University of Huddersfield
Research Integrity
Annual Narrative Statement 2020-21

The University of Huddersfield subscribes to the principles of the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* and is committed to excellence in all aspects of research. As an employer of researchers, the University acts in accordance with the commitments and the related responsibilities for employers of researchers as outlined in the Concordat. This includes fulfilment of the expectations held by funders of research for employers of researchers. The University policies, framework and procedures can be found on the University website.

The University's on-going commitment to the Concordat is reflected below.

1. Supporting and strengthening research integrity understanding and processes

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

1.1 School based training and support

Training and support provided in 2020-21 within Schools is summarised as follows:

- **Applied Sciences** – The research governance website has been reviewed and refreshed. 52 ethics approvals have been granted. School training sessions for 7 new staff and 35 postgraduate researchers (PGRs) were included within induction processes.
- **Art, Design and Architecture** – The research governance website and procedural documents for ethical approval were reviewed. No changes were required. Training for staff on ethics and new forms developed in 2019-20 was delivered by the Chair of the Ethics Committee and by the Director of Graduate Education for students and supervisors. School processes for the identification of security sensitive projects and the related ethics approvals were reviewed and information provided on the School Research MS Teams site. 44 ethics approvals have been granted.
- **Business School** – The research governance website has been reviewed and refreshed and the forms and guidance for the ethics application process have been updated. SREIC has been restructured to include Departmental Research Integrity Champions. 51 ethics approvals have been granted. 7 applications are still under review. 2 new members of staff have received reviewer training. Induction of PGRs includes a 45-minute training session with the Chair of SREIC.
- **Computing and Engineering** – The research governance website has been reviewed and refreshed. The terms of reference and membership of SREIC and procedural documents for ethical approval have been updated. School

processes for the identification of security sensitive projects and the related ethics approvals were confirmed as appropriate. No new projects required ethics approval.

- **Education and Professional Development** - The research governance website has been reviewed and security sensitive research aspects updated to reflect the latest University guidance. A separate email regarding security sensitive research has also been sent to staff. The terms of reference and membership of SREIC and procedural documents for ethical approval have been updated. 29 ethics approvals have been granted. All staff have received training and training needs are reviewed at appraisal. An online video relating to ethics guidance is available and distributed to staff and PGRs. 11 PGRs have undertaken the Epigeum Research Integrity Concise course and included evidence of completion in their research support plan submissions.
- **Human and Health Sciences** - The terms of reference and membership of SREIC and procedural documents for ethical approval have been reviewed. The research governance website has been refreshed with updated additional resources and SREIC membership. 'Security sensitive projects' has been added as a standing item at SREIC. A total of 108 ethics approvals have been granted. On-line training sessions in *Ethics and External Governance* and *NHS Research: Permissions, practicality and pragmatism* were provided to 51 staff and 10 PGRs respectively. The sessions were recorded and are available on-line via the VLE. An induction training event was held for new SREIC members.
- **Music, Humanities and Media** - The research governance website, the terms of reference and membership of SREIC and procedural documents for ethical approval have been reviewed and refreshed where required. The processes for the identification of security sensitive research projects and related ethics approvals have been reviewed and found to be appropriate. 15 ethics approvals have been granted. All new staff received training in autumn 2020 and School training sessions for all new PGRs are included within induction.

School websites include information about the approval processes for research proposals, which are based on the knowledge of discipline specific ethical, legal and professional frameworks. Each Associate Dean Research and Enterprise, supported by a Research Integrity Champion, is responsible for the communication of and continuous improvement in policy, procedures, support and information for staff, PGRs and student researchers within their School.

On 1 August 2021 a new School of Arts and Humanities has been established following the merger of the School of Art, Design and Architecture and the School of Music, Humanities and Media. New arrangements for ethical approval and oversight of research integrity within the new School will be established during 2021-22 and information placed on the new School website.

1.2 Research Integrity Champions Network

The network for the School Research Integrity Champions has been established through a series of online meetings held during the year. This has enabled discussion, sharing of training materials across disciplines and wider communication within and between the Schools. Awareness of the Epigeum Research Integrity packages and the importance of engaging staff in the CEDARS survey has been

raised. The Champions were also made aware of the UKRIO and Vitae's *Research Integrity: a landscape study* document. A review at School level of the outcome from CEDARS 2020 was carried also out.

1.3 Centrally based training and support

The University provides online training and support for research staff and postgraduate researchers (PGRs) in the form of modules within Epigeum's *Research Integrity* and *Research Skills* packages.

Research Integrity: Concise was purchased and released in summer 2019. In 2019-20 uptake was low and the course was actively promoted in 2020-21. Following a change in the University's regulations, from academic year 2020-21 evidence of research integrity training is required at PGR progression monitoring. Submitting a 'pass' certificate for *Research Integrity: Concise* training is one way that PGRs can evidence compliance alongside any discipline specific in-School or external training. Uptake has improved considerably, with an additional 182 users having passed the course.

	13 October 2020	5 October 2021
Failed	7	20
Incomplete	15	32
Passed	**59**	**241**

Figure 1 Research Integrity: Concise online completions (totals)

A new version of *Research Integrity (UK Edition)* was rolled out in Autumn 2020. As of the date of this report, 31 users have passed the *Research Integrity: Core Course* (and a further 25 have engaged but not completed) and 15 the *Research Integrity: Supplementary Course* (with a further 6 engaged)*.*

In 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the PGR induction process moved from face to face to online enabling a full review of content and the opportunity to enhance signposting to *Research Integrity: Concise* and further learning opportunities to support PGRs with research integrity matters throughout their studies.

