

University of Warwick: Annual statement on research integrity (2023-24)

Section 1: Key contact information

1A. Name of organisation:

University of Warwick

1B. Type of organisation:

higher education institution

1C. Date statement approved by governing body:

1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page:

<https://warwick.ac.uk/services/ris/research-integrity/>

1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity:

Professor Jon Coaffee (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research)

J.Coaffee@warwick.ac.uk

1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity:

Carole Harris (Associate Director, Research & Impact Services: Research Culture, Governance and Compliance)

C.D.Harris@warwick.ac.uk or ResearchGovernance@warwick.ac.uk

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

Policies

The University recognises its responsibility to researchers and the wider community to ensure the highest standards of integrity and professionalism are observed in the conduct of research. The University sets out its guiding principles and standards of good practice in research in its [Research Code of Practice](#). This is relevant to all subject disciplines and fields of study in the University. It applies to all those undertaking research on the University's premises using its facilities, or on behalf of the University. This includes staff, students, visiting or emeritus staff, associates, honorary or clinical contract holders, contractors and consultants.

Failure to comply with the Research Code of Practice may be deemed research misconduct. The University has a [Code of Practice for the Investigation of Research Misconduct](#) to manage allegations of research misconduct (see Section 3).

The University also has a [Statement on the Ethical Conduct of Research](#), which sets out its commitment to advancing and safeguarding the highest academic and ethical standards in all its research activities and compliance with the Universities UK (UUK) '[Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#)'.

The University has mandated research integrity training, for all staff and students involved in delivering research, and provides free online training to support this, as detailed in the University's [Research Integrity Training Policy](#).

The University is committed to fair and transparent mechanisms for monitoring and reporting research performance as well as for recruiting staff and assessing their research performance and has developed the [Warwick Principles for the Evaluation of Research](#), which set out how the University uses quantitative indicators and qualitative methods in assessing research outputs, income, postgraduate research (PGR) supervision, and in recruitment, performance management and promotion.

The University also supports the dissemination of its research and scholarship as widely as possible to contribute to society as well as to academic advancement and its [Open Access Policy](#) sets out the University's framework for ensuring that scholarly outputs authored by University researchers, staff and students are made Open Access (OA), where applicable.

The University is also promoting good practice in international research, ensuring adoption of the National Protective Security Authority's (NPSA) Trusted Research framework, and has developed an [Export Control Policy](#) to support the safe transfer of knowledge, goods, and ideas, to international partners. This is accompanied by robust and embedded due diligence processes to ensure that the University is working with partners that operate with integrity and in an ethical manner.

Systems and Reporting

A strong commitment to research integrity is embedded within the University's 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 and 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 is delivered by a dedicated team of expert practitioners situated in the Research Culture, Governance and Compliance function within Research & Impact Services (R&IS). The Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) also reports into RGAEC.

During the last reporting period, RGAEC updated its Terms of Reference (ToR) to include oversight of Trusted Research and Export Control, to ensure good research practice and institutional compliance in these complex areas. RGAEC also updated its ToR to formalise an annual report from the University's Human Tissue Act Designated Individual (HTA DI), ensuring that the requirements for licensing relevant activities under the Human Tissue Act are met. The HTA DI is supported by the Human Sample Steering Group (HSSG).

All research involving human participants, their data or tissue requires ethical approval, which is provided through an external Research Ethics Committee or the University's Research Ethics Committees: BSREC and HSSREC. The University has a robust standardised process for ethical review and approval, supported by a dedicated and knowledgeable pool of ethical reviewers and close readers. The Committees have well-established risk-based and proportionate ethical review processes in place.

The University supports the implementation of the principles of research integrity, including honesty, rigour and transparency 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 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.

The University is also committed to fostering a positive Research Culture, with this area of work driven forward by a diverse Research Culture Forum, also 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.

Communications and engagement

In order to support the research community's understanding of the principles and practices that protect the integrity of research, the University provides online research integrity training relevant to all those involved in delivering research. This is required to be completed for all new starters, those applying for ethical approval, those applying for internal funding, and PGR students.

The Research Culture, Governance and Compliance team in R&IS oversee research integrity matters on behalf of the University and manage the research ethics process, providing Secretariat support for the University's Research Ethics Committees. They are always available to provide support and guidance to applicants on matters of research integrity and research ethics on a 1-2-1 basis. They also provide regular bespoke training sessions for departments or research groups. The team have also set up an annual meeting to connect and update departmental ethics leads responsible for delegated student research ethical review and regularly liaise with these leads to provide support for more complex cases.

Warwick also engages with key external partners with respect to Research Integrity, being a subscriber to the [UK Research Integrity Office](#) (UKRIO). UKRIO visited Warwick during the last year to deliver a training session to Research Ethics Committee members, and colleagues regularly join UKRIO webinars. Warwick is also a member of the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum.

Culture, development and leadership

The University is committed to leading the way in fostering a positive, inclusive, collegiate and dynamic research environment where all those working on or supporting research can thrive to deliver the best research, within a culture which encourages the highest standards of rigour and integrity. This work is supported at the highest level, with Research Culture being one of the University's strategic research priorities, championed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and driven forward by the Research Executive, with Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Research) having responsibility for and oversight of Research Integrity and Ethics, Trusted Research, and Research Culture.

