

University of Hull Annual Statement of Research Integrity 2017

Over the last twelve months, the University of Hull has undergone an institution-wide shape and size process that has led to the restructure of all faculties and the creation of university level research institutes. The University has moved away from faculties comprising departments to combining departments into less but larger schools operating within a revised set of four faculties. As part of this restructure, several school and subject areas have been relocated into different faculties affecting some of the procedures and processes that govern research across the institution.

Statement

The University of Hull takes seriously its commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The University Concordat Steering Group is tasked with ensuring that the University continues to provide an environment that supports good research practices that generates 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 on three main themes: governance, training and dissemination. The focus of the activities relating to the Concordat for Supporting Research Integrity over the last 12 months has been on developing a new research governance framework, ensuring that this is in line with other areas of governance and implemented consistently across the institution. We have also focused our efforts on developing training for staff members involved in research and providing clear guidance on best practice.

A) Governance

The Research Governance and Policy Manager (a new role) with support of key stakeholders has been developing the Research Governance Framework. The structure can be seen in Figure 1. The Framework sets out to support researchers to navigate the internal and external expectations of research practices.

University of Hull Research Governance Framework

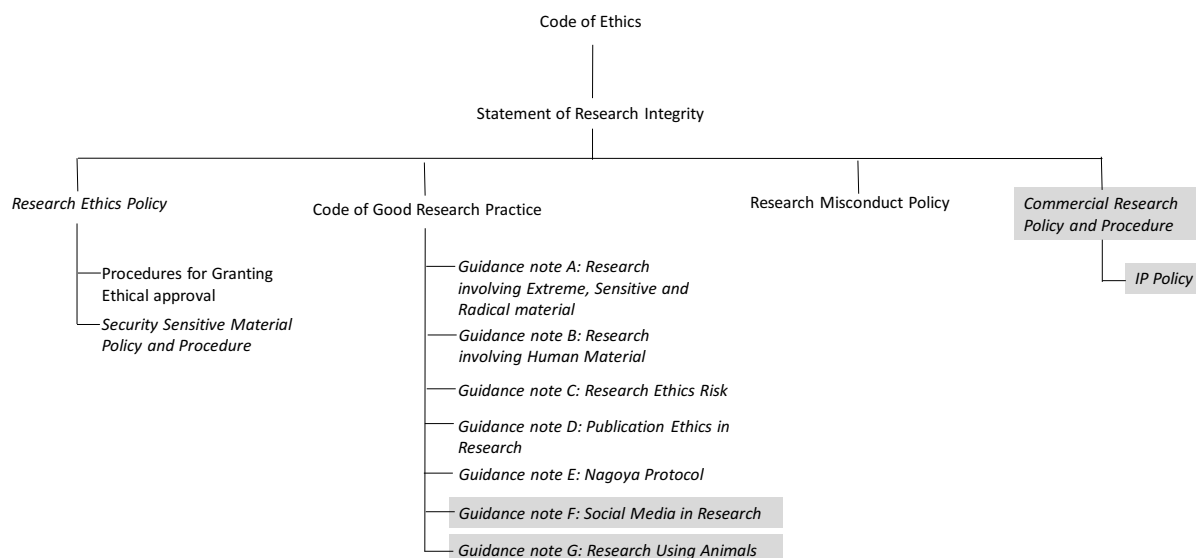


Figure 1. Research Governance Framework. Italicised titles indicates the document is in production; grey box titles indicates the document is planned for production within the next 6 months.

The Research Ethics Policy and the updated Procedure for granting Ethical Approval are completed and are awaiting approval by Senate following the recommendations from the University Ethics Committee.

While the framework for the research governance is being established, it is important that this is consistent with other governance frameworks within the institution. A collaborative relationship has therefore been forged between with the Central Governance team and the Research Governance and Policy Manager, leading to the joint production of the several of the documents.

While most research institutes are still in their infancy of establishment, all Directors of the new University wide Institutes have been engaged in discussions regarding the role of the Research Governance Framework in their areas to ensure the good practice across all areas of the University.

