

Annual Research Integrity Statement

From: University Executive Board

Date: January 2021

INTRODUCTION

The University of Southampton ('the University') is strongly committed to fulfilling the principles of the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) (October 2019) ('the Concordat') to create a comprehensive framework for responsible research conduct and governance. The principles and commitments include:

- Upholding 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, timely, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.
- Working together to strengthen the integrity of research.

In compliance with the Concordat, the University is publishing a Statement on Research Integrity on an annual basis. The following Statement covers the period from **1 August 2019** to **31 July 2020** and summarises the University's status relative to the expectations of the Concordat. It outlines the actions and activities undertaken, and framework in place in support of fostering a culture of research integrity. It also provides a high-level summary of research misconduct investigations undertaken by the University.

UNIVERSITY'S COMMITMENT TO FOSTERING A CULTURE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY

The University of Southampton recognises the importance of undertaking our activities responsibly, in accordance with the highest ethical standards, and in compliance with the revised Concordat. The [University Strategy](#) identifies our core principles as collegiality, quality, internationalisation and sustainability. These principles are further underpinned by the values of excellence, creativity, community and integrity. The University fully recognises our responsibilities to researchers and the wider community, and we are strongly committed to fostering a culture and understanding of research integrity, responsible research conduct, governance, ethics and probity across the full spectrum of our research activities.

LEADERSHIP ON RESEARCH INTEGRITY

The Vice-President (Research and Enterprise) has the overall responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Concordat including the oversight of research policies, research governance and ethics, and training and development opportunities provided by the University to our staff and students. The following groups and/or committees support the Vice-President on matters relating to research integrity:

- **Research and Enterprise Executive Group (REEG)**
- **Research Integrity and Governance Committee (RIGC)**
- **University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)**
- **Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)**

The Vice-President (Research and Enterprise) reports regularly to the University Executive Board (UEB), University Senate, and University Council on matters of research integrity to ensure institutional oversight.

Deans of Faculties have an overall responsibility for the performance management of academics and researchers in their respective Faculties. Deans are supported by Associate Deans Research (ADRs) who represent their Faculty on REEG and RIGC and are responsible for championing research integrity and implementing research policies within their respective Faculties.

Deans and ADRs are further supported by Research Integrity Champions (RICs) who have been appointed for each University Faculty. RICs contribute to championing, promoting and fostering a culture of research integrity within the disciplines relevant to their respective Faculties.

NAMED PERSON IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONCORDAT

The Named Person in accordance with the Concordat is Professor Mark Spearing the Vice-President (Research and Enterprise).

Queries or concerns about research integrity and/or allegations of research misconduct should be made through the Research Integrity and Governance (RIG) Team which reports to Dr Alison Knight - the Head of Research Integrity and Governance, [Research and Innovation Services](#) (RIS).

Contact: researchintegrity@soton.ac.uk
Telephone: 02380 596846

RESEARCH POLICIES

The University has a number of policies and processes in place to meet the Concordat, including the Code of Conduct for Research, which can be found [here](#).

To ensure that our policies and guidance are up to date, and that new policies are developed if required, a Research Policies Action Plan is maintained by the RIG Team and regularly reviewed by the Vice-President (Research and Enterprise) in consultation with RIGC, UREC, REEG and AWERB.

Before official release, each new or revised Policy is widely consulted with the University community. Changes to existing policies, or introduction of new policies and procedures, are communicated to staff and students via a number of various communication channels, in line with our Research Policies and Guidance Dissemination and Communication Plan. The University aims to review and update our Research Policies every 3-5 years, or sooner where necessary in line with any changes to relevant legislation, available guidelines, codes of conduct or requirements of regulatory bodies.

RESPONSIBLE COLLABORATION / RESEARCH FUNDING

The University is committed to the highest standards of research integrity and ethics across all our activities including research, education and enterprise. The University has in place a [Statement of Responsible Collaboration](#) which states our position on considering research opportunities and funding in relation to potentially contentious organisations and sectors.

RESEARCH ETHICS AND GOVERNANCE

University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

The University has an overarching [Research Ethics Policy](#) and a number of ethics sub-policies. The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), chaired by the Vice President (Research and Enterprise), meets 3 times per academic year and has the overall responsibility for the process of ethics review at the University, and for oversight, development and review of policies and guidance related to research ethics. Each University Faculty has a Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) which is tasked with providing ethics reviews and approvals for research projects undertaken within the Faculty. All FRECs report annually to UREC and all FREC Chairs are UREC members.

