessible to the public, which is a milestone going forward contributing to the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK.
- The Home Office Animals in Science regulation Unit (ASRU), responsible for the administration and enforcement of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA), introduced significant changes to the way it will regulate and interact with research institutions. Main changes were communicated to stakeholders with a SurreyNet FaQ webpage (<https://surreynet.surrey.ac.uk/animals-science-regulations>).

## **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 and to be able to deal with all types of research misconduct. The update will bring about a closer working relationship with Human Resources and the provision of follow up support, via mentoring or other support systems. An appeals process will be integrated to bring the University of Surrey in

line with other institutions.

**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 2020/21, the University received eleven allegations for consideration, but none of these resulted in a formal investigation. Annexe 1 shows the number of completed formal investigations over the last three years.

Two allegations were investigated up to the preliminary screening stage. Each of these allegations was declared unfounded and dismissed and therefore did not proceed to formal investigation stage and is 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 University has not had any formal investigations this year but is committed to identifying and implementing improvements to reduce the risk of research misconduct.

The University will take a proactive stance to act upon misconduct cases to find the root cause, help eliminate any repeat occurrences and learn lessons for the future. An example of this is more monitoring of long-term projects, which would ensure a good culture of compliant research is promoted, as well as enforce the University's expectations with regards to good practice at the University.

**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 postgraduate research students can be reported by contacting the Director of the Doctoral College, or directly to the RIGO Team. 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 a "Report and Support" webpage 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 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020 - 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021

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 = 2021; year 2 = 2020; year 3 = 2019.
- “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	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0	March 20	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total (last 3 years)</b>		0	0	0	0	0	1 (2020)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0