University of Warwick Research Integrity Ninth Annual Statement (2022-23)

1. <u>**Key contact information**</u>

This document contains the ninth annual Research Integrity statement for the University of Warwick. Further information on Research Integrity at the University of Warwick can be found here: https://warwick.ac.uk/services/ris/research_integrity/. This statement was reviewed and approved by the University Research Governance and Ethics Committee on 6 June 2023 and by the University's Council on 13 July 2023.

The senior officer responsible for oversight of Research Integrity is Professor David Leadley D.R.Leadley@warwick.ac.uk, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research. Any enquiries should be directed in the first instance to Carole Harris C.D.Harris@warwick.ac.uk, Assistant Director, Research & Impact Services.

2. <u>**Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken.**</u>

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' (2019) (the 'Concordat').

A. <u>**Description of current systems and culture**</u>

Governance and Systems

A strong commitment to research integrity is embedded within our institutional systems and culture. This includes a well-established committee structure that provides transparency and accountability for all matters of research integrity and governance, reporting to Senate, the academic authority of the University, and Council, the University's executive governing body, via the central Research Governance & Ethics Committee (RGAEC).

Chaired by the Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), RGAEC 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. The University's research ethics committees (Biomedical and Scientific Research Ethics Committee (BSREC) and Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC)) report directly to RGAEC, as does the University's Sponsorship & Oversight Committee (SOC). The Secretariat function for these Committees is delivered by a dedicated team of expert practitioners situated in the Research Governance team within Research & Impact Services (R&IS).

The University is committed to the principles of research integrity, including honesty, rigour and transparency and supports this through its work on Open Research, led by the Open Research Group (ORG), which is formally constituted as a sub-committee of the University Research Committee.

The University continues to take a proactive approach to Trusted Research, with oversight being provided by RGAEC and overall responsibility with the University's Council, progressed through an institutional Trusted Research action plan. An Export Control Quality Assurance report is also provided to RGAEC, and reported onwards to the Council, on a regular basis. The Research Governance team has responsibility for the operationalisation of Trusted Research and the implementation of institutional policies and processes to support compliance with external regulations, including those relating to Export Control, the National Security Investment Act and sensitive research.

Related Policies

The University is committed to the principles of research integrity, which underpin its pursuit of excellence and high-quality research. All researchers are expected to read and comply with the University's Research Code of Practice.

The University expects researchers to maintain high standards and behaviours in conducting research and has mandated Research Integrity training, ratified through an institutional Research Integrity Training Policy.

Other relevant policies include:
Export Control Policy
Research Data Management Policy
Warwick Open Access Policy

Support and Training

The Research Governance team provides support to research staff and students with regards to all matters of research integrity, through responding to queries and calls, and providing bespoke training and advice to groups of staff and students on research integrity, ethics, and governance. The team also provides training on areas of regulatory compliance, covering Export Control and the Nagoya Protocol.

The University expects all researchers to conduct their research to high standards of rigour and integrity across all subject disciplines and fields of study at the University and has mandated Research Integrity training, providing access to online training via the Epigeum package, available to all staff and students. An institutional Research Integrity Training Policy was approved by the University Executive Board in January 2022 and implemented during 2022.

Detailed advice and guidance, alongside signposting to legislative and regulatory requirements and related University policies and procedures are provided on our Research Integrity web pages, which are reviewed and updated regularly.

Research Culture

The University is committed to leading the way in nurturing an inclusive environment that supports all researchers and research-enablers to thrive to deliver the best research, within a culture which encourages the highest standards of rigour and integrity. This area of work is driven forward by a diverse Research Culture Forum, reporting to the University Research Committee, which brings together researchers, technicians, PGR students, and Professional Services Staff to have open and collaborative discussions about the University's research culture, to develop a community of practice in this area. There is a programme of work underway to strengthen research culture, progressed through an institutional research culture action plan.

The University also empowers the research community to take a lead in improving research culture via the Enhancing Research Culture funding scheme, which supports grassroots initiatives in all areas of research culture, including improving research conduct and reproducibility.

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

Governance and Systems

A new light touch research ethics review process was introduced in February 2022 and the number of low-risk studies identified as eligible for Light Touch review has been steadily increasing over the current period reducing the number of studies for full Committee review. This has allowed for more effective use of Research Ethics Committee meetings, ensuring time for robust scrutiny of high-risk studies. Further to this and following feedback from researchers, work is underway to further refine the light touch review process to ensure it is as effective and efficient as possible. This includes the introduction of a streamlined application form, to reduce the administrative burden on researchers, and an enhanced pool of close readers, to expedite low-risk studies.

There has also been a focus on improving the governance and systems of HTA related work during the current period. This has included the review and update of a series of Standard Operating Procedures relating to research using human tissue. The Human Samples Steering Group has been reconstituted with regular meetings scheduled, and the Human Tissue Designated Individual now reports to RGAEC on an annual basis. Regular training sessions for all those working with Human Tissue have also been promoted.

