

**U N I V E R S I T Y   O F   Y O R K**  
**C O U N C I L**  
**Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2018**

## **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:

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 2017/18**

1. During 2017/18, the University has undertaken the following actions and activities to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues:
  - (a) The first phase of the scheduled review of the University's *Code of Practice on Research Integrity* has taken place: relevant professional support colleagues have been consulted in order to ensure that the *Code* accurately references and reflects any institutional, national and international developments which have taken place since its introduction in 2014. The second phase, involving academic consultation, will take place over the summer period 2018. It is proposed that all revisions will be submitted to University Research Committee and Senate for approval by the end of the calendar year 2018, and disseminated thereafter to all researchers via Faculty Research Groups and departmental research committees, and fed into existing training provision.
  - (b) In January 2018, the Registrar and the PVC (Research) initiated a review of the University's central ethics governance structures. Preliminary work has been undertaken to scope out good practice within the Russell Group, and a project plan is currently in draft.
  - (c) Guidance has been made available on the University webpages addressing the key implications for research arising from the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). An

online GDPR training package for all staff and students is planned; research staff and students can already access face-to-face GDPR training through the Research Excellence Training Team. In April 2018, a meeting was held between departmental/subject-level ethics committee chairs and the Information Governance Officer to address concerns regarding GDPR and the implications for ethics frameworks, and agree how key elements of compliance would be embedded into ethics processes. Issues arising from GDPR will also be fed into the ethics governance review (see above). In addition, University Research Committee has set up a working group of the relevant professional support colleagues to (i) consider the best way to document the records, datasets and sharing arrangements for research projects; and (ii) compile a resource bank to support academics in key areas of University research on which GDPR has a bearing. Work will begin over the summer period, reporting in October 2018 in the first instance.

- (d) Minor revisions to the University's Research Data Management Policy were approved by University Research Committee in November 2017. The Policy addresses the criteria for the retention of research data supporting published outputs, in line with GDPR legislation. Guidance designed to support the practical implementation of the policy is now provided, and a York-specific online tutorial (RDM 101) was made available to staff and postgraduate research students in departments from the start of the academic year.
- (e) At the request of the University's Global Challenges Research Fund Steering Group, supporting guidance to the University's *Code of practice and principles for good ethical governance* has been developed to set out clearly the ethics governance requirements for research conducted outside the UK. The guidance is due to be approved by University Research Committee, Senate and University Ethics Committee by August 2018, and will be disseminated to all researchers thereafter via subject-level ethics committees, Faculty Research Groups and departmental research committees, and fed into existing training provision.
- (f) University *Social Media Guidelines for Researchers*, regarding the use of social media in the communication and dissemination of research, which were under development for research students in 2016/17, have been extended to apply to all researchers, and were approved by University Research Committee in October 2017. An experience-sharing event was held in February 2018, and regular training events on using social media are provided by the Research Excellence Training Team and Information Services. Given recent events involving Cambridge Analytica, the need for University level guidance regarding the use of social media data in academic research has been noted, and will be addressed in 2018/19.
- (g) Oversight and compliance procedures at University level have been developed in relation to 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. Preliminary briefings have been delivered to key departments via the Faculty Research Group for the Sciences; training in the new procedures and further awareness-raising activities are planned for the summer period 2018 and beyond.
- (h) Training and support additional to the University's core provision has been offered as follows:

- i. In February 2018, the Research Integrity Forum and the Research Impact Forum hosted a joint event, *Engagement and Impact with Integrity*, open to all staff and research students.
- ii. A session on ethics was held as part of the Research and Enterprise Spring Symposium, April 2018, for research administrators across campus.
- iii. Subject-level ethics committees continue to develop discipline-specific training and support, for example:
  - Student-led workshop on the ethics of using social media data in academic research; development of draft guidance on ethics, integrity and impact (Arts & Humanities);
  - Introduction of a dedicated session on research ethics in practice as part of Masters programmes (Social Policy & Social Work);
  - Development of a more structured induction process for new AWERB<sup>1</sup> members, including briefing documents, meetings with the Chair and the Home Office Liaison contact, and a buddying system;
  - Annual audit of all staff research activities with ethical implications (Biology);
  - Introduction of new ethics approval processes to support the new MSc and BSc in Psychology in Education, accredited by the British Psychological Society (Education).
- iv. Following a consultation in early 2018, central online resources to support ethics committee chairs are currently under development and due for launch over the summer period.