Weekly PGR Catch-ups online were introduced to compensate for the lack of face-to-face sessions. In 2020-21 two of these focussed explicitly on Research Integrity, with a total of approximately 20 participants.

1.4 NHS Integrated Research Approval System (IRAS)

All NHS IRAS approvals for research activities in all Schools continue to be routed through Research and Enterprise prior to submission.

1.5 Human Tissue Licence

The University's School of Applied Sciences (SAS) is the largest user of human tissue in its research activities and the School's Research Committee oversees wider compliance with the Human Tissue Act across the University. The University holds a Human Tissue Licence for storage of relevant materials within SAS (https://www.hta.gov.uk/professional/establishments/university-huddersfield).

2. Dealing with allegations of misconduct

"a statement to provide assurance that the processes the institution has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, timely, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation"

The University's procedure for identifying how allegations of misconduct in research are reported and investigated is documented in the staff handbook and was last reviewed in November 2019. The [procedure](#) follows UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) guidance.

The named person for receiving allegations of misconduct is Professor Tim Thornton (Deputy Vice Chancellor).

Misconduct in research by postgraduate researchers is covered in [Section 9 of the Regulations for PGRs](#).

The Regulations for postgraduate researchers were last updated in 2019 by Registry and Graduate Board to bring the procedures in line with guidance from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, such as e.g. shortened timeline and new grounds for appeal. They have been reviewed during 2020-21 as part of the regular annual processes by Registry in consultation with internal stakeholders and amendments made to improve clarity and the consideration of best practice. The 2021-22 Regulations were published on the Registry website on 1 August 2021 and included a new section - Allegations under the regulations for PGRs - which clarifies that the burden of proof lies with the University and that the standard of proof is based on the balance of probability. Section 9 included clarification that a stage 1 investigation can be undertaken by a supervisor.

The University's *[Freedom to Speak Up: Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure](#)* was reviewed and approved by University Council in March 2019 is available on the university website.

3. Formal investigations of research misconduct and lessons learned

"a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, which will include data on the number of investigations. If no formal investigation has been undertaken, this should also be noted"

and

"a statement on what the institution has learned from any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, including what lessons have been learned to prevent the same type of incident re-occurring"

For PGRs, 21 formal investigations have taken place relating to plagiarism, 3 for self-plagiarism and 1 for ethics. The number of cases identified (55) in 2019-20 highlighted a lack of robust guidance and frameworks to support PGRs and staff with issues relating to plagiarism and self-citation. A Task and Finish group was rapidly established to work on developing improved guidance, training and support. The group was led by the Dean of the Graduate School and included representation from Registry, Research and Enterprise, Student Services, Schools and the Student Union. The group reviewed, updated and developed guidance, procedures, supporting documentation at School and University level, training materials, templates for investigation communications and the PGR Handbook. Registry

completed a sector review and the Regulations were reviewed to check whether penalties were aligned to sector norms; they were and no Regulatory changes were made. The improvements implemented by the Task and Finish group resulted in a significant reduction in the number of research misconduct cases, decreasing by 54.5% (55 cases in 2019-20 to 25 cases in 2020-21). It is hoped that further reductions will be seen in coming years once the new procedures have been fully embedded. The case relating to ethics was found to be 'no case to answer', therefore there were no specific lessons learned in this instance.

One formal investigation of staff research misconduct has been carried out. The lessons learned have led to a need to produce improved guidance relating to some aspects of knowledge exchange activities.

4. Institutional research environment

"a statement on how the institution creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct"

In 2021 the second national CEDARS (Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey) provided feedback from our staff regarding aspects of research integrity as the survey included several relevant questions. The survey was sent to researchers and 32% (294) of University of Huddersfield academic staff responded to the survey compared to 29% (275) in 2020. Their responses are summarised as follows:

- 65.2% (67.6% in 2020) said that they had done training or other CPD in research integrity, a slight reduction compared to 2020 though above benchmark for the sector; with an additional 24.7% (23.9% in 2020) indicating that they would like to.
- 75.2% (71.8% in 2020) agreed or agreed strongly that they are familiar with the University's mechanisms to report incidents of misconduct, an improvement compared to 2020.
- 79.8% (77.2% in 2020) agreed or agreed strongly that they would feel comfortable reporting any incidents of research misconduct, an improvement compared to 2020.
- 80.8% (73.2% in 2020) agreed or agreed strongly that they trust the University to investigate any reported incidents of research misconduct fairly, an improvement compared to 2020.
- 78.3% (69.6% in 2020) agreed or agreed strongly that the University would take action if appropriate after such an investigation, an improvement compared to 2020.
- 89.7% (88.6% in 2020) did not personally feel pressured into compromising their research standards or integrity, an improvement compared to 2020
- 23 (18 in 2020) respondents indicated that they had reported incidents of research misconduct, an increase compared to 2020.
- 75.4% (69.6% in 2020) agreed or agreed strongly that the University promotes the highest standards of research integrity and conduct, an improvement compared to 2020.
- 26.7% (23.4% in 2020) indicated that they had some understanding of the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*, an improvement compared to 2020.

A further 29.4% (26% in 2020) stated that they know it exists but do not know the detail.

Although scores for uptake of training have reduced slightly, the survey results generally indicate a level of improvement in the awareness and understanding of research integrity and confidence in reporting instances of alleged misconduct and are broadly in line with or above benchmark scores for CEDARS nationally. Promotion of the online training materials will be re-energised in 2021.

Publication of the Annual Narrative Statement

This is the University's eighth annual narrative statement. The University annual statements are publicly available through its *Concordat to support research integrity pages* on the website.

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