

University of Warwick

Research Integrity Fifth Annual Statement (2018-19)

The University remains strongly committed to ensuring the highest standards in the conduct of all research undertaken in our name, on our premises and in our facilities. This includes research undertaken by staff, students, visiting or emeritus staff, associates, honorary or clinical contract holders, contractors and consultants. In this, the University recognises its obligations to the wider research community, to the funders of research and to society as a whole to uphold the integrity of academic research, and to comply with the Universities UK (UUK) Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2012).

A strong commitment to research integrity is embedded within our institutional systems and cultures. This includes a well-established ethics committee structure that provides transparency and accountability for all matters of research integrity and governance, reporting to Senate and Council via the central Research Governance & Ethics Committee (RGEC).

Chaired by the Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Stephen Jarvis, RGEC provides oversight and leadership to research integrity across the University. It meets on a termly basis with a membership comprising lay representatives and senior members of the academy and professional services. Each of the University's research ethics committees¹ report directly to RGEC as does the University Sponsorship & Oversight Committee, providing strong institutional oversight that is supported by a dedicated Quality Assurance function situated within Research & Impact Services.

The institutional policy framework includes a Research Code of Practice, providing guiding principles and standards of best practice in research across all of our disciplines, a Code of Practice for the Investigation of Research Misconduct, setting out the definition of research misconduct and the procedure for reporting and investigating allegations, and a Statement on the Ethical Conduct of Research, setting out our commitment to advancing and safeguarding the highest academic and ethical standards in all of our research activities. These policies are easily accessible on a publicly available website, and are included in the induction programme of all new researchers and research support staff. Support to all staff and research students with regards to all matters of research integrity is provided by the Research Governance & Quality Assurance Team in Research & Impact Services, which also delivers the Secretariat function to our internal Research Ethics, Sponsorship, and Governance Committees.

The University is a long established subscriber to the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and the Research Governance & Quality Assurance Team in Research & Impact Services is an active member of the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum. The Head of Research Governance attended the 6th World Conference on Research Integrity in Hong Kong in June 2019.

¹ Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee; Biomedical & Scientific Research Ethics Committee; Animal Welfare & Ethical Review Body

During 2018-19, the University has continued to demonstrate its proactive approach to research integrity through a number of discrete initiatives. This has included contribution at a national level, with our Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Pam Thomas chairing the UUK Open Research Data Task Force. The University also took a proactive approach to the sector-wide consultation regarding the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. This involved direct communications with all academic departments and members of each of the University's research ethics committees to encourage an institutional wide response to the consultation. In addition, the University submitted its own institutional response into the consultation and contributed to the response made by the Research Integrity Forum.

The University also provided a proactive and considered response to the House of Commons Science & Technology Committee's report on clinical trials transparency. This reported that the issues raised by this important piece of work had been considered by the University's RGECC, and had resulted in an additional element of oversight being introduced into end of project reporting.

The University has referred in previous statements to its central Research Governance & Quality Assurance Team. During 2018-19 this team has been strengthened further by the introduction of two new research governance co-ordinator roles that work across each of the committees in an integrated approach to the delivery of research governance. Alongside this, the University has reviewed and refreshed the institutional Sponsorship Committee, including a broadening of the Committee's remit to include an increased emphasis on 'oversight'. The retitled 'Sponsorship & Oversight Committee' subsequently appointed a new academic Chair and increased its membership to include the Director of the Warwick Clinical Trials Unit and the Chair of the Biomedical Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The University's partner NHS Trust remains a member of the Sponsorship & Oversight Committee.

A key task during the review period has been the review, updating, harmonisation of the University's Sponsorship and Research Ethics application forms, and participant facing documentation. This comprehensive exercise has resulted in the release of a portfolio of standard forms that are fully compliant with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the related Data Protection Act 2018. In addition, members of the University's Information Data Compliance Team and the Library have been added to the membership of the institutional research ethics and sponsorship committees.

During 2017/18 the University developed a communications plan to increase internal awareness with regards to the provision of research integrity training at the University. This is provided free at the point of use to all University staff and students through the institutional subscription to Epigeum, an online research integrity training package. The University supports both the full and concise versions of this provision, to encourage broad uptake of the training, the uptake of which continues to grow year on year. During 2018/2019, there have been a number of regular internal communications with regards to the availability of the training, which is also included within the University's induction programme.

With respect to cases of research misconduct, the University has one case to report during the period. This was investigated within the framework of the institutional Code for the Investigation of Research Misconduct and the allegation was upheld.