Annual Research Integrity Statement for Academic Session 19/20

Background

As a subscriber to the **Concordat to Support Research Integrity**, the University of South Wales is committed to upholding and promoting the principles found within the concordat and its framework. This annual statement sets out the University's position in relation to research integrity, including what is in place to achieve compliance, as well as facilitating the disclosure of any allegations of research misconduct related to all staff and postgraduate research.

As a recipient of public funding, the University recognises the need to manage risks and minimise the occurrence of adverse events. We acknowledge that Research Integrity should not prevent or block research and innovation activities from taking place but rather it should enhance the success and resilience of such endeavours. In order to maintain and build upon the University's research portfolio, it is important that the University is committed to maintaining the highest standards in research, from design through to dissemination, by demonstrating openness, rigour and integrity in all of our research activity.

We achieve this through underpinning our research with a number of quality assurance and risk management processes and by providing relevant support, policies and guidance in a widely-accessible format.

Governance

Embedded within its terms of reference, the **University Ethics Sub Group (UESG)** holds overall responsibility for overseeing and implementing the Concordat, as well as overall integrity (ethics) and governance related policies and procedures. The UESG is a sub-committee of the University Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) to which it reports, and meets at fixed time periods throughout the academic year.

The UESG Committee is chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (PVC) for Research and Student Experience, a member of the **University Executive** group. The UESG also has oversight of and / or receives reports from all Faculty Research Ethics Committees, which exist in every faculty and are responsible for ensuring faculty compliance with institutional policies related to research governance and ethics, as well as reviewing high risk research ethics applications and ensuring low risk ethics applications are being reviewed appropriately. UESG also provides reports to Research Committee, a formal subgroup of Academic Board.

Operationally, **Research and Innovation Services** (RISe) provides day-to-day support for all matters relating to ethics, integrity and research governance. This includes providing advice and the arrangement of a number of training and awareness raising events across all levels of the research community. In addition, RISe also supports the UESG.

Part of the role of the PVC Research and Student Experience is to ensure the work of developing, publicising and assuring the University's arrangements satisfy the standards required of Research ethics, research integrity and Good Research Practice. As the University's lead for Research Ethics the PVC Research and Student Experience also works to ensure that research, both by academic members of staff and students, meets the highest ethical standards.

Equally, faculties and the schools within them play an important role in ensuring that the research conducted by its staff and postgraduate research students is conducted appropriately and to the highest standard. Each faculty has a Head of Research who is an academic member of staff, whose role includes overseeing and championing a range of research-related issues.

Tailored for PGR students, the **Graduate Research Office** oversees and supports the further development of postgraduates through the provision of training, and a series of induction events throughout the academic year.

Policies and Procedures

The University has a number of policies and procedures related to ensuring research integrity, good research practice, and the reporting of research misconduct and adverse events:

- *Good Research Practice Code of Conduct,*
- *University Research Ethics Policy,*
- *Publication and Authorship guidance,*
- *Research Misconduct - procedure for reporting and investigating,*
- *Whistleblowing policy,*
- *Data Protection (GDPR),*
- *Research Data Management,*
- *Open Access,*
- *PREVENT Protocol for security related research*
- *Research Risk Matrix for pre award approval of research intended for overseas or poses significant risk to researchers, participants, or institution.*

Training

Training and awareness raising in the areas of ethics and integrity play an important role in facilitating good research practice. Recent reviews and subsequent revisions to the training and awareness raising events at University of South Wales are aimed at all levels of researchers and it is necessary to ensure that all researchers are aware of their responsibilities towards maintaining the highest ethical standards when undertaking their research.

At undergraduate and postgraduate level, module co-ordinators and other lecturing staff are encouraged to embed the appropriate University processes and procedures into the delivery of their teaching. Postgraduate, early career researchers and newly appointed academic staff are invited to attend sessions which cover fundamental research ethics issues and university processes which run throughout the academic year. Existing research staff members are also able to attend any of the available sessions.

For those in the human health research field, a number of training opportunities, such as Good Clinical Practice (GCP), have been facilitated by Health and Care Research Wales.

In order to further encourage engagement with Research Governance, the University has designed a Research Governance Checklist to bring together and guide researchers through the Research Governance checks applicable to their research project through its lifecycle.

Levels of engagement from the research community are positive and we will continue to develop and refine its training offering ready for the 2020/21 academic session.

External Memberships

RISe continues to actively participate in the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA).

As of September 2015, the University has become a member of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO). The university is also a proud member of the Universities UK group, as well as being a

member of the University Alliance. These memberships enable and support the University to further embed and support good research practice in a manner which is consistent with the principles and expectations found within the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

Summary of Research Misconduct Investigations

Reports of suspected research misconduct are escalated by RISe to Human Resources, genuine instances are taken through the staff disciplinary procedure. Staff and students are encouraged to report all suspected instances of research misconduct directly to RISe or to the Faculty Research Ethics Chairs.

Based on the University Research Misconduct Policy, the University can report that for 2019/20 there were **no high level (formal)** investigations in relation to research misconduct at staff or postgraduate student level.

Overview of Activities Carried Out During the 2019/20 Academic Session

Despite the advent of Covid-19 and related restrictions and lockdowns, the University has continued to review and refine its provision to ensure compliance with, and commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity**.**

- Increased prominence on University webpages (both externally facing and intranet) of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity to ensure its visibility to staff and postgraduate researchers.

- **Clear advertising of** (i) a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity, and (ii) a named point of contact to act as confidential liaison for whistle-blowers or any other person wishing to raise concerns about the integrity of research being conducted by the institution.

- **Revisions to Research Ethics training (staff, and postgraduate student induction) to ensure** the Concordat (and wider issues related to ensuring research integrity) are disseminated, understood, and promoted to the research community. This includes the reinforcement of the responsibilities applicable to researchers.

- Annual review of policies related to research governance and integrity, including research ethics, data management, authorship/publication, and research misconduct.

- Initiation of an Adverse Event reporting policy that has validity to all research areas, not just clinical.

- Initiation of a Conflict of Interest policy to focus on research.

- Initiation of a University wide 'Research Training Passport' to ensure that researchers are adequately trained to undertake their research. This concept is intended for introduction in a future academic session.

- Review of research training programmes for both staff and postgraduate researchers. This exercise has led to the seeking of additional online training intended for all staff and all students. This will complement and enhance the research training capabilities of the institution, but also improve the understanding and awareness of issues integral to research ethics, governance, conduct, and integrity in a format that is convenient and accessible to all.

- Seeking procurement of an enhanced research approval system to internally review and approve research that intends to seek external funding and internally funded research. The intention is to enhance the 'risks' that are captured, managed, and reviewed prior to research being permitted to commence.