(i) The University continues to participate in the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum to share good practice and discuss issues in relation to support for research integrity. Topics in 2017/18 have included liaison with RCUK to clarify new requirements relating to research misconduct procedures, and finalisation of a *Statement of Co-operation in respect of cross-institutional research misconduct allegations* (see 2. below). The Russell Group Forum has also been invited to nominate a representative for integrity support practitioners on a National Research Integrity Forum, to be taken forward by UUK following review of the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* by a national working group in November 2016. This will enable the University to keep abreast of and contribute towards developments at national level.

## 2. Processes for dealing with academic misconduct:

(a) A review of the University's *Research Misconduct Policy and Procedure* has been undertaken in 2017/18. A number of minor changes have been recommended (i) in order to clarify the relationship between the *Policy and Procedure* and related University policies, and (ii) in response to updates to the *RCUK Policy and Guidelines on the Governance of Good Research Conduct* (rev. April 2017 + FAQs Jan 2018)<sup>2</sup>. The proposed changes to the University's *Policy and Procedure* are due to be approved by Senate in July 2018, following scrutiny by University Research Committee.

(b) All 24 Russell Group PVCs have signed a *Statement of Co-operation in respect of cross-institutional research misconduct allegations* developed by the Russell Group Research

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<sup>1</sup> Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body

<sup>2</sup> The RCUK *Policy and Guidelines* have been endorsed by RCUK's successor, UK Research & Innovation (UKRI)

Integrity Forum (see 1.i. above). The *Statement* acts as a public acknowledgement of the principles agreed between the Russell Group Universities with respect to managing investigations of alleged research misconduct, and sets out the desired standards for cross-institutional investigations between Russell Group members and other universities and/or research organisations (including those outside the UK). The *Statement* has been submitted as evidence to the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee's current enquiry into research integrity.

- (c) A draft protocol to handle academic disputes, with reference to existing University policies and procedures, has been developed during 2017/18. Discussions are currently in train with HR, and it is proposed that the protocol will be submitted to the PVC and the Associate Deans (Research) for approval by the end of the calendar year 2018.

3. Statement on formal investigations of research misconduct:

- (a) During 2017/18, there have been three allegations of research misconduct relating to research students. Two of the allegations concerned failure to obtain local ethics approval for research carried out overseas; both came to light retrospectively during the thesis examination process. Each allegation was investigated by a departmental panel, reporting to the Dean of the York Graduate Research School and the PVC (Research). In both cases the allegation was upheld, resulting in permanent embargo of the thesis and a prohibition on publishing the research in question. In one of the cases, measures have also been put in place to maintain direct departmental oversight of the ethical approvals required for any research conducted overseas by the supervisors concerned, and/or their students. All ethics committee chairs have been reminded of the need to ask as part of the ethics submission process whether local ethics approval is needed and has been obtained; the development of specific University guidance on the ethics governance requirements for research conducted outside the UK (see 1.e. above) is particularly timely.

The third investigation into research misconduct concerned alleged plagiarism of an industrial sponsor's work, in relation to a thesis which had been examined, but the degree not awarded. Following investigation by a departmental panel, the allegation was not upheld.

In addition, an allegation of plagiarism against a research student was investigated under the University's *Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures*, and was upheld.

- (b) During 2017/18, one instance was raised of potential research misconduct involving a member of staff. A preliminary investigation identified that there had been a misunderstanding concerning conflicts of interest, which was duly addressed with the member of staff concerned, and the funder informed.

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

**PROFESSOR DEBORAH SMITH**  
**Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research**

**June 2018**