

# University of Leeds: Annual statement on research integrity

If you have any questions about this template, please contact:

[RIsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:RIsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk).

## Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	University of Leeds
1B. Type of organisation:	Higher education institution
1C. Date statement approved	17 April 2023 by the Research and Innovation Board
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	<a href="https://ris.leeds.ac.uk/research-ethics-and-integrity/research-integrity/">https://ris.leeds.ac.uk/research-ethics-and-integrity/research-integrity/</a>
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	<b>Name: Professor Nick Plant</b> (Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation) <b>Email address: <a href="mailto:DVC.Res@leeds.ac.uk">DVC.Res@leeds.ac.uk</a></b>
1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	<b>Name: Catherine Cho</b> (Head of Governance Support) <b>Email address: <a href="mailto:c.l.l.cho@adm.leeds.ac.uk">c.l.l.cho@adm.leeds.ac.uk</a></b>

## Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken

### 2A. Description of current systems and culture

Please describe how the organisation maintains high standards of research integrity and promotes positive research culture. It should include information on the support provided to researchers to understand standards, values and behaviours, such as training, support and guidance for researchers at different career stages/ disciplines. You may find it helpful to consider the following broad headings:

- Policies and systems
- Communications and engagement

- Culture, development and leadership
- Monitoring and reporting

We aim to conduct research at Leeds according to the University values of collaboration, compassion, inclusivity, and integrity. The University takes responsibility to ensure that our researchers have rigorously considered ethical implications and conduct their research to the highest standards of integrity.

## Policies and systems

The University of Leeds has a comprehensive range of policies and systems that govern research integrity matters and ensure our commitment to the core values set out within the Concordat, listed below.

### Key policies that govern research integrity:

- Protocol for investigating and resolving allegations of misconduct in academic research (This policy is currently under review)
- Code of Practice on Whistleblowing (This policy is currently under review)
- The Procedures for investigating plagiarism in University assessments by Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs)
- Cheating, Plagiarism, Fraudulent or Fabricated Coursework and Malpractice in University Examinations and Assessments
- Code of conduct: Professional behaviour and relationships
- Dignity and Mutual Respect (This policy is currently under review)
- Equality and Inclusion (E&I) Framework (2020 – 2025)
- University of Leeds Research Ethics Policy
- Policy Statement on Professional Integrity in Research
- Code of practice on corporate governance (includes policy statements on academic freedom and professional integrity in research)
- Research data management policy
- Policy on safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Policy for the storage and use of human tissue
- Data protection policies
- Anti-bribery policy
- Export Controls policy

**University committee structures:** Summary diagram available [here](#).

The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) has delegated responsibility for review of individual ethics applications to Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs) and, within the Faculty of Medicine and Health, School Research Ethics Committees.

An organogram detailing the **Research Culture governance groups** can be found in Annex 1.

