

University of St Andrews

Research Integrity statement for academic year 2016-17

The importance of the Concordat to the University

The UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity (Universities UK, 2012) provides a comprehensive framework to assist institutions in ensuring the identified principles are embedded into how research is conducted.

The University of St Andrews fully supports the principles laid out in the Concordat and this report summarises the arrangements for ensuring that the institution is fully engaged in understanding and supporting research integrity issues, recent developments in those arrangements, and plans for future developments.

Supporting and strengthening research integrity

Governance and operational support

Arrangements as of August 2017

The Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation) is the senior member of staff with responsibility for overseeing research integrity, and acts as the first point of contact for anyone who: wishes to make an enquiry regarding or raise a concern about research integrity; or make an allegation of research misconduct.

We have in place a point of contact to act as confidential liaison for whistleblowers or any other person wishing to raise concerns about the integrity of research. Details on our whistleblowing policy can be found [here](#).

Institutional-level oversight of, and assurance to University Court regarding, the University's engagement with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity is provided by the University Ethics & Research Integrity Assurance Group (EARIAG). This Group is chaired by the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation), meets twice annually, and receives reports from the University Teaching & Research Ethics Committee (UTREC, the ethics committee for research involving humans: directly as subjects, or indirectly through use of data, records or biological samples), the Animal Welfare Ethics Committee (AWEC, the ethics committee for research involving animals), and the Research Integrity Working Group (RIWG, the committee that provides operational oversight of the University's engagement with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity).

Convened by the Research Policy Office, the RIWG comprises staff-level representatives of the Centre for Academic, Professional and Organisational Development (CAPOD), UTREC, AWEC, and an academic representative. When appropriate, the RIWG has welcomed other guests. The group has been meeting at least every two months since late August 2015, with a temporary hiatus from November 2016 to June 2017 due to a staff shortage. The RIWG is represented on, and works closely with, the HR Excellence in Research Award working group which focuses on implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

The University is also a subscriber to the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), which has resulted in access to expert information and advice from the UKRIO team and attendance at UKRIO events, which provide valuable learning and networking opportunities for members of the RIWG.

Relevant institutional developments and/or activities during AY2016-17

The group providing institutional oversight of, and assurance to University Court regarding, the University's engagement with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity formally changed its remit and name, regarding the latter from the University Ethics Assurance Group to the University Ethics & Research Integrity Assurance Group.

For clarity, and because of the importance of research integrity, we established a separate email account for anyone with queries on matters of research integrity (researchintegrity@st-andrews.ac.uk).

Looking ahead to AY2017-18

A restructure in support staff will take place: existing support functions for AWEC (the Home Office Liaison Officer) and UTREC (the UTREC Officer), and the convenor of the RIWG, who co-ordinates the institution-wide work on research integrity (the Senior Research Policy and Integrity Manager), will be brought alongside each other within a Research Policy and Ethics Office situated within a new University unit called Research and Innovation Services.

Policy

Arrangements as of August 2017

St Andrews has in place fair and transparent Good Research Practice policies and procedures (the document containing these is referred to henceforth as 'the GRP'), which define good practice and research misconduct, and describes the process for making and handling allegations of research misconduct.¹

Relevant institutional developments and/or activities during AY2016-17

Following analysis undertaken in 2015-16, in 2016-17 the RIWG steered a considerable amount of development of new policy, process and guidance that will be more robust and better reflect best practice through improved incorporation of relevant external requirements and guidance. This focused on the updating of the GRP into two new documents: a 'Principles of Good Research Conduct' that will sit amidst comprehensive yet concise and navigable guidance on a new dedicated set of publicly-accessible webpages; and a 'Policy and Procedure for Handling and Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct'. Both will apply to all individuals undertaking research activity under the auspices of the University and will be reviewed annually.

A review commenced of the arrangements for providing ethics approval for research that involves human participants, either directly or through use of their data, records, or biological samples. It considered a range of aspects, including support services, processes, procedures, policy, information and software.

Looking ahead to AY2017-18

The drafts of these documents, which have been developed through extensive engagement with support staff from across the University and at other Universities, will be provided to support and research staff for consultation, after which approval will be sought from relevant University committees. After their development and implementation, the RIWG will seek to steer:

- The undertaking of annual review involving consultation with support staff and academics, for consideration by the RIWG and EARIAG.
- Engagement with the Directors of Research in every School to assist with the advertising and dissemination of the new policy, process and guidance by facilitating the sharing of best practice, delivering talks/workshops and producing School-tailored advertising, guidance and induction materials.

The outcomes of the review of the arrangements for providing ethics approval for research that involves human participants will be taken forward.

The Senior Research Policy and Integrity Manager will take on operational responsibility for fulfilling the University's role as 'Sponsor' of NHS-related research, as per the UK policy framework for health and social care research², relating to general research governance oversight of NHS-related research. An analysis of arrangements for compliance will identify if and where 'joining-up' of processes and/or the work of relevant support staff is required.

