

University of Hull Annual Statement of Research Integrity 2016

Background

In July 2012, Universities UK published the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (July 2012): a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance. HEFCE, NIHR, RCUK and the Wellcome Trust are included among its signatories, and HEFCE, in particular, has stipulated that compliance with the Concordat is a condition of the HEFCE grant from 2015/16.

The Concordat requires that the University submit an annual statement to its governing body that:

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

The University therefore provides the following assurances that measures are being taken to continue supporting consistently high standards of research integrity.

Statement

The University of Hull takes seriously its commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The University Concordat Steering Group, a sub-grouping of the University Research Committee, is tasked with ensuring that the continues to provide an environment that supports good research practices that generates both robust and quality research. The Steering Group is committed to continued development of practices to reflect changes in expectations of the research sector and the needs of the researcher. To address these issues, the work of the Steering Group has focussed across seven areas, but with focus on three main themes: governance, training and dissemination.

A. Staffing

The University acknowledges the importance of the research integrity and ethics agenda within the research activities and therefore has appointed Research Governance and Policy Manager whose remit includes governance around research integrity and ethics. The immediate priority of this post has been to develop a new research governance framework to provide clear guidance on the University's expectations of good research practices. This has included the review, amendment and production of a series of governance documents. This post also provides a clear point of contact for guidance on internal and external governance expectations for the University's research community.

B. Governance

The Research Governance and Policy Manager has made progress with developing the Research Governance Framework, which has produced the following documents:

- i) Code of Good Research Practice has been approved and is available to all staff. This document sets out to clearly describe the expected practices in the pursuit of research at the University.

- ii) Code of Research Ethics has been reviewed and updated. This document is sets out to clearly guide all University staff and students in the principles and good practice for conducting ethical research. It sets out the expectations and responsibilities of roles of staff and students involved in ethical review processes to ensure a robust system that supports good research. This document is awaiting formal approval.
- iii) Procedures for Granting Ethical Approval is under review and will be updated to reflect the recent changes in University structure (introduction of Schools in the place of Departments and a restructure of Faculties) and a more efficient, approval process which will be aligned with a new University Research Information System.
- iv) Research Guidance notes have begun to be drafted covering a range of more specific areas of research, including Radical, Extremism and Sensitive Research; Working with Animals; Working with Children and Working with Human Tissue. These will be referenced and linked from the more generic and broader based Codes described above.

C. Restructure of the Concordat Steering Group

The Concordat Steering Group is a subgroup of the University Research and Enterprise Committee with a broad membership from across the University, including both academics and service areas across the University. After two years of convening, the membership was reviewed. While making significant progress in supporting the Concordat, the membership was amended to include more senior members of the University that could provide enhanced strategic oversight of the activities and more direct authority to implement any recommended changes. These changes will ensure continued Concordat compliance and the continued development of quality research support that go beyond the expectations of the Concordat.

D. Training

Research integrity training for post graduate research students:

The first year of mandatory research integrity training for post graduate research students has been delivered as part of the PGTS. The programme was delivered to all PhD students in their first year with a 2015 entry, and will be delivered again in this next academic year. Of the faculties hosting the research integrity training, 87% of first year PhD students have attended the course while only 39% completed the module within the first year. Continued monitoring of completion rates is in place to ensure that all areas comply with the training requirements. HYMS have prepared a research integrity module to be delivered in the 2016/17 academic year.

Research ethics and integrity training for staff:

Following the establishment of the PhD student training programme, focus has been now being directed to developing research integrity and ethics training for staff. This includes both research and research support staff. These courses are being developed as part of a larger “researcher development” programme with ethics and integrity being the highest priorities within a broader mix. The University Ethics Committee have approved faculties to generate in-house workshop based training with the support of Staff Development. Research ethics and integrity expert Dr Andrew Rawnsley, has been invited to deliver two workshops for the University scheduled to be delivered in February 2017. One of these workshops aims to support faculty researcher ethics leaders to develop in house training programmes. Funding requests for developing an online ethics training programme are expected to be submitted in the next budget round.

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A revised and enhanced researcher development programme is in development which aims to provide the researchers with relevant information and skills to support the conduct of good research practices. It is expected that the new programme will be live in the next academic year in 2017/18

E. External body membership

The University keeps abreast of the current best practice and sector wide issues through its membership with various external bodies, including UKRIO and ARMA. Appropriate members of staff have been encouraged to attend various meeting and feedback to the appropriate staff of the research community.

The University continues its membership of UKRIO and had attendance at the annual conference and Training and Development Workshop, as well as attendance at the Research Ethics Network host by UCL giving us the opportunity understand sector-wide practices and seek advice on institutionally specific issues. The Research Ethics Network continues to be a source of informal support from other research ethics support staff from across the sector.

As members of ARMA, the University had attendance to various ARMA workshops covering publication ethics and developing research ethics management systems. Our delegates at the annual ARMA conference attended the sessions relevant research ethics, obtaining guidance on best practice and sector wide issues.

All notes from these meetings have been shared across the faculties and with the Research Governance and Policy Manager to inform the changes being developed.

F. Process review

The University has begun to develop a new procedure for applying and approving research ethics applications. The intention is to streamline the process across the University to generate a simple and robust system that is universally accessible for all researchers and research support staff. By generating such system, it is expected that the research community will be able to actively engage with the integrity and ethics agenda. The process has been developed in consultation with the key stakeholders including, but not exclusively, the Faculty and University Ethics Committees, the Associate Deans for Research, Directors of Institutes, the University Director of Research, research administrative staff and the Research Governance and Policy Manager.

The first stage of implementing this new procedure was the development and inclusion of the Research Ethics Checklist in the work flow of the University's new Worktribe Research Information System (RIS). The intention of the checklist is to encourage researchers to consider the ethical implications of their research and direct them to support where required at the conception stage. The first version went live in August 2016 and the Systems Project Manager continues to collate user feedback to further develop the checklist. The intention longer term is to migrate the newly established approval procedure onto the RIS and thus to fully integrate it into the normal workflow of any research lifecycle.

G. Website development

The Steering Group has continued its effort to increase accessibility and visibility of the University's expectations of the standard of research conduct by developing a series of webpages available internally and publicly available. These include Research Integrity website that links into the three University Concordat pages and research misconduct page. These pages provide clear guidance on the University's commitment to research integrity and the

expectations of all staff and students involved in research at or under the guise of the University (<http://www2.hull.ac.uk/researchsupport/research-integrity.aspx>)

Research Misconduct Formal Investigations

Within the reporting period, no formal investigations of research misconduct have been conducted on staff or students.

Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Enterprise

Dr David Richards

November 2016