## Communications and engagement

- **University Strategy (2020-2030):** Sets a blueprint for a values-driven university that harnesses expertise in research and education to help shape a better future for humanity, working through collaboration to tackle inequalities, benefit society and drive change. An introduction to the values and responsibilities at the University is part of the induction checklist for all new staff.
- For PGRs, there is a research practice handbook which includes research ethics, data management and academic integrity. All PGRs are expected to have research integrity discussions with their supervisory team within the first 3 months of study and provision built into individual training plans as appropriate. Progress against the training plans is monitored and reviewed regularly, including within the formal transfer examination. For the 2023/24 session an induction checklist is under development, which will include links to the Concordat and our Research Integrity online course (available to all staff and students via Minerva)
- The University runs a regular series of **Research Culture Cafés** and has recently launched a **Research Culture Uncovered podcast series** as part of our ongoing work to promote a positive and inclusive research environment at Leeds. Our Culture Cafés are run as small group discussions with a facilitator and each session is followed up with notes from the session to share the challenges, examples of best practice and ideas openly with our Research Culture Community. We have so far run 3 cafés on the topic of Research Integrity. The weekly podcast series is themed into seasons, each focussing on a different area of research culture. Since the launch in November 2022, it has received a great response with good levels of engagement and over 1500 downloads. Research Integrity has been included in season 3 (Open Research), and upcoming seasons 4 (Research Impact) and 6 (Research Culture and Concordats)
- Active networks of researchers engaged in promoting open research through initiatives such as **ReproducibiliTea** journal club and **Open Lunches** webinar series. We have also invested Research England funding into developing a **case study resource** to explore and promote open practice across different disciplines.
- Our Research and Innovation Service (RIS) maintains dedicated and externally accessible **“Research Ethics and Integrity”** webpages to signpost relevant policies and provide further guidance, including processes for investigating allegations of research misconduct and whistleblowing.
- RIS also has a **Trusted Research Environment team** who maintain a dedicated **“Trusted Research”** webpage where guidance on safeguarding international collaborations, export controls and the National Security and Investment Act is available.
- Changes to **funder terms and conditions**, including those relating to ethical, legal and research integrity issues are communicated by the Research Operations team to the network of Faculty Research and Innovation Offices, to inform relevant colleagues. Where appropriate, changed terms and conditions are reviewed by the Contracts team in RIS to ensure compliance.
- Research integrity is a key theme embedded within our Researcher Development Concordat Implementation Plan and the UKCGE Good Supervisory Practice Framework.
- The University of Leeds is a signatory to the **NCCPE’s Manifesto for Public Engagement** and has several outreach teams that deliver diverse widening participation programmes, activities, and events, for example the STEM@Leeds team.

## Culture, development and leadership

At the University of Leeds, we believe all members of our research community have a role to play in developing and promoting a positive and inclusive research culture. Following the recruitment of our inaugural Dean for Research Culture, Professor Catherine Davies, we published our **research culture statement** outlining our five research culture themes:

- personal development, reward and recognition
- open research and impact
- equality, diversity and inclusion in research
- responsible research and innovation
- a collegiate and supportive environment

We convened a **Research Culture Steering Group** pulling together all aspects of work under the research culture umbrella. This includes strategic subgroups as outlined in Annex 1. Work by the research culture subgroups has led to the publication of our **responsible research metrics statement** and **open research statement**. These statements were ultimately approved by the University's Research and Innovation Board (chaired by Prof Nick Plant) and promoted via our dedicated **Research Culture webpages**.

We acknowledge this is just the start and will soon be releasing our Research Culture Strategy and Implementation Plan, with our four priority areas:

- Recognising diverse forms of research activity
- Embedding EDI principles in research practices
- Enabling open research practices
- Mutually supporting and developing research teams

Elements of the Research Integrity Concordat run throughout each theme and are supported by other key Concordats and initiatives including the Researcher Development Concordat, DORA, Athena Swan and the Technicians Commitment.

### Training and development opportunities:

- E-learning modules for research integrity, research ethics, academic integrity and safeguarding in research: Open to all staff and students (via the University VLE: Minerva)
- Dedicated **Researcher Development and Culture Team** committed to developing the skills and confidence that enable researchers to thrive, with a wide range of opportunities for professional and personal development.
- The **Library** offers enquiry support and training including workshops on open research practices, data management planning, responsible research metrics and safeguarding research data
- Our Research Computing team and IT Training Unit run a variety of specialist training in topics including bioinformatics, version control with GitHub, R programming, Python and reproducible scientific code development.
- The University of Leeds is a signatory to the **Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers** and recently hosted Concordat Awareness Month: A chance for all staff to find out more about the support and opportunities available to researchers, (prospective) research managers, and the wider academic community.
- A **University-Wide Mentoring Scheme** is available to all staff at Leeds