ERGO II - Ethics and Research Governance Online

Since 2012 the University has been using an internal system ERGO (Ethics and Research Governance Online) which is an integrated platform for obtaining ethics approvals, sponsorship and University insurance, and allows the RIG Team to provide digital research governance oversight and monitoring. The current system, ERGO II, was rolled out in March 2018, and since then its functionality has been continuously updated and expanded. ERGO II has improved and streamlined the ethics review process across the University, making it more intuitive and user-friendly, as well as broadening the scope of ethics review to new areas raising ethics considerations.

All staff and student projects (including undergraduate and postgraduate students) which require an ethics review (notably but not exclusively studies involving human participants, animals, or analysis of data about people) must be registered, reviewed and approved through ERGO II. The system includes filter questions that allow researchers to check whether ethics review of their study is required or not. Retrospective ethics review is not allowed under any circumstances and where ethics approval was not obtained, this will constitute a breach of the University Research Ethics Policy, and therefore a breach of academic/research integrity.

Through ERGO II, in academic year 2019/2020, the Faculty Research Ethics Committees received the following number of staff and student research projects which were granted ethics approval:

▪ Faculty of Arts and Humanities:	241
▪ Faculty of Medicine:	216
▪ Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences:	157
➤ Psychology Sub-committee:	384
➤ Geography and Oceanography Sub-committee:	110
▪ Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences:	283
▪ Faculty of Social Sciences:	653
➤ Business and Law Sub-committee:	1272

In addition, the RIG Team jointly with the Insurance Team reviewed 581 ethics submissions and amendments of high risk/complex research projects and the University of Southampton sponsored studies. Out of those submissions, 443 preceded externally regulated health and social care Research Ethics Committees (REC) reviews.

Research involving Cultural Heritage

Since October 2018 the University has the [Ethics Policy on Cultural Heritage](#) which applies both to land-based and underwater cultural heritage. The Policy aims to help staff and student researchers working with cultural heritage to consider the impact of their research, including the potential loss or damage to tangible cultural heritage, provenance and acquisition of artefacts, and working with human remains more than 100 years old. Research involving cultural heritage might require an ethics review and approval via the University ethics and governance system ERGO II.

Research and education activities involving Animals

The University Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) ensures that animal related research and activities are carried out with scientific rigour and according to ethical principles, including the [3Rs](#) and weighing the potential benefits of the activity against the likely harm to the animals concerned. Since July 2019, the University has a new [Policy for Involving Animals in Research and Education](#) which was developed jointly by AWERB and the RIG Team. More information on the activities of AWERB, types of research involving animals, and examples of benefits arising out of such research is available via the [AWERB webpage](#). The University supports and is a signatory to the [Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK](#).

In academic year 2019/2020, AWERB reviewed and approved the following staff and student research projects:

- 4 ASPA project licence applications.
- 16 applications for amendments.
- 40 applications for non-ASPA research.
- 10 project license holder 2 and 4 year progress reports and 4 retrospective assessments (as required by the Home Office).

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND GOVERNANCE TEAM

The University's Research Integrity and Governance (RIG) Team was established in March 2016 and is based within the Research and Innovation Services (RIS). Its responsibilities include:

- Leading on the implementation of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity through facilitating review and development of research and governance policies and guidance, and standard operating procedures (SOPs).
- Oversight of research ethics and governance through the University's ERGO II system, and review and monitoring of high risk research projects.
- Providing expertise and advice on research integrity, research ethics and governance, studies involving NHS staff and patients, and sponsorship of clinical trials and other externally regulated health and social care studies, in line with legal and ethical requirements and available guidance and codes of conduct.
- Providing advice and training sessions to staff, students and ethics reviewers on all aspects of good and responsible research conduct including research integrity, research ethics and clinical governance.
- Ensuring that any allegations of research misconduct are investigated in a fair and timely manner in accordance with the University's [Procedure for Investigating Cases of Alleged Misconduct in Research](#) (applicable to all staff), or referred to the relevant Curriculum and Quality Assurance (CQA) Team for an investigation by Academic Integrity Officers (AIOs) under the [Regulations Governing Academic Integrity](#) (applicable to all students).

- The RIG Team actively participate within the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum (RGRIF) which aims to share best practice in the area of research integrity among the Russell Group Universities, and regularly attend other events devoted to research integrity such as an annual conference organised by the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO).

