

University of St Andrews

Research Integrity statement for academic year 2018-19

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 2019

At an institutional level, oversight of research integrity activity is led by the [Vice-Principal \(Research and Innovation\)](#), who chairs the University's Ethics and Research Integrity Assurance Group (EARIAG). This group meets twice annually and comprises the Vice-Principal (Governance) and convenor of the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC), and a Court observer. The EARIAG receives reports from the [University Teaching & Research Ethics Committee \(UTREC\)](#), the [Animal Welfare and Ethics Committee \(AWEC\)](#), and the Research Integrity Committee (RIC, see below). The EARIAG reports to the [Audit and Risk Committee](#) of University Court, providing assurance regarding the University's engagement with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

At an operational level, oversight of research integrity activity is led by the Senior Research Policy and Integrity Manager, who convenes the Research Integrity Committee (RIC), which meets six times annually. The RIC comprises professional services staff from UTREC, AWEC, and [CAPOD](#) (the Centre for Academic, Professional and Organisational Development), and three academic representatives (from Management, Medicine, and Psychology & Neuroscience). When appropriate, the RIC has welcomed other attendees for specific items. The RIC reports to the Ethics and Research Integrity Assurance Group (EARIAG). Members of the RIC attend other University committees and working groups, including the [Research Committee](#), [Research Excellence Board](#), Open Research Working Group and HR Excellence in Research Award working group (which focuses on implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers).

The University is 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.

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 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](#).

Relevant institutional developments and/or activities during AY2018-19

There has been increased operational support within the team based in Research and Innovation services: receiving and responding to questions and concerns, and administrating allegations. The academic representation on the Research Integrity Committee expanded to three members with the return of a member from Medicine. The [new](#)

[webpages](#) launched in January 2019 give [clearer guidance on the governance and operational support](#), and these are also now linked to from the [UKRIO subscriber page](#). The RIC liaises with the University's [Research Committee](#), [Postgraduate Research Committee](#) and Open Research Working Group in developing plans relating to research integrity. An online training module that covers the contact points for research integrity at St Andrews was developed; all postgraduate research students will be required to take the module as a condition of matriculation starting AY2019-20, and all other all St Andrews researchers are encouraged to take the module.

Looking ahead to AY2019-20

RIC will review its membership and additional members sought if necessary; the committee is mindful that it currently has no academic representative from the Arts and Humanities or the physical sciences.

Policy

Arrangements as of August 2019

St Andrews has in place robust policies and procedures relating to [good research conduct](#) and [research misconduct](#), launched in January 2019 following developments that started in 2015/16. The University has a proforma for individuals to use when making a formal allegation of misconduct, and developed documentation for use in the investigation process, including declarations of conflicts of interest for all those involved at all stages and guidance for those undertaking investigations. The policies and procedures are publicised via staff and postgraduate induction events, a [training module](#) that covers the policies and procedures, and any talks/workshops on research integrity. The policies and procedures will be reviewed by January 2021 at the latest.

Relevant institutional developments and/or activities during AY2018-19

Following extensive engagement and consultation the year prior, the new policies and procedures were finalised, approved and launched on a new set of webpages. This comprised undertaking an equality impact assessment on the policies and procedures, and securing approval from the [Research Committee](#), the trade unions, and the [Principal's Office](#).

Looking ahead to AY2019-20

Feedback on the policies and procedures will continue to be obtained at the end of any investigations that occur. A review of policies and procedures will take place by January 2021 at the latest.

Training and awareness-raising

Arrangements as of August 2019

The University's Centre for Academic, Professional and Organisational Development (CAPOD) provides a range of training opportunities for staff and students. 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, both in the form of explicit talks on the issue and distribution of fliers providing the key research integrity information and contact points. The Senior Research Policy and Integrity Manager provides workshops on an ad hoc basis, frequently doing so for the undergraduate students on the [Laidlaw scholarship programme in research and leadership](#) and different cohorts of Physics postgraduates.

The University is in receipt of licensed research integrity specific training materials from another University and has developed its own additional module on institution-specific policies, processes and contact points. All researchers are encouraged to undertake these modules, at the least the latter (institution-specific module).

Relevant institutional developments and/or activities during AY2018-19

The online module on institution-specific policies, processes and contact points was developed, trialled with different career stages of researcher from five Schools and launched. All researchers have been encouraged to undertake all of the available modules, with the other six modules covering the following topics: introduction to research integrity and the responsible conduct of research, ethical approval and practice, collaborative research and data management,

authorship, peer review and publication ethics, plagiarism and recycling of text and research outputs. Approval was obtained from the Postgraduate Research Committee to mandate these modules for postgraduate research students as a condition of their matriculation starting in AY2019-20, and work was undertaken to arrange the logistics of this. The Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation) raised the prospect of making the online module on institution-specific policies, processes and contact point mandatory for all research staff in the future, and the suggestion was welcomed by the Directors of Research from the academic Schools and Departments. At the request of the Postgraduate Research Committee, work began to develop a mandatory face-to-face workshop for the one-year postgraduate research students; this is to be introduced in AY2019-20 to complement the online modules with discussion of case studies, given the shorter time that these individuals have available to accumulate experience during their studies.