Warwick is also committed to encouraging research training and career development, as a signatory to the Researcher Development Concordat and a holder of the HR Excellence in Research Award. The University has established a Research Operations Training Group, which works to co-ordinate research training opportunities across the institution, making them visible and accessible to researchers. This ensures that all levels of researcher have access to training and development opportunities which increase awareness and understanding of good research practice and behaviours.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

The University is continually looking to review its systems and processes and has progressed this work in a number of areas over the last reporting period.

As already described, the University has a robust and risk-based system of ethical review. During the last reporting period, the Research Ethics Committees have embedded a low-risk ethical review process, with the introduction of a light touch application form. This has reduced unnecessary bureaucracy and allowed Committee meetings to focus on high-risk studies, providing greater scrutiny to appropriate projects.

There has also been increased activity with regards to the governance of human tissue: with the delivery of training to all those carrying out research involving human tissue; the circulation of HTA Standard Operating Procedures to all relevant researchers and technicians; an update of the University's human samples register; and the introduction of audits of human samples held by researchers by the HTA DI.

Other key activities during the last reporting period have focused on supporting researchers, raising understanding of research integrity, research ethics and governance.

During the past year, a major review, update and relaunch of the University's online guidance on [Research Integrity](#) and [Research Compliance](#) has been undertaken to ensure information is relevant and easily accessible to researchers.

Further work is being progressed through a review of the University's current online Research Integrity training provision to ensure the training is engaging and useful to all levels of researcher. As part of this review, Warwick is taking part in the pilot of UKRIO's research integrity training. The University is also developing an online ethics training module for researchers applying for ethical approval, to help them to understand the principles of working with human participants, their data or tissue and to navigate the processes for applying for ethics more easily.

The Research Culture, Governance and Compliance team have also been undertaking an outreach programme during the last reporting period to raise awareness of Trusted Research and help guide researchers through the complexities of associated regulations.

Warwick is enabling an active programme of events related to improving research culture across the institution, having supported over 60 grass-root initiatives over the past three years, to empower researchers, technicians and research enablers to make a difference and drive forward positive change in good research practice and behaviours.

Warwick is also leading in the sector with the launch of the [National Centre for Research Culture](#) during the last reporting period, which aims to improve research culture across the UK Higher Education sector and beyond, connecting people and institutions to share best practice and serving as a long-term hub for knowledge curation, training and innovative research into research culture.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

The University is committed to research integrity and has robust policies, systems and processes in place to uphold good research practice, ethical research conduct and compliance with external regulations. Support and training are provided to researchers to ensure they are confident in conducting their research with rigour and integrity, they understand the principles of good research practice, and are able to report instances of questionable research practice.

The University has received good feedback during external and internal audits regarding its policies, systems and culture to uphold research integrity but recognises that more can be done to drive forward improvements in this area. Therefore, plans have been put in place to further enhance the University's commitment to research integrity in these areas.

The University's Research Code of Practice is regularly reviewed and updated and during the last reporting period, a new section on [Responsible Innovation](#) has been added and sections on [Preventing Harm in Research](#) and [Bullying and Harassment](#) have been updated, to ensure information is useful and relevant and in line with funder requirements. A full review is scheduled to take place during the next year, updating content to ensure information is accurate and reformatting the output to make the Research Code of Practice more accessible to researchers.

The University is keen to ensure research ethics processes are robust but do not create barriers to research. It is planned to progress the implementation of an online ethics system during the next year, with requirements for the new system already developed and agreed.

Further emphasis will also be placed upon on-going quality assurance of projects, with regards to research integrity and ethics. An audit of delegated student research ethical review processes has already commenced and greater follow up of high-risk studies will be undertaken going forwards.

Finally, as mentioned previously, new online guidance for Research Integrity and Research Compliance has been launched during the last reporting period and training for researchers in all areas of research governance is on-going. New ways of providing guidance and support to researchers will be explored, with plans to increase capacity to support research integrity under discussion. It is also planned to improve online training provision in research integrity and ethics, with work already underway to review and develop training provision.

The University has also recently launched its Interdisciplinary Research Spotlights – one of the aims of the Spotlights is to support a vibrant research community and they will play a key role in promoting best practice in the area of interdisciplinary research, fostering a positive research culture and providing training and mentoring for less experienced researchers.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

The University has a [Code of Practice for the Investigation of Research Misconduct](#) to assist with the investigation of reports of research misconduct. All allegations are investigated thoroughly, fairly and in a timely manner in accordance with the Code of Practice. Details of key contacts and procedures for dealing with allegations of research misconduct and complaints are clearly signposted on the University's [Research Integrity](#) web pages. All policies are reviewed regularly and overseen by the University's Policy Oversight Group. The Code of Practice for the Investigation of Research Misconduct is due to be reviewed and revised during the next year, with reference to UKRIO's Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research and with particular attention to clarifying the process for informal resolution of issues raised.

The University believes that its research environment should be safe and inclusive and has guidance and policies in place to ensure this, including Warwick [Values and Behaviours Safeguarding Policy](#), and [Whistleblowing Policy](#). 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](#). During the last reporting period, Warwick's Social Inclusion team have launched mandatory short online training courses on ED&I, Microaggressions in the workplace, and Harassment Prevention to support the University's commitment to a positive and safe working environment.

The Research Culture, Governance and Compliance team in R&IS works with the Chairs of RGAEC and sub-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. There has been increased liaison with departmental ethics leads regarding the handling of possible research misconduct cases by research students during the last reporting period to ensure appropriate support.

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

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	1		
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	2			
Misrepresentation				
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern				
<i>Other*</i>				
Total:	5	1	0	0