

University of Birmingham

Annual Report on Research Integrity

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 On the recommendation of UEB and Senate, Council is invited to consider and, if thought appropriate, approve, the University's Annual Research Integrity Statement.

2. Background

- 2.1 The University of Birmingham has, by virtue of its membership of Universities UK, agreed to adhere to the commitments of the Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

- 2.2 The Concordat seeks to provide a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance. The five commitments of the Concordat are:

- maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research;
- ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards;
- supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers;
- using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise;
- working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.

Please note: A revised version of the Concordat has been developed, and is currently out for consultation. It is expected that it will be available in October 2019.

- 2.3 In respect of the fifth commitment, the Concordat recommends that a short annual statement be presented to the University's governing body (Council) which:

- provides a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues (for example postgraduate and researcher training, or process reviews);
- 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.

- 2.4 Commitment to the Concordat to support research integrity is a condition of funding and higher education institutions are expected to adhere to the requirements of this Concordat. UKRI and Research England have updated research integrity policies formerly set out by Research Councils UK and HEFCE.

3. Sixth Annual Statement

- 3.1 The sixth annual statement in respect of Oct 2018 / Sept 2019 is attached at Appendix 1.

- 3.2 The Concordat states that, in order to improve accountability and provide assurances that measures are taken to support consistently high standards of research integrity, the University's annual statement on research integrity should be made publicly available. It is

therefore proposed that the statement will be published on the University's external website following its approval by Council.

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/RSS/Research-Support-Group/integrity-ethics-governance/Research-Integrity/index.aspx>

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 On the recommendation of UEB and Senate, Council is invited to consider and approve the University's Annual Research Integrity Statement.

Professor Tim Softley

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer) and

Chair of the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Committee

University of Birmingham

Research Integrity Statement 2018 –2019

Introduction

This is the University of Birmingham's sixth 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. Commitment to the Concordat to support research integrity is a condition of funding and higher education institutions are expected to adhere to the requirements of this Concordat. UKRI and Research England have updated research integrity policies formerly set out by Research Councils UK and HEFCE. 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 fostering a positive culture of research integrity, enhancing the current infrastructure by reviewing progress regularly and openly.

Directors of Research from Colleges and Research Ethics Committee Co-Chairs support a positive culture of research integrity at College / School level. Oversight Committees such as the Clinical Trials Oversight Committee (CTOC), the Human Tissue Oversight Committee (HTOC), and the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB), provide oversight for high-risk areas.

The Research Ethics & Governance Teams (REGT) in collaboration with the Clinical Research Compliance Team (CRCT) provide support for the research community and the senior team.

The University Executive Board (UEB) sponsor for research integrity is Professor Tim Softley, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer). Research integrity activities at the University are overseen and coordinated by the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Committee (RGEIC), chaired by Professor Softley. This report updates on the following actions, which have been undertaken throughout the 2018–2019 academic year:

1. Supporting and enhancing the understanding of all aspects of research integrity:

1.1 Relevant Policies

- Appropriate Codes of Practice such as the CoP for Ethics and Research are in place. The CoP for Research includes a section in relation to allegations of research misconduct: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/opportunities/integrity.aspx>
- In addition, the Policy and Procedure on Public Interest Disclosure and 'Whistleblowing' is designed to allow staff, students and all members of University bodies (eg University Committees) to raise, at high level, concerns or information which they believe in good faith provides evidence of malpractice: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/whistleblowing.pdf>
- Allegations of Harassment and Bullying will be managed in line with this policy: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/harassment-bullying.pdf>
- For data protection & security requirements, the following guidance is available: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/data-prot-policy.pdf>

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/it/documents/public/General-Conditions-of-Use-of-Computing-and-Network-Facilities.pdf>

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/it/documents/public/Information-Security-Policy.pdf>

- Data management and archiving processes are supported as follows:
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/research/rdm/Archiving-data/Archiving-and-sharing-data.aspx>
- For clinical research, a comprehensive Quality Management System has been implemented:
<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/mds/mds-rkto/governance/Clinical-Trials-QMS.aspx>
- In relation to Equality and Diversity the University works to the following guidelines:
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/collaboration/equality/Policies-procedures-and-guidelines.aspx>

1.2 Review of Policies

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. The Code was reviewed in consultation with relevant stakeholders during the 2018-2019.

1.3 Training and Development

- Online

There are online discipline-specific training courses available in research ethics and integrity that provide an introduction to research ethics and integrity and the responsible conduct of research. All courses are freely available to University researcher or students and University's research ethics committee members, Directors of Research, the REGT and Doctoral Training Centres promote this development opportunity to the research community.

- Face to Face training

In addition to the online provision, there a variety of face to face development opportunities broadly related to research integrity e.g. courses on research ethics and integrity, including good practice requirements in line with the CoP for Research, animal research training provisions, research data management courses as well as research methodology and research skills training. Research ethics and integrity information is included in modules for student courses where appropriate.

The University works in close collaboration with NIHR colleagues from the CRN Networks e.g. the West Midlands Research Training Collaborative <https://wmrtc.org.uk/>

Some highlighted examples of recent development opportunities include:

- University Induction: Central and College / Divisional level induction is provided:
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/mds/welcome-induction/welcome/induction/index.aspx>
- Mandatory (all staff) provision: Data protection and GDPR, Information Security, H&S, Equality & Diversity and fire safety. Mandatory (as required by law): GCP, Home Office Modules for animal research where applicable
- The CRCT and POD development opportunities
<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/mds/mds-rkto/governance/index.aspx>
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/development/index.aspx>
- Research data management training is available via the Research Data Management Team (Library Services)

- Drop in sessions are offered at School / College level where members of staff and students are able to seek informal guidance from members of the REGT.
- Group specific research ethics and integrity workshops are provided as requested e.g. HEFi.

2. Quality Assurance and risk management

The UoB research governance infrastructure is built on a quality assurance programme that allows the University to manage the quality and risk arising from research involving human participants, their data and/or tissue.

The REGT manage the risk for the University arising from studies involving human participants, their data and/or tissue and ensures that close liaison with researchers, administrators, collaborators and regulatory bodies fosters a positive culture of research integrity as encouraged by the 'Concordat to support research integrity' (Concordat RI).

In 2018 researchers submitted 2124 Self Assessment Forms and the review of 810 full ethics applications and amendments to AERs were processed via the University Ethics Team (CoSS: n=243, CAL: n=106, EPS: n=37, LES: n= 277, MDS: n=147). An internal audit of the central ethics review process confirmed substantial assurance.

Studies that needed review by a NHS Research Ethics Committee were supported. The University sponsored 67 new studies that were reviewed via HRA processes and managed 206 amendments for the active study portfolio. Each project is risk assessed and a due diligence process ensures that the appropriate level of ethical and legal review is undertaken.

In addition the University managed research that involved animals in line with Home Office Regulations and ARRIVE guidelines.

3. Networking with other stakeholders

The University of Birmingham is an active contributor to meetings of Russell Group Universities aiming to develop common approaches to research integrity. In addition, the Head of Research Governance & Integrity supports the Health Research Authority non-commercial Sponsor Group, the NHS R+D Forum and works as an advisor for the UK Research Integrity Office.

4. Managing Conduct queries

In the period October 2018 to September 2019, there has been no formal hearing of a case of alleged research misconduct. In the same period, 5 allegations of research misconduct were received and one was upheld. These were addressed in accordance with the Code of Practice for Research.

5. Research Integrity Statement 2018-19

The next annual statement will be published in November 2020.

Further Information

Further information on research integrity at the University is available from Dr Birgit Whitman