UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL

March 2023 (Final version)

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 30/06/2021 – 01/07/2022

During the reporting period, there were no reports of and cases of Research Misconduct.

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.

[Guidance for researchers at the University of Leicester on Research Misconduct](#) is in place for researchers around the reporting and investigation of Research Misconduct. This was updated in 2022 alongside the creation of a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), along with template letters designed to better support the management of allegations of research misconduct.

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

During the year the Research Integrity Working Group (RIWG) and the Ethics and Integrity Team have worked towards the actions detailed in the previous reports (see appendix A for an update). In

the main the actions were completed, however there remains a lack of universal training provision for research staff across the university on Research Misconduct and good research practice.

The RIWG conducted work to identify appropriate content and devise methods of delivery based on a survey they conducted. It has been challenging to implement this content due to changes that are underway with the current mandatory training processes. Further work is currently being progressed in 2022/23 year.

The Dean for Research Excellence will take on leadership for embedding research integrity and good research practice across the University of Leicester. A Research Integrity Strategy will be created to support the work.

Appendix A provides a breakdown of work undertaken 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	Planned actions for 2021/22	How did we do against our plan?		Planned actions for 2022/2023
1. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.	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.	The Code of Conduct was launched through bulletins and online updates during the year. A review was undertaken of non-sponsored projects which identified the need for revised processes to support appropriate governance. The University has invested ~£50,000 in a new research approvals system to support this.	✓	We will develop and start to deliver on an Integrity Road Map which will outline our strategy for embedding further good research practice and awareness of research misconduct across the institution.
	Implement online training for research staff in Research Misconduct including addition of training to induction checklists.	Mandating online training for research staff in Research Misconduct has not been possible during the year.	✗	Enhanced training will form a key pillar of the Research Integrity Road Map with provision of online and face to face training appropriate to research staff launched within the year. Further, communication and awareness raising strategies will be developed.

| 2. We are committed to ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards. | 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 | WorkTribe will be launched in January 2023, which will support our researchers to address the issues of Commitment 2 at the very earliest stages of their project. The Ethics & Integrity Team have supported the process flow development.

A gap analysis was undertaken of our ethics provision and the findings from this are being addressed alongside the implementation of the new research approvals system.

Although some guidance was issued around social media, one finding from the gap analysis was that further work is required to ensure that the organisation has appropriate support and guidance in place for social media, data science and artificial intelligence to meet the emerging ethical and legal issues in these areas. | ✓ | Develop comprehensive webpages providing guidance on the use of Social Media, AI and machine learning in research, including a Frequently Asked Questions section for ease of use.

Investigate ways to deliver an assurance plan, and resources to deliver it, across the institution to ensure that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.

Implement Infonetica as the new research approvals system to support enhanced compliance with ethical, legal and professional frameworks. |

3. We are committed to supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers.	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 to all RED polices.	Shaping for Excellence was completed within the year and an Ethics and Integrity Advisor was appointed to support the University's commitment under the concordat. The Dean for Research Excellence has added Research Integrity oversight to their portfolio of work to support improvements.	✓	Development of a Research Integrity Road Map to embed a culture of integrity based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers.
	Implement online training for all staff in Research Misconduct.	Mandating online training for all staff in Research Misconduct has not been possible during the year.	✗	
	Implement revised Code of Conduct via email bulletins and videos.	Code of Conduct implemented	✓	
	Revise Sponsor Standard Operating Procedures.	Sponsor Standard Operating Procedures updated and implemented.	✓	
4. We are committed to using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.	Implement revised Code of Conduct and Standard Operating Procedures for the management of Research Misconduct	Code of Conduct was implemented alongside Standard Operating Procedures for the investigation of allegations of Research Misconduct.	✓	We will publish our Standard Operating Procedures for Investigating Cases of Research Misconduct on our external website along with anonymised synopsis of the outcomes of any research misconduct cases, to include any organisational learning.
5. We are committed to working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.	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)	Complete.	✓	We will publish the outline of our Research Integrity Road Map on our external website along with updates on our progress.

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 1 - 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 was 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.	Ethics & Integrity Team work closely with Research Governance and departments to ensure that projects are reviewed and approved in a timely manner, utilising manual processes to mitigate risks as far as possible. Implementation of a new online research approvals process (Infonetica) will help reduce this risk further once implemented. The University is also implementing Work Tribe as a research management platform which will also support controlling this risk.	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. This is now supported by Standard Operating Procedures for process. This risk remains due to the lack of mandated training.	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