

University of Warwick Research Integrity Sixth Annual Statement (2019-20)

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 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 (RG&EC).

Chaired by the Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), RG&EC 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 RG&EC 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 (R&IS).

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 R&IS, 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 R&IS is an active member of the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum. The Head of Research Governance had registered to attend the 2020 INORMS Conference in light of the 'research integrity' component and will be supported to attend in 2021. In addition, the UKRIO Chief Executive was invited by the University to attend a meeting of the RG&EC following the launch of the revised Concordat.

During 2019-20, the University welcomed the publication of the revised Concordat, having engaged positively in the consultations around this, both institutionally and through the Russell Group. Subsequently, the University progressed a detailed review and action plan through its Research Committee and RG&EC. As a result, the University Executive Board, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, agreed that the University should aim to exceed the requirements of the Concordat, particularly with reference to 'research integrity' training and 'online research ethics review'.

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

With regards to research integrity training, the University has reported in previous statements its provision of free-at-the-point-of-use research integrity training for all staff and students, via the Epigeum package. Up to date, engagement with this training has been strongly encouraged, by academic departments, the research ethics sub-committees, and RG&EC.

The University has now made the executive decision that it will work towards mandatory training for all research-active staff and PhD students. A 'Research Integrity Training Sub-Committee' has been established, chaired by an academic member of staff and including representation from R&IS, HR, Finance, and academic departments, to support the University in this ambitious objective, reporting to the University Executive Board via RG&EC.

In terms of the 'online ethics review', the University has explained above that it has a well established system of discipline specific research ethics committees, and a sponsorship & oversight committee. During 2019/20 an executive decision has been made to strengthen this provision further, via the introduction of an institutional on-line ethics review and approval system.

This new functionality will be facilitated by the development of an additional module within the University's established research management system, IDEaTE. With investment now secured and a contract agreed with an external developer, this exciting project will be progressed during 2020/21.

The University has referred in previous statements to its central Research Governance & Quality Assurance Team. During 2019-20 this team has supported the University's research ethics and sponsorship committees to work with new harmonised sponsorship & ethics application forms. This follows a detailed piece of work in 2018-19, during which this documentation was updated to take a more consistent approach across disciplines and to ensure full compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR). The delivery of research ethics & sponsorship during 2019-20 has therefore taken place within this updated internal policy and operating framework, with researchers and committee members reporting positively on the use-ability and robustness of the updated application forms and participant facing documentation. A key task in the development of the 'online ethics review' system is to ensure that these positive advances established are embedded into the new review and approval system.

In addition the University has elected to review and refresh the institutional Research Code of Practice and the 'Code of Practice for the Investigation of Research Misconduct', to ensure that the institutional policy framework and operating procedures are progressing alongside the evolving external research funding environment. A joint academic-professional services 'Research Culture Sub-Committee' has been established to take forward this important piece of work, reporting directly to the University's Research Committee.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the University successfully delivered its research ethics and sponsorship functions via remote and secure working. All committee meetings took place via video conferencing, receiving ethics and sponsorship applications beforehand and providing a full review to each application, ensuring the continuity of research at the University including projects that were directly linked to COVID-19. This included support provided to a clinical trial which was supported to progress from the submission of an application for University research sponsorship to recruitment of the first participant in seven days.

In addition, the University's Research Governance Team has made a significant contribution to data management within the institutional REF2021 return, providing detailed advice and guidance to the Research Impact and REF Teams on the development of university-specific data collection statements for both staff and third-party data, and working closely with the Information and Data Compliance Team on the research-related amendments to the University's Data Privacy Statement.

Work has continued through 2019-20 on several initiatives to support Research Integrity through fostering Open Research. This work has been led by the Open Research Group, chaired by the Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research, which is formally constituted as a sub-committee of the University Research Committee. The University is committed to ensuring research integrity and transparency in all aspects of research and research administration. Furthering this commitment, in 2020 the University approved adoption of the 'Warwick Principles for Evaluation of Research' which is based on the Leiden Principles on research assessment. The Open Research Group is driving progress to ensure that these principles are embedded in the University's processes for research communication, administration and assessment.

2019-20 has also seen several milestones for Open Research at Warwick with the number of open datasets reaching over 250 and a further 150 datasets held in external repositories identified and signposted in WRAP². Our open datasets are now attracting more than 10,700 downloads a year from WRAP alone. In February we launched Open Research Warwick³ a continuing programme of events, social media and online training designed to celebrate the benefits of open research for improving research integrity and raising the profile of research. The first event linked to this programme was a roundtable discussion, hosted by the Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies, on the 'Risks and Opportunities' of Open Research⁴. This discussion, between members of the University of Warwick and two influential scholars and advocates of open research, Prof Sarah de Rijcke and Prof Ludo Waltman of the Centre for Science and Technology Studies (University of Leiden), both authors of The Leiden Manifesto, was recorded and is planned to be released as the first in a series of podcasts promoting open research.

The Library's expert support staff continue to support open access through the Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) and through the management of block grants and through participation in new transformative deals with publishers. In addition to this the University has recently launched its own open access publishing service, University of Warwick Press⁵, aimed at providing increased options to allow the University's research to be made available open access.

With respect to cases of research misconduct, the University has one case that is being progressed through the institutional Code for the Investigation of Research Misconduct.

² Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) – <https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk>

³ Open Research Warwick - <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/library/open-research-warwick>

⁴ Open Research: Risks and Opportunities?: Round table discussion - https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/cim/events/open_research_risks_and_opportunities/

⁵ University of Warwick Press - <https://journals.warwick.ac.uk/>