RESEARCH INTEGRITY ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY

Training and professional development

- It is the University's policy that all researchers should receive appropriate training and development opportunities in order to enable them to conduct research to the highest standards.
- Each University Faculty organises periodic induction, training, workshops and awareness raising events for both staff and students on research integrity and University research policies and procedures. Examples of these include: good research conduct, research ethics and research governance (including ethics submissions on ERGO II), ethical issues in research with human participants and human tissue, Good Clinical Practice (GCP), good laboratory practice, animal research ethics, academic integrity, journal authorship, and data protection and management. Training is delivered both in-person and through online training modules, or via remote online sessions (due to COVID-19 pandemic). Information and advice is available on Faculties' Intranets and via regular newsletters, email communication or blogs.
- **Doctoral College**
 - Leadership on training and personal development for postgraduate researchers is provided through the University's [Doctoral College](#). The University strongly supports the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) and holds the European Commission's [HR Excellence in Research Award](#) for its ongoing work in implementing the Concordat.
- **Centre for Higher Education Practice (CHEP)**
 - The University [Centre for Higher Education Practice](#) (CHEP) promotes academic professional learning for every member of University staff, in all areas of academic activity and at every stage of their career, by working in partnerships with University faculties.
- University staff and students can also access a wide range of online skills training including technology, business and creative thinking through the University's subscription to [LinkedIn Learning](#).

Research Culture

- The University organised a number of events devoted to research culture with activities to promote conversations about challenges faced in research culture, reflections on what a better culture could look like, and possible solutions for how the current system could change. This includes Café Culture discussion session with researchers based on Wellcome's [Café Culture toolkit](#), as well as a number of presentations delivered by the Head of Research Integrity and Governance both to internal and external audiences.

RIS SharePoint

- Research and Innovation Services (RIS) developed the [RIS SharePoint site](#) which includes information for staff and students on all aspects of the Research Lifecycle (from research funding through to enterprise and commercialisation) with 'how to' guidance and signposting to important sources of information both elsewhere in the University and externally. It also includes guidance on all aspects of research integrity, ethics and regulatory compliance.

- Some University Faculties have created additional Research Integrity resources including case studies, reports, and website links etc. which are available through the Faculty SharePoint sites.
- RIS also publishes a monthly newsletter for researchers, and a quarterly publicly available [Re:action](#) magazine, which both periodically include articles on research integrity, research culture, and University policies and guidance written by the RIG Team in cooperation with relevant academics/professional services staff.

University Library

- The University's Library has developed a wide-range of resources offering advice and support on [research data management](#). To promote and foster best practice among staff and research students, library staff hold regular lunchtime sessions, briefings and workshops on data management, research outputs storage and general compliance issues (either face to face or via remote means due to COVID-19 pandemic). These courses can be booked via Gradbook (open to Post Graduate Researchers) or Staffbook, and other bespoke training sessions and talks can be arranged on request.
- The University has the **Responsible Research Metrics Policy** which was developed by the Library and is available [here](#) together with other information on measuring research impact.

Research Integrity and Governance Committee (RIGC)

- The University's Research Integrity and Governance Committee (RIGC), established in December 2015, meets regularly 3 times per academic year to provide leadership on policy development in line with the Research Policies Action Plan, and monitoring of implementation of regulatory compliance across the University. Its core responsibility is to foster and develop a culture of research integrity and responsible research conduct amongst the University's academic community. Associate Deans Research who sit on RIGC provide Annual Research Integrity Reports for their respective Faculties which are considered by RIGC at the beginning of every academic year.

EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY ACTIVITIES (1 AUGUST 2019 TO 31 JULY 2020)

- The RIS newsletter (published in February 2020) included an article on research integrity, with the focus on the updated Concordat to Support Research Integrity (October 2019).
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the RIG Team developed and kept under review a number of research ethics guidance including guidance for research involving human participants (both clinical and non-clinical) and guidance on remote data collection.
- In June 2020, the University publicly [endorsed](#) the [Hong Kong Principles for Assessing Research Integrity](#). The RIG Team will be working with the RI Champions on developing an action plan for implementation of the principles at the University.
- Also in June 2020, the decision was made for the University to become a formal institutional member of the [UK Reproducibility Network](#) (UKRN), which is a national peer-led consortium that aims to ensure that the UK retains its place as a centre for world-leading research.
 - Moreover, since 2019, the University has had a Local Network Lead in place as a point of contact for UKRN and overseeing grass-root groups (including Early Career Researcher) that meet periodically across the University to discuss issues related to reproducibility and open research. They include the [ReproducibiliTea](#) journal club at Southampton. More information can be found at: <https://library.soton.ac.uk/lovedata/reproducibiliTea>
- The RIG Team has been working with the University Library on the draft Authorship, Contribution and Publishing Policy and associated guidance. The draft policy and guidance have been widely

consulted with the University community and it is expected that they will be finalised and officially approved in the academic year 2020/2021.