#### **Additional information:**

- **Key leadership groups:** UREC, Ethics and Values Committee, Research and Innovation Board, Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Committee, Audit and Risk, Export Controls and Sanctions Steering Committee.
- **Employee Engagement Survey (Feb 2023):** This survey is a key mechanism to gather feedback on the institution's research culture, including the views of researchers and others involved in research. Nearly 5,300 people took part, submitting more than 30,000 individual comments. The Executive and Leadership teams are now analysing the results, reviewing feedback and will begin the process of developing action plans in response, to help create positive research environments for all.
- **Research Integrity pulse surveys** are embedded within the research culture evaluation plan and regular themed Research Culture Cafés. The pulse surveys have up to 10 regular questions, mostly single click choices, repeated every 4-6 weeks. This quick and simple format is designed to build participation and provide real-time evaluation of changes in culture, engagement and awareness of our initiatives.
- **Knowledge Equity Network:** A major new initiative aiming to collaboratively tackle our biggest global challenges by truly opening access to quality higher education for all. The network will develop and enact a global ***Declaration on Knowledge Equity***, to capture our collective commitment and aspirations to reduce inequalities through increased access to knowledge. We are keen to engage with senior leaders from Higher Education Institutions, with policy makers, funders and publishers who share this vision for fair and equitable access to knowledge ([KnowledgeEquityNetwork@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:KnowledgeEquityNetwork@leeds.ac.uk)).

#### **Monitoring and reporting**

- Research misconduct allegations are treated seriously and handled directly via the University Secretary (as described in section 3). The Senate and Council (where the respondent is a member of staff) will be informed of the outcome of any formal investigation, and information is published in the University's Integrated Annual Report as part of the section on 'Maintaining Standards'.
- Annual reports on the work of FRECs are made to UREC. During the 2021-22 academic year, the FRECs considered a total of 1,017 research ethics applications. A proportionate model for ethical review of lower risk projects is provided, in 2021-22 there were 220 applications via this route.
- Faculties report on research culture challenges and develop action plans as part of the annual Integrated Planning Exercise.
- The University's internal auditors undertook an audit exercise in 2018 focused on ethics in the context of research, which was classified as "low risk" and actions for improvement affected. These included amending the ethical review forms to include a declaration, to be signed by all applicants, stating they had read the University's research ethics policy and more detailed guidance.
- Development needs for staff are identified via the annual process of appraisals (SRDS) and used to generate tailored training plans. The University maintains a database of participation for compulsory training in EDI, H&S, data protection etc.
- For PGRs, engagement with research ethics and data management are reviewed as part of the progress review milestones, including the first formal progress

report (at 6 months), the transfer stage (12 months) and annual progress reviews (annually thereafter). Confirmation of ethical review is required as part of the examination process and a data management plan is required by transfer stage.

## **2B. Changes and developments during the period under review**

Please provide an update on any changes made during the period, such as new initiatives, training, developments, also ongoing changes that are still underway. Drawing on Commitment 3 of the Concordat, please note any new or revised policies, practices and procedures to support researchers; training on research ethics and research integrity; training and mentoring opportunities to support the development of researchers' skills throughout their careers.

### **Summary of changes made during the review period (1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 – 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2022):**

- Launch of our **Open research statement**, which commits to open research principles and practices throughout the institution. Development of **Open Research Hub webpages** is underway as a focal point for resources, best practice and guidance.
- Introduction of a new **Publications Policy**, which details our commitment to ensuring that the outputs of our research are open (where possible) and freely accessible. This includes requirements for authors to include a Data Access Statement in all research outputs, retain the necessary rights to make the accepted manuscripts publicly available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) licence, record bibliographic details of all research outputs in the University's publications database and make outputs open access as soon as possible after acceptance.
- The University has become a full member of the **UK Reproducibility Network**, with appointment of an Institutional Lead (Prof Daryl O'Connor) who will work alongside our existing Local Network Lead (Dr Eike Rinke) to promote responsible research initiatives and new training in this area.
- Trial of a new online ethics application and review system (**Infonetica**) was implemented, with institution-wide roll out to follow in the coming months.
- Appointment of a new **Academic Development Consultant** (Dr Emily Goodall) with specific responsibility for research integrity, open research and responsible research training provision across the institution.
- The University's Research Integrity and Research Ethics online training courses (delivered via Minerva) have been updated, this training is recommended for all staff and students who engage in, or support, research activities at the University.
- A summary of the wider Research Culture work currently underway at Leeds can be found via our **Research Culture Roadmap**.

