U N I V E R S I T Y O F Y O R K

COUNCIL

Annual Statement on Research Integrity

Background

In July 2012, Universities UK published the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance. HEFCE, NIHR, RCUK and the Wellcome Trust were included among its signatories. Compliance with the Concordat has been a condition of the HEFCE grant since 2014/15, and HEFCE policies around research integrity continue to apply under Research England. Likewise, the Concordat has been endorsed by RCUK's successor, UK Research & Innovation (UKRI).

The Concordat requires in particular that the University should present a short annual statement to its governing body that:

- Provides a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues;

- 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;

- Provides a high level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken.

To improve accountability, and provide assurances that measures being taken continue to support consistently high standards of research integrity, the statement must be made publicly available.

The University's Statements are published at:

https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/research-integrity-and-ethics/.

Statement for 2018/19

1. During 2018/19, the University has undertaken the following actions and activities to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues:

   (a) A preliminary review of the University's research integrity frameworks has been undertaken against draft revisions to the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* proposed by the signatories to the Concordat in February 2019. The University has made a submission to the national consultation on the proposed revisions, and has fed into the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum response. The structures and policies in place currently at York put the University in a good position in regards to compliance with the Concordat, and the University will continue to assess this once the revised Concordat is published this summer.

(b) Dr Alice Wakely has been appointed to the position of Research Integrity and Compliance Manager. The remit of this post includes ensuring that policy and guidance regarding research conducted overseas or with overseas partners is robust.

(c) York continues to be actively involved in the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum, including hosting members of the Forum for a conference in April. This event brought colleagues from the research integrity sector together to discuss research culture and policy across institutions, including the continued development of a training template, setting out agreed standards of provision within the Russell Group.

(d) Revisions to the University Code of Practice on Research Integrity were approved by the University Research Committee in November 2018, featuring a number of clarifications relating to authorship, research culture, and ethics processes. The RSPO has produced an accompanying summary of the Code to aid engagement and understanding. Both the Code and the summary have been disseminated amongst staff to ensure full awareness of policy. The online Research Integrity Tutorial, mandatory for postgraduate research students, is to be updated over summer to reflect these changes.

(e) The proposed restructuring of University ethics governance is in train in response to a paper which went to Council in 2018 (C.18-19/5). It is envisaged that this revised structure will be composed of an Academic Ethics and Compliance Committee (AECC) and a University Governance Ethics Committee (UGEC). UGEC is to report directly to Council, and will receive an annual report from AECC to ensure there is consistency and collaboration. The AECC will report to the University Senate via University Research Committee (URC), and will maintain reporting links with the University Teaching Committee (UTC) and the University Partnerships and Enterprise Committee (UPEC). The new structure will allow for a more thorough and cohesive approach to ethics across the institution, ensuring oversight at high- and local-level. A paper is to be brought to the University Research Committee in June which will outline proposals for the new structure and a series of priorities and focus areas for the AECC, and it is expected the proposals will be fully in operation by the summer term of the 2019/2020 academic year.

(f) The University has rolled out mandatory online data protection training for all staff. In addition, research staff and students can access a number of face-to-face GDPR training courses including modules available via the Research Excellence Training Team. Data Protection Impact Assessments are now fully embedded into day-to-day working practice and ethical approval forms have been amended to incorporate new GDPR requirements. Going forward, the University will consolidate work already done in this area by developing a GDPR toolkit for departments to allow them to self-serve various data protection requirements. In addition, the bank of resources available online will be updated and further developed to ensure staff and students remain equipped with the knowledge needed to conduct research in a data protection compliant way.

(g) The University GDPR working group presented its final conclusions and recommendations to the University Research Committee, emphasising the need to avoid a 'box-ticking' approach to

compliance. Departmental Ethics Committees and Faculty Research Groups are well-placed to communicate such issues and facilitate and maintain an ongoing dialogue with the research community. The 2020 Annual Departmental Research Review will include a question on data protection compliance in order to maintain oversight of this area.

(h) IT Services have recently launched the Data Safe Haven (DSH), a secure data processing service for handling and analysing sensitive data. The DSH is certified to ISO 27001, meaning risks are considered, managed, and externally audited to validate the security controls. The service is available to all staff, students, and associates who are involved in the processing of secure datasets.

(i) The University has welcomed the increased emphasis on Open Access in line with funder policies, and is in the process of developing and refining structures in line with Plan S and similar funder requirements. In line with this, the existing University Research Data Management (RDM) Group will be reconstituted into an Open Research Strategy Group and an Open Research Working Group, both operating at an institutional-level to drive the agenda. This will be complemented by an Open Research Community of Practice, which will be developed with input from the University community through a website/wiki and a launch event with guest speakers in autumn 2019.

(j) The University RoPA Working Group has continued to work on strengthening reporting processes for data handling and storage at the University. A draft Record of Processing Activity has been developed to support GDPR documentation requirements and indicate how and where data should be stored. Professional services staff from relevant sectors have been consulted to ensure accuracy. This process is supported by a draft Record Retention Schedule for research records, which outlines how, where, why and for what period of time records should be retained.

