Research and Innovation Services

Annual Research Integrity Statement for Academic Session 21/22

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

The Pro Vice Chancellor for Research oversees Research Integrity and ensures that this information is kept up to date and publicly available.

The Research Governance Manager is the first point of contact for those seeking information about Research Integrity or any related matters.

Individuals who wish to raise concerns in confidence about the integrity of any research being undertaken by the University of South Wales are invited to contact the Head of Research and Innovation Services.

This information is publicly available on our USW Research Governance web pages including our annual statements and links to our Research Misconduct and Whistleblowing policies.

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 meets at fixed times throughout the year but also convenes as is required as well as managing requests via Chair's Action. The UESG is a sub-committee of the university's Research Committee which itself is a sub-committee of Academic Board.

The UESG Committee is chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (PVC) for Research, 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 each 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.

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 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 also works to ensure that research, both by academic members of staff and students, meets the highest ethical standards.

Equally, faculties and the subject areas 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 an Associate Dean for 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 for Research (GDPR),*
- *Research Data Management,*
- *Open Access,*
- *PREVENT Protocol for security related research*
- *Research Risk Matrix for preliminary approval of research intended for overseas or that poses significant risk to researchers, participants, or institution.*

During this current academic session, we intend to introduce additional policies to compliment and strengthen our commitment and compliance with the Concordat:

- *Conflict of Interest policy (currently under review)*
- *Research Integrity policy (in draft)*

Training and Dissemination

It is widely agreed that 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 students and academic staff are invited to participate in training that covers fundamental research ethics issues and university processes.

For those in the human health research field, a number of external training opportunities, such as Good Clinical Practice (GCP), have been facilitated by Health and Care Research Wales and continue to provide training related to clinical research. These external opportunities are advertised via our internal communications and cover a wide range of clinical research governance requirements.

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 during its initiation and through its lifecycle.

Staff induction involves direct reference to the University's policies related to integrity, ethics, and governance. The Research Governance Manager is also available to support and advise researchers with any matters related to research integrity.

As part of postgraduate induction all research students attend a session entitled Introduction to Research Ethics, Research Integrity, and Research Governance. In these sessions the concordat and key internal policies are referenced, and key principles and responsibilities are discussed.

As a commitment to furthering the visibility and understanding of matters related to research ethics, the University has invested in and recently implemented a comprehensive suite of online research training within our virtual learning environment, which covers in depth both Research Ethics and Research Integrity. This training is regularly advertised to the research community via the University Research Committee and Associate Deans of Research (formerly Heads of Research).

The University will continue to offer a number of opportunities for researchers to help them ensure their research is conducted in accordance with the principles of the concordat and the institution will work harder to increase the number of staff that engage with the training on offer.

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 a member of the Universities UK group, as well as being a

member of the University Alliance (UA), which includes membership to the UA Research Integrity and Ethics Research Administration Network.

The University has recently contributed to a review of the suite of Concordats and frameworks that are relevant to HEI's, undertaken by Oxentia Ltd on behalf of UUK.

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. Our policy is mindful of treating suspected instances seriously while protecting those that might be the victim of unfair, inaccurate or unsubstantiated accusations. Our Research Misconduct policy instructs all staff and students to report all suspected instances of research misconduct directly to RISe, or the PVCR, or to the Faculty Research Ethics Chairs.

Based on the University Research Misconduct Policy, the University can report that for 2021/22 there were **no high level (formal)** investigations in relation to research misconduct at staff or postgraduate student level. There also no serious reports of suspected research.

Overview of Activities Carried Out During the 2021/22 Academic Session

- Annual review research policies related to research governance and integrity, including research ethics, data management, authorship/publication, and research misconduct. Including updates to Research Ethics proformas and guidance to the reviewers of research ethics applications.

- UKRI Funding Assurance exercise, of which large elements related to research integrity.

- Annual audit of the prevalence of research ethics approval related to our REF submission publication pool.

- Continued dissemination of both research ethics and research integrity (including training opportunities) via institutional communication channels.

- Review and revision to staff induction to enhance reference to Concordat to Support Research Integrity and research ethics policies.

- Review and revision of PREVENT procedures relating to research.

- Procurement of an online ethics review system to replace all existing manual based ethical approval processes. Due to go live in June 2023.

- Creation of Conflict-of-Interest policy – currently under review.

Future work

Research integrity literacy

The concordat makes it clear that researchers are responsible for '*understanding the expected standards of rigour and integrity relevant to their research*', by proxy this passes an obligation to the institution to ensure they do.

The number of researchers who have engaged with our online training does not confirm whether researchers more broadly are aware or not of their responsibilities. However, this has suggested there is a need to establish the levels of 'literacy' related to research integrity amongst the current research community. This information will enable the institution to assess whether our researchers are appropriately aware of and upholding of the concordat's principles, as well inform future strategies to increase awareness and engagement.

Research Integrity Policy

As a step to ensuring that all researchers take the time to understand their responsibilities within the concordat, the institution intends to introduce a Research Integrity policy. The policy will clearly promote the responsibilities and expectations that both the concordat and the institution place upon researchers.

Research and Innovation Services, October 2022