Directors of Research were guided in their thinking about what activities they undertake at the 'Unit' level that relate to research integrity, for presentation in their REF2021 Unit-level environment statements. This took the form of four reflective questions about awareness-raising, training, encouraging ongoing discussion, and the presence of a clear and advertised contact point.

On 29 January 2019, the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation) hosted an event attended by approximately 50 staff – a mixture of academics and professional services. The event saw a brief introduction from Research and Innovation Services staff on the newly launched policies, website, guidance and training, followed by academic insight and commentary from the School of Modern Languages, School of Psychology and Neuroscience and School of Medicine, ahead of an open discussion with all attendees. The event received very positive feedback.

Looking ahead to AY2019-20

The rollout of the mandatory online modules for postgraduates will be monitored and evaluated, and the practicalities of mandating the modules for other cohorts will be considered.

The mandatory workshop for one-year postgraduate research students will be further developed, delivered and evaluated. The workshop will be designed so that it can, with minimal adjustment, be tailored to any discipline and delivered by anyone following minimal instruction.

Using the REF2021 Unit-level environment statements, a summary of activities at the Unit level across the whole University will be produced and discussed by the RIC and EARIAG, to consider how School and Departmental level activity might be better supported by the University moving forward.

Monitoring and evaluation

Arrangements as of August 2019

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%; 2017, 32.1%, and in 2019 is 42.8% (an increase of 10.7% or x1.3 from 2017). Although there is still much room for improvement, the proportion of staff aware of the Concordat has doubled since 2015 and is now at its highest point since the Concordat's publication.

A suite of [online training modules](#) are available. These are mandatory for postgraduate researchers. Completion by other researchers, which is encouraged, could potentially be monitored.

Relevant institutional developments and/or activities during AY2018-19

A suite of [online training modules](#) were made available. Each contains a quiz and completion is recorded in the Moodle software. This allows for monitoring of completion across all topics.

Looking ahead to AY2019-20

RIC will monitor aggregate data on completion of online training by researchers, and will obtain feedback on the in person workshop.

We will continue to seek feedback on the Research Misconduct Policy after any investigation we will have a formal review of the policies launched in Jan 2019 by Jan 2021.

External engagement

Arrangements as of August 2019

Regarding research integrity broadly, the University is a member of UKRIO. Regarding research involving animals, the University is a member of the Scottish AWERB hub (a Home Office facilitated regional 'hub' that acts as a platform for inter-University support).

Relevant institutional developments and/or activities during AY2018-19

The University renewed its subscription to UKRIO, and a member of the RIC attended the UKRIO annual conference in May 2019.

A member of RIC attended and an academic from the University spoke at the event 'The Future of Research Integrity & Ethics in Higher Education' hosted in Edinburgh by Holyrood magazine.

A member of RIC spoke at the European Academy for Taxes, Economics & Law's seminar 'Strategic Internationalisation and Successful Funding of Your Research Cooperation' in Berlin to an audience from higher education across Europe.

The University responded to the consultation on the new Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

Looking ahead to AY2019-20

The University intends to remain a subscriber to UKRIO.

We may seek to contribute more substantially to conferences and workshops now that we have policies, guidance and training in place.

Addressing research misconduct

	Academic year 2017-18*	Academic year 2018-19	
Questions asked	7	3	
Concerns raised		9	
Allegations received and investigations undertaken	3	1	Progressed through preliminary and formal investigation stages and was referred to disciplinary procedures. The outcome was a correction to the research record.
Ongoing investigations	0	0	

**as reported last year. The terminology of questions and concerns was introduced this year: both were together referred to as 'inquiries' in previous years' statements.*

Definitions:

- A 'question' is an enquiry relating to general guidance on good research conduct, or explicitly related to a specific piece of research conducted under the auspices of another organisation.
- A 'concern' is an enquiry explicitly related to a specific piece of research conducted under the auspices of the University.
- '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 Research Misconduct Policy.

- '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.

The questions asked related to advice about potential research misconduct taking place under the auspices of another institution, in some cases providing advice to researchers about possible making formal allegations of research misconduct.

Concerns raised related to: pre-publication disputes about authorship and publication planning that required active mediation (2); pre-publication advice about ensuring correct attribution on an output (2); potential plagiarism (2); potential misappropriation of research data and breach of ethical approval (1); potential breach of ethical approval (1); a potential breach of good research conduct by an individual employed by another organisation but working under the University's auspices (1). None of these concerns led to subsequent allegations; all were resolved via providing advice, mediation or direction toward guidance.

One allegation was received and investigated in accordance with our Research Misconduct Policy and was referred to Human Resources following the formal investigation stage. The disciplinary investigator appointed by Human Resources recommended that with an adjustment to the research record, no further action be taken.

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 need to further minimise conflict of interest in preliminary investigations of research misconduct will be explored.

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