

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 meets at fixed times throughout the year but also convenes as is required as well as managing requests via Chair's Action.

Following discussion and recommendation at the October 2021 University Research Committee meeting the UESG became a sub-committee of Research Committee in November 2021. The Research Committee 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 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 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.*

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 external 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.

As part of Postgraduate induction 67 PGR students attended a session entitled Introduction to Research Ethics and Research Integrity. Where key principles of both ethics and integrity are presented and explored.

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 resource will be launched in late November 2021 to all staff and students and can be accessed at any time. This training will be embedded within our development programmes of both Postgraduate and Early Career researchers.

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

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 2020/21 there were **no high level (formal)** investigations in relation to research misconduct at staff or postgraduate student level.

For transparency, In March 2021 the University received one external communication which questioned the authenticity of a research output generated by a member of staff. The claims made were informally investigated in accordance with our Research Misconduct policy. This case was not escalated beyond an informal exploration of the facts at which point it was agreed that the claims made should not be upheld.

Overview of Activities Carried Out During the 2020/21 Academic Session

- Revisions to Research Ethics Policy to ensure the Concordat (and wider issues related to ensuring research integrity) are understood and captured as part of the ethics review process, ensuring there is consideration of issues related to Research Integrity and Research Ethics.

- Redesign of institutional research webpages to further promote and make prominent the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and associated sources of support.
- 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.
- Implementation (November 2021) of an online research training programme available to all staff and students. These, as well as a broader suite of research training will be prescribed to postgraduate and early career researchers as part of their development programme. Of relevance here is a series of online training related to both Research Ethics and Research Integrity covering the following topics:

Research Ethics - Ethical decision-making, Underpinning values for ethical research, Ethical concerns associated with different forms of research, Ethical concerns associated with different research methods and activities, working with human participants, understanding research ethics approval, Working ethically in challenging circumstances, Working ethically in a global environment.

Research Integrity - Good Research Conduct, Irresponsible Research Practices, Planning Your Research, Managing and Recording Your Research, Data Selection, Analysis and Presentation, Scholarly Publication, Professional Responsibilities, Communication, Social Responsibility and Impact, Conflicts of Interest, Research Involving Human Participants, The Care and Use of Animals in Research, Intellectual Property.

Research and Innovation Services, November 2021