## 2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

This should include a reflection on the previous year's activity including a review of progress and impact of initiatives if known relating to activities referenced in the previous year's statement. Note any issues that have hindered progress, e.g. resourcing or other issues.

### Reflections

In 2021 we invited the whole community at the University of Leeds to have their say in developing our university values via [The Big Leeds Conversation](#), the survey responses are helping to shape our future as a values-led university. To follow up, the **Research Culture Insights** project focused on the ~1,300 survey contributions by professional services staff and researchers (including PGRs). It provided evidence for specific challenges in our research culture as felt by the researcher community and presented colleagues' recommendations to inform the development of our Research Culture strategy. This reanalysis also represents a baseline monitoring and reflection tool.

Research integrity principles are embedded within the Research Culture strategy, with the five key themes (1: *collegiate and supportive environment*; 2: *EDI in research*; 3: *personal development, reward and recognition*; 4: *open research and impact*; and 5: *responsible research and innovation*) aligning with core elements of the Concordat. Current initiatives as a result of the insights project include, providing more opportunities to share ideas around open research practices (Open Lunch webinar series and Open Research Case studies resource) and increased transparency within recruitment and promotions procedures (including responsible use of bibliometrics, and a pilot project to provide candidates with interview questions in advance). We recognise there is more to be done and continue to proactively work via our Research Culture Steering group and the associated strategic subgroups to implement changes.

We identified a gap in research integrity training provision and prioritised this as an area of growth with the appointment of a new Academic Development Consultant (Dr Emily Goodall) to lead on research integrity, open research and responsible research provision across the institution. Working closely with the research culture team, this role increases the visibility of the Concordat and helps to further embed the commitments within our policies, processes and culture activities at Leeds. We will monitor awareness, development and implementation of research integrity work alongside our research culture evaluation work, with leadership via a new Research Integrity Steering Group.

### Future developments for 2022/23 academic year

- The University has formed a **Research Integrity Task and Finish group**, which will use the **UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool** to help identify areas for future development. This will include formation of a Research Integrity Steering Group to provide leadership in this area, participate in regular monitoring and auditing activities, and ensure that the institution continues to proactively meet the commitments of the Concordat.
- The University of Leeds has recently subscribed to the **UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO)** and will be working with them to review and update research integrity policies, processes and training resources.

- In light of the new university **Ethics and Values Committee**, a refresh of the role and remit of the UREC is underway to be completed by July 2023. As part of that process, consideration will also be given to the operation of the FRECs. The aim is to undertake a phased roll out of Infonetica (online ethics application system), to be completed by the end of the calendar year.
- A new online suite of training resources is under development, which further align the core values of research integrity set out within the Concordat to our research culture work. To accompany this, we will develop a new **Research Integrity Hub** website for clearly articulating the expectations of our researchers, sharing best practice and promoting training opportunities. Completion rates for the online training courses and analytics for the webpages will be monitored, then fed into the Research Integrity Steering Group as part of their monitoring activities going forward.
- Further development of the **Open Research Hub**, focusing on signposting and crosslinking to related services and support, hosting open research case studies and infographics to help make concepts more digestible, videos/talking heads explaining open research practices and benefits in different disciplines and research contexts, training resources, opportunities and events.
- We are a signatory to the San Francisco **Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)** and are planning events to celebrate its 10th anniversary later in the year.
- New Researcher Development Concordat implementation plan (due April 2023)
- Launch of the Research Culture strategy and action plan (due Sept 2023)

## 2D. Case study on good practice (optional)

Please describe an anonymised brief, exemplar case study that can be shared as good practice with other organisations. A wide range of case studies are valuable, including small, local implementations. Case studies may also include the impact of implementations or lessons learned.