Related Policies

The University has signed up to the [Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment](#) (CoARA) in a move towards the responsible and transparent use of metrics, and recognising the diverse outputs, practices and activities that maximise the quality and impact of research. This will build upon and enhance the work already undertaken on the [Warwick Principles for the Evaluation of Research](#).

Support and Training

A new Research Culture, Governance and Compliance team in Research & Impact Services has been established, encompassing all aspects of Research Integrity, Culture, Ethics, Governance and Compliance, consolidating existing expertise in these areas. This has led to increased cross team working, collaboration and knowledge sharing,

The team brings together a well-established ethics and governance function, which supports the University Research Ethics and Sponsorship Committees and research integrity, with a newly formed governance and compliance function, which provides support on regulatory compliance, due diligence and Trusted Research. The appointment of a Research Culture Manager in February 2023 has further expanded the team's remit to raise awareness and encourage rigour and integrity across all areas of research.

The Research Governance Team continue to support Research Integrity training and monitor completion of the online training modules, reporting back to RGAEC and to Heads of Department and ensuring that all ethics approvals are subject to completion of the training. The team are also working with the supplier (now Sage) to ensure the best quality training is made available to researchers.

The University is also keen to ensure that research and innovation conducted by its researchers is socially desirable and undertaken in the public interest and has therefore introduced training on '[Responsible Innovation](#)', together with useful guidelines and signposting to resources.

[Guidelines on the use of social media in research](#) have also been developed and published on the University's Research Integrity web pages, which offer comprehensive advice and useful points for researchers to consider when conducting this type of research.

The University has supported an initiative to map out current training provision for researchers in all areas, encouraging a more coordinated approach to training provision, with courses more accessible to researchers, including PGR students. Web pages with clear signposting to current training provision are being developed, and a group comprising of HR, Researcher Development, Research Support, the Doctoral College, the Library and the Institute of Advanced Studies are working together to ensure that researchers are provided with the best quality training possible.

Research Culture

The University has been proactive in developing a positive Research Culture through its extensive programme of work in this area. The Research Culture Forum meets regularly to discuss important issues, such as bullying and harassment and researcher well-being, with the appointment of a Research Culture Manager taking forward actions arising.

C. **Plans for future development**

Governance and Systems

The Research Ethics Committees have begun a review of systems and processes related to ethics review and approval of research studies. This will be driven forward by a Working Group comprised of Committee members, which will consider improvements to the review process and associated documentation.

Training is planned for Committee members, providing an opportunity to refocus ethics review on ethical principles and facilitate discussion on ensuring ethical review does not create a barrier to research. This training will be provided by the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO).
It is also planned to undertake a review of all current student delegated processes for the ethical review and approval of student research studies. This will commence during the next academic year.

It was mentioned in the previous annual statement that the University plans to adopt an online ethics system. Work is still on-going and discussions with the supplier are in progress with plans to roll this out in late 2023.

Support and Training

It is planned to engage with the research community and academic departments during the next academic year, promoting research integrity, culture and governance, raising awareness and offering support, encouraging researchers to engage with ethics and compliance processes, with help to navigate complex regulations. Work to develop a short online training module with an overview of requirements in all these areas and with signposting to support is also underway.

Research Culture

The University is keen to ensure that good research practices and behaviours are not only shared across the institution but across the sector and more widely, and therefore are proposing to establish an Institute for Research Culture to co-ordinate this work at a national level and engage widely with other Universities and partners. This will involve hosting a sector conference, with speakers from EDI Caucus and the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN). To ensure lasting impact, evidence-based research culture knowledge developed at the conference will be captured and documented in an open access Special Issue on Research Culture.

3. **Addressing research misconduct**

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

The University believes that its research environment should be safe and inclusive and has policies in place to ensure this, including Dignity at Warwick Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, and a Code of Practice for the Investigation of Research Misconduct. Details of key contacts and procedures for dealing with allegations of research misconduct are clearly signposted on our Research Integrity web pages.

The University believes that everyone should be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their status, rank, grade, belief or any protected characteristic, that everyone has the right to feel safe, and bullying and harassment of any kind is completely unacceptable. Staff or students can report any incidences of bullying and harassment and access appropriate support through Report + Support. Staff are required to complete training on 'Principles and Social Inclusion' and 'Unconscious Bias', to reinforce the University's values and expected behaviours.

The Research Governance team works with the Chairs of the Research Ethics Committees and Heads of Department to resolve any reported issues of questionable research practices prior to escalation to a formal procedure and provide training and advice to individual researchers and research teams when required.

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

There has been one formal investigation completed during the period under review relating to Fabrication which was dismissed at the Preliminary Stage.