Annual Statement on Research Integrity Activity 2016/17

The Annual Statement on Research Integrity for 2016/17 was approved by the Board of Governors on 20 November 2017.

1.   Background

The Concordat to Support Research Integrity was published in July 2012 by Universities UK. It was endorsed by the Research Ethics Committee in December 2012, and by June 2013 the University was a signatory. As a condition of funding, HEFCE require that all institutions signed up to the Concordat be compliant by 1 April 2014. Institutions are asked to confirm their compliance in the annual assurance statement, which is subject to routine audit.

One of the requirements of the Concordat is to produce a short annual statement to the Board of Governors that:

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

2.   Actions and activities undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues

Research integrity is overseen by the Research Ethics Committee (a sub-committee of Research and Innovation Committee). The following actions and activities have been undertaken in 2016/17

2.1   Staff Resources

The Faculty Research Ethics Directors continue to meet regularly with key staff in Research and Innovation Services to review processes and procedures for research ethics, making recommendations to Research Ethics Committee as appropriate.

2.2   Ethics Training

A standard ethics training presentation, for all faculties, delivered by the Faculty Research Ethics Directors, has been implemented since 2014/15.   This training is supplemented by Faculty-specific requirements and information. A mechanism has been established to identify new academic staff to the Faculty Research Ethics Directors in order that ethics training can be delivered as part of induction.

Research and Innovation Services and the faculty Research Ethics Directors are working on an online training module to ensure all staff are appropriately trained which will go live in October 2017.

2.4   Ethics Audit

A thematic audit of ethics processes relating to consultancy arrangements was carried out between May and July 2016. Overall, the audit raised some concerns in ensuring that staff are aware of when to apply for ethical approval for consultancy projects. These issues will continue to be taken forward into 2017/18.

2.5   System for Ethical Approval

A new online system for research ethics approvals went live in April 2017 for staff and postgraduate research projects. The system has been used successfully and s being rolled out to undergraduate and postgraduate taught students in 2017/18 academic year.

2.6   Requirements for Ethical Scrutiny and Review

This issue has been debated by Research Ethics Committee on several occasions, resulting in guidance for use by colleagues across the university to provide consistent advice on activities that require ethical scrutiny and review.

3.   Research Misconduct Policy

The Misconduct in Research Policy and Procedure was revised in 2013/14 is available to all staff through the Human Resources pages on the intranet.

4.   Formal Investigations into Research Misconduct

4.1   PGR Students

In the last year there has been 1 investigation, this related to plagiarism. No further action was taken, and it was resolved at stage 1 informal investigation.

4.2   Staff

In the last year there have been 2 investigations. Both were allegations of plagiarism. In both instances no further action was taken and were resolved at stage 1 informal investigation.