The interface between the work of the RIWG and the preparations for REF2021 will be considered by the RIWG and the University's Research Excellence Board (which will make key decisions relating to institutional preparations for the exercise), with the Research Policy and Ethics Office acting as a bridge.

¹ <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/research/policies/researchintegrity/>

² <http://beta.hra.nhs.uk/documents/1068/uk-policy-framework-health-social-care-research.pdf>

Training

Arrangements as of August 2017

The University's Centre for Academic, Professional and Organisational Development (CAPOD) provides a range of training opportunities for staff and students. The coverage of research integrity was mapped out in 2015-16 and 2016-17, and future plans were identified. Active development of new training opportunities was put on hold until policy development had progressed further.

Ongoing monitoring and review of integrity-relevant awareness-raising and training provision will be undertaken by the RIWG, working with and reporting to the EARIAG.

Relevant institutional developments and/or activities during AY2016-17

A number of postgraduate researcher (PGR) training opportunities were introduced and/or adjusted to place greater emphasis on research integrity, as follows

- Placed more focus on copyright in the mandatory half-day "PGR essentials" by introducing a 10-minute slot titled "Copyright: Keeping it legal (for teaching and research) "
- Introduced a once-a-semester (since Semester 1) optional 3-hour GRADskills workshop on "Research Data Management". First and second workshops had 5 and 6 participants, respectively.
- Introduced a once-a-semester (since Semester 2) optional workshop on copyright issues for teaching and research. First workshop had 7 participants.
- Introduced a once-a-semester (since Semester 2) optional workshop on the research information system Pure. First workshop had 7 participants.

Staff and PGR induction were adjusted to better incorporate research integrity content.

Looking ahead to AY2017-18

The training offering and induction coverage relating to research integrity will be reviewed and we will aim for the following to be put in place: improved coverage at University-level student and staff induction; greater visibility in University- and School-level induction materials and processes; online training; and a face-to-face workshop.

Monitoring and evaluation

Arrangements as of August 2017

The University monitors awareness of research integrity issues via the relevant question in the biennial Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS). The trend in positive responses to the question "How would you rate your knowledge and understanding of the following UK initiatives relevant to research staff...Concordat to Support Research Integrity" has been as follows: 2013, 26.8%; 2015, 21.7% (-5.1%, x0.8 from 2013); and 2017, 32.1% (+10.4%, x1.5 from 2015). Although there is still much room for improvement, the existence of the RIWG and its work has coincided with a reversal of trend from 2013-2015, such that in the period 2015-2017, 1.5 times the staff became aware of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, more than in 2013 and thus the highest ever percentage since the Concordat's publication.

Relevant institutional developments and/or activities during AY2016-17

None.

Looking ahead to AY2017-18

The RIWG will devise a range of indicators that will capture heightened consideration and discussion of, and institutional support for, research integrity, anticipating that they will be included in and tracked using a new biennial researcher survey undertaken by Research and Innovation Services.

Training and staff datasets will be linked, which will allow for reporting of aggregate data on the proportions of staff attending induction and training events by discipline and career stage.

External engagement

Arrangements as of August 2017

Regarding research integrity broadly, the University is a member of UKRIO. Regarding research involving animals, the University is a member of the East of Scotland and Islands AWERB hub (the Home Office has facilitated the creation of these regional AWERB 'hubs' comprising members from geographically close institutions as platforms for inter-University support).

Relevant institutional developments and/or activities during AY2016-17

A member of the RIWG attended the UKRIO annual conference in May 2017.

In the development of the new policies and guidance, conversations were had with research integrity leads at other UK universities.

Looking ahead to AY2017-18

The University intends to remain a member of UKRIO.

Once our policies, guidance, training and monitoring are in place, we may seek to contribute more substantially to conferences and workshops.

Addressing research misconduct

Academic year 2016/17			
Inquiries made	1		
Ongoing investigations	0		
Allegations received and investigations undertaken	1	<i>Upheld</i>	1
		<i>Dismissed</i>	-

Definitions:

- 'Inquiries made' refers to clarifications sought by an individual as to whether a particular activity and/or example scenario may constitute/include an act of research misconduct.
- 'Allegations received and investigations undertaken' refers to the receipt of a formal allegation in writing and its handling in accordance with the relevant section of our Good Research Practice Policy and Procedures.

One allegation was investigated in accordance with the process contained within our Good Research Practice Policy and Procedures (2016) and upheld. Action was taken to correct the research record, but no disciplinary action was required due to the act being unintentional and insufficiently serious.

The experience of undertaking this investigation highlighted a number of issues that have informed ongoing development of the research integrity provisions at the University, including; the need to describe the distinct steps of the investigation process in any new policy document, including communication with all parties involved, for the purposes of transparency; consideration of how to take corrective actions so as to not negatively impact parties who have a stake in the outcome but are not responsible for the act; and the need for dedicated and specialised human resource to administrate and advise on the handling and investigation of allegations of research misconduct.

Current policy arrangements and ongoing developments are described in the relevant section above.