B) Training

There has been a heavy focus on developing training to support the new governance framework and thus ensure all staff and research students understand the expectations of the University and practical application of ethical principles in research.

Students: PhD Research Integrity PGTS module

All First year PhD students are now required and expected to complete a PGTS Research integrity training module. Attendance and compliance is as follows across the four faculties.

Faculty of Science and Engineering 83%

Faculty of Arts, Culture and Education: 89%

Faculty of Business, Law and Politics: 61%

Faculty of Health Sciences: Not yet available, this is newly formed faculty.

While there has been an increase in the compliance rate for this course compared to last year (39% for 2015/16; 77% for 2016/17), there is still a significant portion of students not yet engaged in the training. Some students were granted exemptions through the Graduate School, this does not however account for the non-compliant students. Attention will therefore be given to routes of engagement for students located off campus, either heavily involved in field work, based overseas or part time.

Staff: With the support of the Concordat Steering Group, Staff Development secured funds for and have been developing, an online research integrity training programme for all staff. It is expected that this programme will be launched in November 2017.

Research and Innovation hosted an ethics training day led by Prof. Margaret Rees that comprised two sessions: a senior research management briefing and train-the-trainer session. These sessions were intended to support faculties generating their own training programmes covering discipline specific needs that complement the online training module for staff. Faculties are developing training plans that will be submitted to the Research Governance and Policy Manager so that a coherent programme can be generated over the next 12 months and made accessible to all relevant parties.

C) Ethics Process review

To reflect the changes in the University academic structure, the process of seeking ethical approval was reviewed and a proposal for a new system, that ensures a robust and appropriate mechanism is in place to support good research. There are 3 phases of this plan: 1) the ethics checklist on a new Research Information System (RIS), 2) new approval process on hardcopy form and 3) planned transfer onto an online platform.

A Research Ethics Checklist has been included on the RIS and is available for use. When researchers register a project on the system, a Ethics Checklist is accessible and has to be completed in order to establish the level of ethics approval needed for the project.

A large focus of this year's activities have been on establishing a new process that is suitable for all research across the institution that is proportionate and efficient. It needs to support cross discipline research and accessible for projects led by the research institutes. The intention is to implement a new institutional wide ethical review procedure in hard copy form, with a plan to review the process after six months. Following the review of new process, it will be migrated onto an online platform with the intention to adopt the RIS for this. A proposal that reflects these needs has been generated, recommended by the University Ethics Committee and awaits approval by Senate in November 2017. Following approval of the new process, the next stage of implementation will be actioned immediately.

D) External engagement

The University strives to keep abreast of a new and emerging expectations in research practices that includes research integrity and ethics. The University continues to be a member of UKRIO and ARMA, with representatives present at both Annual Conference. We continue to seek support from the UKRIO and ARMA on research ethics and integrity related issues. University staff attended a number workshops through the year covering publication ethics, ethical review systems and Nagoya Protocol. 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. We have joined the North East Ethics Group that comprises of representatives from Teeside, Northumbria, Newcastle, Durham and AfRE, where practices and challenges are shared between institutions. Our membership in this group has been invaluable as it has been a platform to access sector information not widely disseminated.

The University Ethics committee and faculty committees have been registered with the Office of Human Research Protection in the USA, reflecting the University's commitment to ensuring our structures and practices meet the expectations of our external partners.

E) Communication platforms

The University webpage is undergoing a major transformation and research-focussed pages will be part of the second phase of this project. The webpage transformation has involved a reprioritisation of included content to reflect the targeted audience and research governance pages were deemed to be internal facing only going forward. As a result, a research governance Sharepoint site is in development and is expected to be available for staff in October 2017.

Research misconduct investigations

Within the reporting period of 2016/2017, the University of Hull reports for staff and student researchers:

Allegations: 7

Still under investigation:3

Upheld:1

Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Enterprise

Dr David Richards

November 2017