(k) The RSPO is in the process of developing guidelines on the use of social media data in research. These guidelines will support our broader commitment to research integrity, and will provide direction to researchers when thinking through the ethical dimensions of such research. Relevant professional services staff and academic staff across the institution have been consulted individually. A Research Integrity Forum focusing on this topic was held in April 2019, facilitated by an expert speaker and colleagues from the RSPO and the Research Excellence Training Team. Feedback from staff was collected and will be used in the continued development of the guidelines to ensure their effectiveness and relevance. These will be presented to URC in October and, subject to potential changes, implemented following Committee approval.

(l) Oversight procedures continue to be developed to support compliance with the 'Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising to their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity', an international agreement establishing a legal framework for access to genetic resources. A 0.5 FTW Grade 7 Contracts

Officer has been requested through the Medium Term Planning process to support Nagoyarelated work.

(m) Training and support additional to the University's core provision has been offered as follows:

i. The York Research Administrators Forum annual Spring Symposium featured a session on research integrity and ethics specifically designed to aid those in research support and professional services. Attendees were given a series of case studies to work through, all of which were drawn from experiences administrators were likely to encounter, and discussed these amongst themselves. Guidance and policy advice was provided throughout by the Research Excellence Training Team (RETT) and the RSPO.

ii. Subject-level ethics committees continue to develop discipline specific training and support, for example:

- In addition to the core integrity and ethics training provided by the University, the RETT recently ran a Biology-specific course mandatory for all PhD students.
- Ethics Chairs have been working alongside the Research RoPA Working Group to identify ways in which data processing and information from ethical review applications can support accountability and integrity requirements and how University processes might be streamlined, to avoid unnecessary duplication of data or effort on the part of researchers.
- New members of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)who lack previous experience of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 are now offered Home Office modules L and E1 training, a half-day course covering the regulations, ethics, and the 3Rs (Replacement, Refinement, Reduction of animals in research).
- The Education Researchers for Open Science (EROS) working group has been established (Education). The group aims to improve awareness of OS within and beyond the department, as well as provide advice and examples of good practice. Ethics procedures have been reviewed within the department to reflect this commitment, to enable data archiving and sharing in line with GDPR.
- A systematic review of ethical issues arising from teaching modules and field courses, including any GDPR relevant activities (Biology). This includes an examination of how student personal data are held and shared whilst absent from the University.

2. Processes for dealing with academic misconduct:

(a) Discussions took place with both HR and the Associate Deans (Research) regarding the need for a specific policy on academic disputes as highlighted in the 2017/18 statement. It was decided that existing disciplinary procedures were sufficient, and the additional complexity of a separate policy would be counterproductive.

(b) The University is in the process of reviewing misconduct procedures following the consultation on the Concordat to Support Integrity to ensure compliance, in particular the use of

independent external members of formal investigation panels, and clear routes for appeal. The RSPO and PVC (Research) continue to work with HR in the implementation of the requirement for external members on disciplinary panels. The procedure that must be followed in the case of a Research Student has been elaborated upon in the updated Code of Practice on Research Integrity.

(c) The University is committed to increasing awareness of misconduct procedures, and to fostering an environment where all staff, researchers, and students feel comfortable in reporting misconduct. The RSPO is in the process of reviewing webpages to ensure relevant information for such enquiries is as clear as possible, by foregrounding key contact details for the PVC (Research). Revisions to the Code of Practice on Research Integrity emphasise that researchers will not face detrimental treatment for allegations made in good faith.

(d) The RSPO will assess University reporting processes in regards to the Wellcome Trust Bullying and Harassment policy. An implementation plan is to be developed in collaboration with HR; this will direct the next steps for the University.

3. Statement on formal investigations of research misconduct:

(a) (i) During 2018/19, there have been two allegations of research misconduct relating to research students, both from the same department, and both concerning failure to obtain appropriate ethics approval before commencing research. One case has undergone a preliminary investigation by the Department, reporting to the Dean of the York Graduate Research School and the PVC (Research), and is currently the subject of a formal investigation led by a member of staff external to the Department who has appropriate expertise.

The second case was self-reported by the student and supervisor in question via the departmental ethics committee chair to the Dean of the York Graduate Research School, and swiftly identified as a capability issue. The student has been instructed that any data gathered before ethical approval was secured is not to be used in the student's thesis or any associated publications.

In light of the above, the PVCR has raised concerns with the Head of Department regarding effective ethics governance and awareness of ethics requirements amongst staff and students within the Department. The Head of Department and the chair of the departmental ethics committee have drawn up an action plan to address the issues, which includes additional training for staff, and a review of the current training provision for students. The Department will report on progress in its next annual ethics report to the University's academic ethics committee, due in October.

(ii) An allegation of plagiarism against a research student within an annual progression report was investigated under the University's Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures, and was upheld, following which the student withdrew.

(b) During 2018/19, the University received three allegations of research misconduct relating to members of staff, all from sources external to the University. The first involved a former member of staff and concerned inadequate acknowledgement of sources. A preliminary

investigation by the Department, reporting to the PVC (Research), established that there was a case to answer, and this is currently the subject of a formal investigation led by the Head of Department.

The second related to the adequacy of research study procedures for the reporting of poor clinical practice. Screening procedures were initiated by the Head of Department and established that there was no case to answer.

The third incident involves an enquiry from a funder relating to the University's handling of allegations involving bullying and harassment within a research project team. Since this area does not fall under the University's Research Misconduct Policy and Procedure (which focuses on academic practice), the allegations have been referred to HR for an institutional response.

Council is asked to note and approve this Statement.

PROFESSOR DEBORAH SMITH

Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research

June 2019