UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL *AND* RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE COMMITTEE *AND*

UNIVERSITY ETHICS AND INTEGRITY COMMITTEE

September 2021

Annual Research Integrity Statement

The Concordat to Support Research Integrity requires employers of researchers to provide a short annual (publicly available) statement that must include:

- a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and the application of research integrity issues (for example postgraduate and researcher training, or process reviews)
- 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
- 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
- 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
- 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

This statement is drafted by the Research Integrity Working Group (RWIG) and addresses the above points.

Investigations of allegations of misconduct in research

This report covers 30/06/2020 – 01/07/2021

During the reporting period, one formal investigation was initiated as outlined in Table 1.

Staff

Table 1 - Formal Research Misconduct investigations

Ref	Nature of Allegation(s)	Outcome	Institutional Learning
CLS/1/2020-21	There was an allegation of plagiarism relating to grant applications	Allegation not upheld	Training on Research Misconduct should be rolled out for all staff. Clearer guidance documents are required to support timely and efficient Research Misconduct investigations. See Appendix A for progress and future actions.

The University adopts the UK Research Integrity Office (an independent charity providing advice and support to the public, researchers and organisations to further good practice in research) Procedure for investigating allegations of Research Misconduct.

Internal guidance is in place for researchers around the reporting and investigation of Research Misconduct. This was created in conjunction with the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), and previously believed to ensure transparent, timely, robust and fair investigations. However, on conclusion of case CLS/1/2020-21 it was clear that both those conducting the investigation and those giving evidence did not feel the documentation supported them sufficiently through the process.

The RWIG are working on new guidance for researchers which not only outlines the process, but also provides frequently asked questions to support those who are involved in the process. This will be provided to researchers and their representatives at the beginning of the process.

Separately a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), along with template letters are being created to guide those conducting any investigation. These will help ensure that the process is fair, transparent and timely. The SOPs will be approved by the University Ethics and Integrity Committee.

Those involved with the investigation have stated that mandatory training for all research staff on Research Misconduct (including plagiarism), is essential to ensure that similar issues do not occur again. The RIWG conducted a survey of postgraduate students to ascertain their views of the existing online training package used. Feedback was overwhelming positive, however on reviewing the content, it was felt that the course would be too time consuming to deliver to all research staff.

The Ethics and Integrity Manager is working with the RIWG, Organisational Development and the Doctoral College to identify learning objectives and content for mandatory training for research active staff. This should be created and implemented in 2022.

Embedding a culture conducive to researchers understanding research integrity and reporting research misconduct

In the reporting period we have undertaken significant reviews of key University policies to support researchers understanding of research integrity and research misconduct. The following policies have been updated:

- Research Ethics Policy
- Research Code of Conduct
- Researching and Handling Sensitive, Extreme and Radical Material Policy

In addition to this, the updated policies have been supported by updates to the Research Ethics Governance and Integrity (REGI) webpages which aim to guide researchers to operate to best practice and account for the policy changes. Email and Sharepoint bulletins have also been utilised to ensure that researchers are aware of the policy updates.

Appendix A provides a breakdown of other work undertaken along with current challenges and planned actions for the next year.

Appendix B provides a breakdown of integrity related risks to the University and actions being taken