### ***Case study: Leading change in the responsible use of research metrics***

As part of the University's commitment to positive research culture, we have established a Responsible Research Metrics Group (RRMG). A collaborative team which consists of experts from academic units and professional services to provide leadership and champion the responsible use of research metrics.

The RRMG aims to create new structural and institutional norms and practices to reduce bias in research assessment. Since the groups formation in 2021, the committee has collected and analysed survey data on responsible metrics from the University community, developed and published a position statement, and provided training for recruitment, assessment, and reward processes. It has successfully lobbied senior leadership for support, informed institutional KPIs, and provided expert advice for REF processes. The group has made a significant impact on one of the most problematic and tenacious aspects of research integrity: the reliance on misleading quantitative metrics. It demonstrates several further aspects of research culture, e.g. EDI (recognition of biases in publication), transparency and open research, and the value of collaboration between academic and professional services staff.



The work of the RRMG will achieve a significant change in the way that our researchers and assessors view the value of research. It will allow traditionally marginalised researchers to be correctly recognised and rewarded. It will provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of research assessment by the community. Success will be measured by changes to policy (e.g. promotional criteria; uptake and implementation of responsible metrics training by recruitment panels). The ultimate outcome will be a fairer research community.

The RRMG won a university **Research Culture Award** (2022), recognising the importance of responsible research practices and their efforts to place research integrity at the core of our work, ensuring it's trustworthy, ethical, honest, rigorous, respectful and accountable.

## Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

### 3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

Please provide:

- a brief summary of relevant organisation policies/ processes (e.g. research misconduct procedure, whistle-blowing policy, bullying/harassment policy; appointment of a third party to act as confidential liaison for persons wishing to raise concerns) and brief information on the periodic review of research misconduct processes (e.g. date of last review; any major changes during the period under review; date when processes will next be reviewed).
- information on how the organisation creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct (e.g. code of practice for research, whistle-blowing, research misconduct procedure, informal liaison process, website signposting for reporting systems, training, mentoring, reflection and evaluation of policies, practices and procedures).
- anonymised key lessons learned from any investigations into allegations of misconduct which either identified opportunities for improvements in the organisation's investigation procedure and/or related policies / processes/ culture or which showed that they were working well.

### Organisation policies and processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct

The main policy for investigating allegations is the **"Protocol for investigating and resolving allegations of misconduct in academic research"**, which sets out a framework for the investigation and resolution of allegations of misconduct in academic research. Once an allegation is submitted to the University Secretary, three individuals (screeners) are assigned to consider the evidence and recommend the most appropriate course of action, this may include a full, formal investigation. The University Secretary has overall responsibility for ensuring the integrity of misconduct investigations, resolving cases with appropriate actions and reporting outcomes to external bodies as required.

PGR thesis cases are dealt with by the Committee on Applications (akin to taught student cases), with a preliminary stage undertaken at Graduate Board level. PGR cases at the transfer stage are dealt with at School level, but may be referred to the Committee on Applications. Where the allegation relates to published work, it would fall within the above Protocol for investigating research misconduct. We are embarking on a review to update the Protocol as part of the Research Integrity Task and Finish Group.

There is a separate system for cases of plagiarism by PGRs, governed by the Doctoral College and University Graduate Board as appropriate via the **“Procedures for investigating plagiarism by PGRs”** (updated April 2017).

Work submitted for the taught elements of research degrees are covered by via the procedure for **“Cheating, Plagiarism, Fraudulent or Fabricated Coursework and Malpractice in University Examinations and Assessments”** (updated May 2018).

