

University of Birmingham

Research Integrity Statement 2013 –2014

Introduction

This is the University of Birmingham's first annual summary statement on research integrity, as recommended by the Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The Concordat outlines the responsibilities and commitments of stakeholders in UK research with respect to research integrity. All members of Universities UK are signatories to the Concordat and HEFCE and Research Councils UK have both made commitment to the Concordat a condition of funding. This statement has been reviewed and approved by Council, the governing body of the University.

Activities to Support Research Integrity

The University is committed to strengthening the integrity of research and reviewing progress on this regularly and openly. The University Executive Board (UEB) sponsor for research integrity is Professor Malcolm Press, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer). Under his leadership, a review of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity was completed and approved by UEB. This report updates on the following actions which have been undertaken throughout the 2013–2014 academic year following on from the UEB review to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues and which are ongoing:

- *Identify a senior academic to lead on development of research integrity training.*

A role description for a Research Integrity Training Lead has been developed and we are in the process of identifying a senior academic to undertake this activity.

- *Statement on research integrity to be included on the website.*

The University's statement on research integrity has been added to the University's Research Ethics and Research Governance web-pages. In addition, the University's Code of Ethics and the University's Code of Practice for Research include sections on research which further describe the University's commitment to research integrity and are published on the website (see below). It is planned to add additional materials in 2014/2015.

- *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer) is named as the person responsible for research integrity on the University's website. The Research Governance and Ethics Manager to be named as administrative contact.*

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer) is listed in the Code of Ethics as responsible for ethical matters in research and on the Governance and Ethics webpages as the person responsible for research integrity. The Research Governance and Ethics Manager is named as administrative contact.

- *Central register of research misconduct cases.*

The reporting and recording processes for research misconduct cases have been reviewed. A central register of allegations of research misconduct has now been established.

- *Review and Revise the University's Code of Practice for Research*

The Code of Practice for Research details the University's expectations of researchers with respect to ethics and integrity, forms part of their terms and conditions of employment and is kept under annual review. It is intended to propose changes to the Code of Practice for Research in 2014/2015.

- *Inclusion of research as an area within the University's Code of Ethics*

The University of Birmingham's Code of Ethics was approved by Council on 26th June 2013. The code includes a section on research ethics, with guidance on the approach to ethics and related policies and procedures. It is available on the University's website.

- *Clarification of the process for handling allegations of research misconduct*

A review of current practices identified the need to clarify and formalise the actions needed and responsibilities of key staff in relation to the investigation of research misconduct. UEB approved a paper in November 2013 on this matter.

- *Participation in Russell Group Research Integrity Group*

The University of Birmingham is an active contributor to meetings of Russell Group Universities aiming to develop common approaches to research integrity.

- *Online Research Integrity training*

The University of Birmingham and a number of other leading Universities from the UK and the USA have collaborated with Epigeum, a sector-wide training provider, to invest in and produce an online course on research integrity. This has been piloted within the University during 2013/2014, receiving positive feedback. It will be made available to all staff and students in 2014/2015.

- *Awareness Raising Scoping Exercise*

An awareness raising scoping exercise is underway in order to identify opportunities within the University to heighten awareness of research integrity issues and improve oversight of research. Members of the Graduate School, the Centre for Learning and Academic Development, and senior members of staff from three out of five Colleges have been interviewed. Interviews with colleagues from the remaining Colleges, and Library Services are being scheduled and a report will be produced in autumn 2014.

- *Review of Committee Structure*

A review of the ethics review structures within the University was conducted in 2013 in line with the University's new Code of Ethics. A further review is currently underway of the oversight and research governance committees with a view to ensuring that they are fit for purpose and that clear reporting lines bring issues of concern to responsible senior managers.

- *Plagiarism Code of Practice*

The Plagiarism Code of Practice has been reviewed and revised to ensure a fair and efficient process for dealing with cases of student plagiarism, including plagiarism by Post-Graduate Researchers, and guidance for staff in dealing with student plagiarism has been produced. There is also a Code of Practice for Staff on Plagiarism and a Protocol on Conflicts of Interest in place.

Misconduct investigations

In the period September 2013 to September 2014, formal hearings of 3 cases of alleged research misconduct have upheld the allegations. These cases were dealt with in accordance with the Research Code of Practice and the University's Ordinances and appropriate and proportionate actions were taken.

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The next annual statement will be published in November 2015.

Further Information

Further information on research integrity at the University is available from Dr Sean Jennings, Research Governance and Ethics Manager (s.jennings@bham.ac.uk Ext. 58011).