Appendix A – Summary of challenges and actions

Concordat Commitment	What we achieved in 2020/21	Challenges	Planned actions for 2021/22
1. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.	RIWG conducted evaluation of Epigeum training package for staff. Continued work on creation of a blackboard module to make mandatory for all staff who are involved with research.	Limited staff time to progress online training means this work will continue as a priority task into 2022. Non-Sponsored (NHS) projects do not receive a formal research governance check in the same way that Sponsored projects do. Medical/Clinical research projects pose a risk of non-compliance and should receive a specialised Governance Review the same as Sponsored projects.	Implement online training for all staff in Research Misconduct including addition of training to induction checklists. Implement revised Code of conduct via email bulletins and videos. Review processes around governance checks for Non-Sponsored projects to ensure equitable reviews and support.
2. We are committed to ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.	Launch of new REGI web pages bringing together guidance for researchers on these topics. Introduced email bulletins updating staff on regulatory changes. Requested changes to the Online Ethics system to drive up compliance with obligations.	Online system has limited in functionality to effectively meet the needs of the University to drive compliance with this commitment. Internal guidance required on the use of social media data in research to help guide researchers. Limited guidance for staff on appropriate tools and facilities for data processing.	Support implementation of Work Tribe, the new research management system and identify how this can be used to support this commitment. Work across departments to put into place guidance on: - Social media data use - Frequently Asked Questions for data processing and storage
3. We are committed to supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice	Revised the Ethics Policy. Revised the Sensitive, Extreme and Radical Material (SERM) Policy, convened the first meeting of the Advisory Group on SERM, and	Ensuring that governance arrangements for Research and Enterprise are joined up and transparent	Complete 'Shaping for Excellence' programme which aims to deliver a reconfigured RED team 'to provide proactive and high-quality professional support across the full research ,enterprise and postgraduate

and support for the development of researchers.	implemented the associated Standard Operating Procedures.		research (PGR) student lifecycles'. This will allow a joined up approach to all RED polices. Implement online training for all staff in Research Misconduct Implement revised Code of Conduct via email bulletins and videos. Revise Sponsor Standard Operating Procedures.
4. We are committed to using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.	Research Code of Conduct updated through extensive consultation.	Effective support for staff conducting Research Misconduct investigations.	Implement revised Code of Conduct and Standard Operating Procedures for the management of Research Misconduct
5. We are committed to working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.	Improved reporting between various groups and committees on integrity matters, including from Research Integrity Working Group, University Ethics and Integrity Committee and the Research and Enterprise Committee. The Chair of the University Ethics and Integrity Committee is now an Ex-officio member of the Research and Enterprise Committee, allowing for informed discussion of the integrity agenda.	Current research management systems are not as joined up as they could be.	Complete 'Shaping for Excellence' programme which aims to deliver a reconfigured RED team 'to provide proactive and high-quality professional support across the full research ,enterprise and postgraduate research (PGR) student lifecycles'. This will allow a joined up approach including the implementation of Work Tribe.

Appendix B - Risk factors

A number of integrity-related risks have been identified which could have serious consequences for the University, should they arise. The table below sets out:

- The key risks and potential consequences;
- Identified mitigations;
- Risk before mitigation (high / medium / low: red / amber / green);
- Residual risk after mitigation.

Table 2 - Current Integrity Related Risks

Risk and consequences	Mitigation	Initial risk	Remaining risk
Failure to have appropriate integrity and ethics systems and training has potential for reputational and financial damage.	RWIG is working to identify or create suitable training. Online ethics training is provided to PGR students.	High	Medium
Failure to have suitable systems for ethical review in place for both NHS and other projects, or failure to adhere to procedures, regulations and Codes is both a reputational and financial risk. It has been identified that the current process and systems for Ethical approval and monitoring of research & enterprise activity within the University of Leicester are lacking robust features to support the effective and efficient oversight of projects.	REGI, the RIWG and UEIC are working together to review IT solutions and updated policies and procedures to address this issue. 'Shaping for Excellence' programme which aims to deliver a reconfigured RED team 'to provide proactive and high-quality professional support across the full research ,enterprise and postgraduate research (PGR) student lifecycles'. This will allow a joined up approach to all RED polices. The University is implementing Work Tribe as a research management platform which will support controlling this risk. The University is also exploring Infonectica as a research approvals system.	High	Medium
Failure to investigate allegations of research misconduct fairly, and to deal appropriately and promptly with the findings has potential for reputational and financial damage.	Research Code of Conduct sets out what misconduct is and how it will be investigated. Underpinned by Disciplinary Ordinance and new process flowchart.	Medium	Low
Failure to provide adequate responses to assurance questions risks reputational damage with key funding bodies and, in the extreme, removal of funding.	Work across professional services and with Colleges to ensure prompt and accurate responses to audits etc.	Medium	Low

Failure to adhere to any of the five principles of the Concordat, which the University has publicly endorsed, is a reputational risk.	The publication of this report, along with the activities outlined, above provide assurance of commitment to the Concordat.	Medium	Low