The University’s **“Code of practice on whistleblowing”** (under review) is intended to encourage staff and students to report suspected wrongdoing (including professional malpractice, harassment, bullying etc), so an impartial investigation can be conducted.

These key policies will be reviewed within the next 6 months as part of the Research Integrity Task & Finish group, in consultation with UKRIO.

The following policies are in place to handle other forms of misconduct:

- Policy on dignity and mutual respect
- General University Disciplinary Regulations
- Student complaints procedure

## **Research environment and culture**

Our **Research Culture Cafés** were implemented to gather feedback on our existing culture and help inform our plans. The Cafés are anonymous to ensure they are a safe space to share what is working well, where we need to improve, and present ideas for change. The findings are summarised and considered by the Research Culture Steering Group. As the Cafés progressed, they became a space for people to informally raise concerns or provide examples of poor behaviour. Whilst they are not designed to address these, they do highlight and signpost where people can get more support if needed. Specific Cafés on the topic of research integrity have been held, with more planned for the future.

One challenge that has been highlighted was around power relationships and people not feeling empowered to speak up, report or tackle behaviours. This led to the creation of our ‘Tell us more’ anonymous form. Here people can share their experiences and chose to remain anonymous. All submissions to this form are read by the Research Culture Team and forwarded to relevant services when required.

We regularly remind staff and students of our **Report and Support system** to report any incidents of concern and access specialist support from our Harassment and Misconduct Team. All incidents are taken very seriously, the reporting form can be submitted anonymously or there is an option to speak directly to an advisor. We also advocate and provide support for those supporting others.

As part of the Research Culture strategy, we are seeking additional ways to enable colleagues to safely call out poor behaviour.

## **Key lessons**

The University will always seek, where possible, to learn lessons from any cases that have arisen to improve or enhance our processes. During the reporting period, the following matters were identified.

The potential complexity of cases relating to work submitted for PhD assessment that includes materials derived from papers published by the individual during their PhD candidature, as it straddles two investigation protocols (allegations of research misconduct and plagiarism by PGRs). Consideration is being given to the relevant procedures and policies to ensure consistency of approach and avoid any undue overlap or delays. This work will include clearer communications and guidance for PGR tutors, internal examiners, staff and PGRs to clarify when the different investigation processes apply.

The retrospective nature of some cases (for example, a complaint made after the degree had been awarded) highlighted a need for better screening of PhD-related work before formal assessment. We are developing processes to affect earlier screening, including agreement to include PGRs in the institutional Turnitin licence for transfer reports and thesis submissions.

Raising awareness and understanding of academic integrity within the PGR community is also key, work in this area is led by the Graduate Board and Doctoral College. Examples include generation of a targeted academic integrity training package for PGRs; development of a PGR-related Proof-Reading Policy and Guidance to provide better clarity on what support is acceptable from third-party proof reading of a PhD thesis; and the appointment of a PGR academic lead for academic integrity.

### 3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken

Please complete the table on the number of **formal investigations completed during the period under review** (including investigations which completed during this period but started in a previous academic year). Information from ongoing investigations should not be submitted.

An organisation's procedure may include an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. These allegations should be included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column.

Type of allegation	Number of allegations			
	Number of allegations reported to the organisation	Number of formal investigations	Number upheld in part after formal investigation	Number upheld in full after formal investigation
Fabrication				
Falsification				
Plagiarism	3	3		3
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations				
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)				
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)				
Other*	1			
<b>Total:</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>3</b>
<p><b>*If you listed any allegations under the 'Other' category, please give a brief, high-level summary of their type here. Do not give any identifying or confidential information when responding.</b></p>				
<p><b>Other case:</b> We are aware of one allegation involving fabricated data within a draft conference paper. In this case, the matter was resolved locally via the Head of School who met with the individual to discuss the issue and the paper immediately withdrawn.</p>				

**Annex 1:** Organogram detailing the Research Culture governance groups

