

Annual Statement on Research Integrity Activity 2015/16

The Annual Statement on Research Integrity for 2015/16 was approved by Board of Governors on 20 February 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 2015/16

2.1 Staff Resources

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

Administrative support for research ethics is now formally based in Research and Business Services with effect from 1 August 2015.

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 Business Services is working with Human Resources to develop a way to routinely capture attendance at ethics training so that the activity can be monitored.

2.4 Ethics Audit

A thematic audit of ethics processes relating to franchise and distance learning programmes was carried out between May and December 2015. Overall, the audit did not uncover any issues that were cause for concern, but did raise some issues for further investigation, notably consistency of processes across all faculties, and ethics training for staff delivering franchise programmes. These issues will continue to be taken forward into 2016/17.

2.5 System for Ethical Approval

Research Ethics Committee has agreed standard forms and templates for handling ethical approval across the Faculties, to ensure a consistency of approach across all academic areas. A project to develop a new on-line system to handle all research ethics approvals (for staff, PGR, PGT and UG students) is in progress. The anticipated delivery date is January 2017.

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 one informal investigations into research misconduct by PGR students. The allegations of academic misconduct were upheld. The first case was pre-submission; the misconduct was plagiarism (minor). The student was required to work through the submitted chapter, and resubmit via Turnitin. They were also required to undertake training and development on referencing and avoiding plagiarism.

4.2 Staff

In the last year there have been no formal investigations into research misconduct by staff.