

# UNIVERSITY OF YORK

## COUNCIL

### Annual Statement on Research Integrity

#### Background

In July 2012, Universities UK published the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* (July 2012), a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance. HEFCE, NIHR, RCUK and the Wellcome Trust are included among its signatories, and HEFCE in particular has stipulated that compliance with the *Concordat* is a condition of the HEFCE grant from 2014/15.

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

1. Provides a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues;
2. 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;
3. 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 2016/17

1. During 2016/17, the University has undertaken the following actions and activities to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues:
  - (a) Review of the *Code of practice and principles for good ethical governance*, resulting in the following modifications:
    - i. Specific guidance on research and other academic activities related to political extremism and terrorism (approved by Council March 2017);
    - ii. Clarification of guidance relating to the timing of ethics review for research activities (approved by Council March 2017);
    - iii. Clarification of where 'dual' ethics review (i.e. internal as well as external) is required (to be approved by Council at its meeting on 28 July 2017).The changes will be communicated to key groups of staff, including departmental research committee and ethics chairs, at the start of 2017/18, for cascading to all researchers, and will also be fed into training provision.  
The University's *Code of Practice on Research Integrity* is due for review during 2017/18.

- (b) A query raised in relation to acceptable research practices identified a need for the University to develop a risk register specific to working overseas. This was completed in Spring 2017.
  - (c) A meeting was convened by the Research Excellence Training Team in October 2016 to review and co-ordinate the central training offer in relation to research integrity. Core integrity and ethics training has been updated, including a section on data protection compliance. Building on the compulsory online research integrity tutorial for PGR students, termly drop-in sessions relating to ethics, open access and research data management have been trialled, and a guide for PGR students on the use of social media in research is under development. The Research Integrity Forum hosted James Parry from the UK Research Integrity Office for a session on authorship in February 2017. Subject-level ethics committees continue to provide discipline-specific training and support via departmental induction procedures, lectures, discussion sessions, and/or web resources, for students and increasingly for staff, as set out in the committees' annual reports to University Ethics Committee.
  - (d) A web resource has been developed to provide guidance in relation to compliance with the Nagoya Protocol, an international agreement establishing a legal framework to govern access to genetic resources, and ensure that benefits arising from the use of these resources are shared fairly.
  - (e) Work has been completed on the University's new research management system, Worktribe, so that assurances from PIs that they have complied with the University's *Code of practice and principles for good ethical governance* will be sought and logged centrally. The system, which is due to go live in August 2017, will also require the PI to upload evidence of ethical approval where this is required, including details of what was approved.
  - (f) The University continues to participate in the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum to share good practice in support for research integrity. Discussions this year have included sharing practice in relation to implementation of the Nagoya Protocol (see above). The Forum collectively submitted feedback on a draft report (POSTnote) by the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology on research integrity and misconduct, and subsequently made a written submission to a House of Commons Science and Technology Committee inquiry into research integrity launched in January 2017. However, this inquiry is now on hold owing to the General Election.
2. (a) The University's *Research Misconduct Policy and Procedure* is currently undergoing review in relation to procedures for PGR students: the proposed changes are due to be approved by Senate in July 2017. A full review of the *Policy and Procedure* is scheduled for 2017/18.
  - (b) In response to a query relating to acceptable research practices, the University has identified the need to develop a procedure to handle academic disputes. This will be addressed in 2017/18.
  - (c) Queries received by the Research Strategy and Policy Office regarding research misconduct are increasing, indicating growing awareness of the issue.

3. (a) During 2016/16 there have been two allegations of academic misconduct relating to research students' theses. The first was investigated by an Academic Misconduct Panel and was found not to be misconduct. The second was withdrawn after it became apparent that the problematic material was in a version of the thesis that had been retracted and not submitted for examination.
- (b) The University has not received any formal allegations of research misconduct against staff in 2016/17.

**Council is asked to note and approve this Statement.**

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