- Doctoral College in cooperation with the RIG Team has been working on our in-house online version of the RI Training.
- In November 2020, the University's annual Assurance Statements to President and Vice-Chancellor for the period of 1st August 2019 to 31st July 2020 were presented to the University's Audit Committee. The Assurance Statements are signed by Faculty Deans and by the Chief Operating Officer on behalf of the Professional Services. They cover a range of financial, legal compliance, health and safety, and environmental questions and specifically obtain assurance on matters of research integrity, ethics, research data management, conflicts of interest and information security.

A RICH ENVIRONMENT PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING RESEARCH INTEGRITY

The University has a number of academic lead groups, centres or initiatives that develop and support aspects of ethics, integrity and good research practices, including:

- [Health Ethics and Law \(HEAL\)](#) (established in 2005) is an interdisciplinary research group which explores the nature of health care law and its impact on society. It actively promotes engagement between academics, health professionals and policy makers, and makes substantive contribution to theory and practice. The group holds regular events hosting external speakers on a variety of ethics topics which are widely attended by staff and postgraduate research students (PGRs).
- [Southampton Ethics Centre \(SEC\)](#) (launched 2013/2014) brings together a large community of researchers including PGRs working on ethics and ethics related issues across the University. The Centre provides newsletters and information on national events and hosts events locally.
- [Clinical Ethics and Law at Southampton \(CELS\)](#) (established in 2010) is a multidisciplinary research group that explores the application of ethics and law in clinical practice through conceptual and empirical research, innovative teaching and public dialogue. It is actively engaged in national debates through its work with groups such as ELSI Research Group, Institute of Medical Ethics (IME) and UK Clinical Ethics Network (UKCEN).
- [National Centre for Research Methods \(NCRM\)](#) (established in 2004) provides training and capacity building activities in social science research methods which includes topics on good research practices and ethical issues. It was set up by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) at the University of Southampton and is now run in partnership with the University of Manchester and the University of Edinburgh. In January 2020 NCRM entered a new phase with an ESRC award for 5 years which focuses on delivering a comprehensive programme of cutting-edge research methods training across the UK with its partners including: UCL, NatCen, WISERD, Bristol, Exeter, Essex, Leeds, Liverpool and Glasgow.

EXTERNAL MEMBERSHIPS

To ensure that the University keeps abreast of best practice in matters related to the Concordat and research integrity, it is a member of a number of external bodies including:

- [UK Research Integrity Office \(UKRIO\)](#)
- [Association for Research Managers and Administrators \(ARMA\)](#)
- [Understanding Animal Research \(UAR\)](#)
- [Russell Group Research Integrity Forum \(RGRIF\)](#)
- [UK Reproducibility Network \(UKRN\)](#)

ADDRESSING RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

University Students

Any concerns about research misconduct in relation to University students can be reported to the Curriculum and Quality Assurance (CQA) Teams based in every University Faculty. Such concerns will be treated as potential breaches of Academic Integrity (AI) and investigated by Academic Integrity Officers (AIOs) in line with the University's [Regulations Governing Academic Integrity](#).

University Staff

The University has the [Procedure for Investigating Cases of Alleged Misconduct in Research](#) ('the Procedure') which has been revised and updated in February 2019 in line with the new requirements of research funders. The Procedure is administered by the RIG Team and includes clear principles and mechanisms to ensure that any investigations are conducted in a fair, thorough, objective and timely manner. All allegations received are treated with confidentiality and in line with the data protection legislation. Any allegations concerning University staff can be reported at the Faculty level by contacting the Faculty's Research Integrity Champion (RIC) or the Associate Dean Research (ADR), or directly to the RIG Team. As per the University's Procedure, all those raising concerns in good faith will be protected, supported and not penalised, in line with the University's [Whistleblowing Policy](#).

Research misconduct investigations

The table below sets out the high-level details of investigations and findings in relation to research misconduct covering both staff and post graduate research (PGR) students in academic year 2019/2020. Number outside of brackets reflects staff, and number within brackets indicate PGR students.

	Number of allegations for which an investigation has been undertaken (Academic Year)	Number of allegations upheld (in whole or in part) (Academic Year)
	2019/2020	2019/2020
Fabrication		
Falsification		
Plagiarism	0 (3)	0 (3)
Misrepresentation		
Breach of Ethics		
Breach of Duty of Care		
Authorship dispute/Lack of authorship credit	1 (0)	0 (0)
Other e.g. unprofessional behavior.		

* Blank box indicates no cases.

Lessons learned

During the academic year 2019/2020 the RIG Team continued to receive queries and allegations regarding authorship and acknowledgments, as well as, retractions and corrigenda. This further necessitates the work on finalising our Authorship, Contribution and Publishing Policy and associated guidance and disseminating information about it once it will be completed and fully approved. We will also ensure that a separate module on authorship is included in our online RI training.