

University of St Andrews

Research Integrity statement for academic year 2017-18

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 2018

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

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 teaching and research activities 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 Committee (RIC, 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 RIC comprises staff-level representatives of the Centre for Academic, Professional and Organisational Development (CAPOD), UTREC, AWEC, and an academic representative. When appropriate, the RIC 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 RIC 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 RIC.

Relevant institutional developments and/or activities during AY2017-18

A restructure in support staff took place: existing support functions for UTREC (the UTREC Officer) and AWEC (the Home Office Liaison Officer), and the convenor of the RIC, who co-ordinates the institution-wide work on research

integrity (the Senior Research Policy and Integrity Manager), were brought alongside each other within a Research Policy and Ethics Office situated within a new University unit called Research and Innovation Services. This has resulted in some additional resource for research integrity from the Home Office Liaison Officer.

Improved academic representation on the Research Integrity Committee was secured, now containing one representative from Sciences, and one representative from Arts/Humanities/Social Sciences.

The institutional webpage was updated to describe the institutional and operational level oversight of research integrity.

Looking ahead to AY2018-19

A University Research Committee was formed in early 2018, chaired by the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation), and comprising the Assistant Vice-Principal (Collections and Digital Content) and the University's 21 Directors of Research. It is expected that RIC will provide brief updates on research integrity matters to the Research Committee at its biannual meetings.

Policy

Arrangements as of August 2018

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

Following analysis undertaken in 2015-16, in 2016-17 the RIC 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, and a 'Policy and Procedure for Handling and Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct'. Both will sit on a new dedicated set of publicly-accessible webpages, and apply to all individuals undertaking research activity under the auspices of the University and will be reviewed annually.

Relevant institutional developments and/or activities during AY2017-18

The drafts of the new policy documents were developed further in liaison with the University's employment lawyers (regarding provisions for staff), and both Deans and the Pro-Dean PGR (regarding provision for students) and approved for consultation by the Principal's Office to go for consultation with an extensive group inside the University, plus the UK Research Integrity Office. Following the consultation, the RIC and the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation) considered the feedback and decided on adjustments.

The Senior Research Policy and Integrity Manager has taken on operational responsibility for acting as Sponsor's representative regarding NHS-related research, in line with the UK policy framework for health and social care research². Arrangements for compliance on ethics and tissue have been reviewed and work is ongoing to 'join-up' processes and/or the work of relevant support staff.

Looking ahead to AY2018-19

The adjusted policies will be checked with key individuals before being sent for approval by relevant University committees, with an aim to launch in January 2019. After their implementation, the RIC will seek to steer:

- The undertaking of biennial review involving consultation with support staff and academics, for consideration by the RIC 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.

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

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

The joining-up the processes and work of support staff around NHS ethics and tissue governance will be finished, before reviewing provision for NHS data.

The outcomes of the review of the arrangements for providing ethics approval for research that involves human participants will be taken forward (including support services, processes, procedures, policy, information and software).

The interface between the work of the RIC and the preparations for REF2021 will be considered by the RIC 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.

Training

Arrangements as of August 2018

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. A number of postgraduate researcher (PGR) training opportunities place greater emphasis on research integrity. Staff and postgraduate induction now consistently contain dedicated content on research integrity.

The University is in receipt of licensed research integrity specific training materials from another University, and starting to develop its own additional module on institution-specific policies, processes and contact points. The latter (institution-specific module) will be relatively brief, and we will seek to mandate it for all researchers at the University, starting with postgraduate research students. It has been further agreed that all researchers will be encouraged to complete the former (licensed training materials), but we will also seek for these to be mandated for all postgraduate research students. It is expected that these modules will go live when the policy is launched in January 2019.

Relevant institutional developments and/or activities during AY2017-18

Improved coverage at University-level student and staff induction: there is now consistent and dedicated content on research integrity.

Greater visibility in University level induction materials and processes: research integrity is now mentioned in the staff handbook.

Online training: we have started to develop an institutional-specific module on policies, processes and contact points, which will be mandated for all researchers, starting with staff and postgraduate researchers.

Face-to-face training: we have started to develop the materials for an in-person workshop.

One-off awareness-raising events: workshops on research integrity were delivered to a Scotland-wide Physics postgraduate event and an undergraduate student event.

Our School of Biology has been developing a research integrity tutorial on image manipulation.

Looking ahead to AY2018-19

We will aim for greater visibility in School-level induction materials and processes and to put in place a face-to-face workshop.

Ongoing monitoring and review of integrity-relevant awareness-raising and training provision will be undertaken by the RIC, working with and reporting to the EARIAG, with reference to the Select committee's recent recommendations.

Considering expanding the mandating of aspects of the online training to staff, undergraduates and taught postgraduates, and whether we will require that individuals re-complete the training at certain intervals.

Monitoring and evaluation

Arrangements as of August 2018

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 RIC 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 AY2017-18

It was decided that Research and Innovation Services would wait until a later date to explore undertaking a new biennial researcher survey. The RIC was anticipating using that as a vehicle for a range of indicators that would capture heightened consideration and discussion of, and institutional support for, research integrity.

Looking ahead to AY2018-19

RIC will monitor aggregate data on completion of online training amongst staff and postgraduate students, and will seek to collect feedback on this training (after its deployment, planned for January 2019).

External engagement

Arrangements as of August 2018

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 AY2017-18

The University renewed its membership of UKRIO.

A member of the RIC attended the UKRIO annual conference in May 2018, and sessions on research integrity at the INORMS conference in June 2018, networking with national and international colleagues working on research integrity in higher education.

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

The University provided anonymised and abbreviated case studies to UKRIO to help with production of training materials for the sector.

Looking ahead to AY2018-19

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 2017/18				
Inquiries made	7			
Ongoing investigations	0			
Allegations received and investigations undertaken	3	<i>Upheld</i>	1	Dismissal of Respondent
		<i>Dismissed</i>	2	Unfounded (x2)

Definitions:

- ‘Inquiries made’ refers to clarifications sought by an individual as to how to apply the principles of good research conduct in a given situation, or whether a particular activity and/or example scenario may constitute/include an act of research misconduct.
- ‘Ongoing investigations’ refers to investigations that commenced but not concluded before the end of the academic year, and are therefore not counted in the ‘Allegations received and investigations undertaken’ section.
- ‘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 referred to a disciplinary panel. The Respondent was subsequently dismissed. No action was required to correct the research record or inform any other organisation (beyond relevant funders).

The University seeks to continually improve its policies and processes, and often seeks feedback from those involved in investigations (except the Complainant and Respondent, because of their conflicted involvement) following their conclusion. Based on this feedback, and from the experience handling investigations more generally, the following issues have been fed into the ongoing development of the research integrity provisions at the University: the need to have a sufficiently detailed policy and process that provides to all involved a clear roadmap of the stages of investigation, who is involved at what stages, and steps taken to maximise confidentiality, integrity, fairness and prevention of detriment; minimising and/or providing improved orientation for the evidence documentation provided to disciplinary panels; better defining what in house expertise we have for forensic digital investigations; clearer understanding of what to report to funders; improved confidence in appraising evidence, in particular that provided in initial allegation; the value of having a panel at formal investigation stage; the need to strongly guide Complainants to use standardised approaches to structuring their allegation; the need to be able to take action against a Complainant who has made an unfounded allegation that was not in good faith; and how we record and communicate conflict of interest checking in investigations.

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