

Annual statement on research integrity 2023-2024

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	University College London
1B. Type of organisation: higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)	Higher Education Institution
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	09/12/24
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.ucl.ac.uk/research-innovation-services/compliance-and-assurance/research-integrity
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Gail Adams
	Email address: gail.adams@ucl.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	Name: Lauren Cantos
	Email address: researchintegrity@ucl.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

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

UCL continues to promote high standards of research integrity by clearly communicating the expectations of researchers and all those who conduct research in UCL's name. We are continuously reviewing our policies and guidance to ensure that we are keeping pace with research developments in the field. UCL provides ample opportunities and avenues for guidance, expert advice, and sharing of best practice: this ensures that all researchers, at all stages of their career, are supported throughout the entire research lifecycle to practise research with integrity.

Policies and systems

Code of Conduct for Research

The UCL Code of Conduct for Research 2023 (the 'Code') clearly outlines responsibilities and expectations of UCL researchers at all career stages. The Code was considered by the Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee in July 2022, and following additional revisions, the final version was approved in March 2023.

Following the launch of the Code in 2023, and its publication on the UCL website, we have done more work to improve its accessibility for researchers. Expanding on the work of the Code, the Office for Open Science & Scholarship have launched the

UCL Statement of Principles of Authorship, a guidance document which includes advice on authorship and affiliations.

The Research Integrity website has been updated to foreground the Code as an important reference point for researchers. The Code is included in training for new PGRs (postgraduate researchers) to make them aware of their responsibilities as researchers. The code also acts as a signpost to various research support services available throughout their research journey at UCL.

Research Ethics

UCL takes a proportionate approach to research ethics review. All high-risk applications and low-risk ethics applications from some departments and faculties are managed by a specialist central team within Research & Innovation Services and Compliance & Assurance - the Research Ethics Service. Devolved authority is granted to Local Research Ethics Committees (LRECs) in some faculties and departments for low-risk review. Substantial reform of the research ethics review process has taken place in 2023/24 as described in section 2B below.

Compliance and Assurance

The Compliance and Assurance team (within Research & Innovation Services and established in January 2023) has been working on developing and enhancing institutional policy and processes for regulatory compliance related to research and innovation. The Research and Innovation Security Committee was set up earlier this year to maintain strategic oversight of research and innovation security at UCL, with a focus on international collaborations and partnerships, promoting a culture of Trusted Research and Innovation across the Institution, managing risk and ensuring senior role modelling of research security practices. A new Trusted Research webpage was created with additional guidance and support for researchers. The team continues to provide regular training and awareness programmes for researchers. Targeted training sessions and online resources are available to keep researchers informed about best practices and evolving standards.

Disclosure of Conflict and Declaration of Interest Policy

UCL's Disclosure of Conflict and Declaration of Interest policy was published in August 2020, setting out clear definitions and responsibilities around identifying, disclosing, and managing conflicts of interest. The digital system for recording declarations of interest has been enhanced effectively, as described below. The policy is currently undergoing a scheduled review, to be completed in 2024-25, with consultation across the institution.

Communications and Engagement

Open Science and Scholarship Outreach and Engagement

The Office for Open Science and Scholarship (OOSS) maintains a website for researcher training on open research practices, which draws together a range of areas including copyright, citizen science, information governance, open access, research data management, research transparency and reproducibility, metrics and bibliometrics. The website connects to other services at UCL including research funding management, advanced research computing, and creating accessible content. OOSS also maintains a dedicated webpage for PGRs which signposts the various resources and support available to them.

Enhancing copyright literacy and knowledge

The OOSS has been working with the newly appointed Copyright Officer to increase knowledge and advocacy in this area to better support researchers at every career stage and in every discipline. There are new webpages for staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as a [new page in support of open licensing for data and software](#). There has also been [a series of blog posts](#) around different aspects of copyright and their implications for open research and scholarship.

To support the ethical creation and use of copyrighted materials, the UCL copyright team launched a new copyright literacy community. The aim of the community is to work collaboratively to support copyright literacy, building upon our existing resources and activities to enhance the confidence and understanding of UCL researchers around copyright.

Promoting responsible metrics

UCL has a policy supporting the responsible use of metrics for research assessment, which is kept under regular review to ensure it reflects evolving best practice. During 2023-24 we assessed it against the DORA guidance on the responsible use of quantitative indicators; the LERU position paper on next generation metrics; and the Barcelona Declaration on Open Research Information. UCL's position was seen as broadly in line with all three, and a decision was made to keep the Barcelona Declaration under review for potential adoption in 2024-25.

The Bibliometrics team continues to offer support in the responsible use of metrics and impact measurement, including new services such as Altmetrics and Overton as well as traditional citation analysis. The team offers an enquiry and training service, with regular public training sessions.

Culture, development and leadership

Research culture at UCL

A healthy, inclusive and sustainable research culture underpins UCL's excellence in research and innovation and is vital to our academic and societal mission. As described in the previous annual statement, UCL undertook an extensive consultation across UCL's research community in 2021 and, building on this and the Enhancing Research Culture Programme launched in 2022, UCL published its 10-year Research Culture Roadmap in January 2023.

The Roadmap sets out how, as an institution, UCL will develop a fairer, more collaborative and inclusive research culture, where both its research and research community can thrive. The Roadmap sets out five themes, around which research culture activity is organised:

- Transparent and fair career development
- People-centred leadership and management
- Opportunities to collaborate and innovate
- Openness and integrity in our research and innovation
- Supportive and inclusive environment

A dedicated and specialist Research Culture team, situated in the Office of the Vice Provost (Research, Innovation and Global Engagement), facilitates delivery of the Programme against the Roadmap objectives.

To oversee the strategic direction of the Research Culture Programme (RCP) and provide guidance and support to the research culture team, a Research Culture Governance structure was established, made up of two organs: a Research Culture Programme Board and a Community Steering Group. The Programme Board encompasses:

- Internally – delivery of projects and change initiatives as well as the amplification of change by building shared commitment and capability across the institution.
- Externally – exchanging knowledge and experiences with peers; tackling common issues and engaging peers, funders and policy-makers on systemic issues affecting the broader sector and beyond.

The Community Steering Group is made up of a cross-section of the research community and has four functions: 1) to advise/feedback on initiatives proposed by the Programme Board; 2) Propose/raise ideas, initiatives, issues to the Programme Board; 3) Be the 'ears on the ground' of the needs and initiatives of the wider

research community; 4) disseminate and champion research culture initiatives to the wider research community.

Monitoring and Reporting

Support for declaring and managing conflicts of interest

The Declaration of Interest and Disclosure of Conflicts policy is supported by an electronic reporting system, mandatory training and guidance pages. All senior staff (c. 2,000 colleagues) must declare their external interests annually, and in the 2023-24 declaration year, the compliance rate reached 91%, up from 80% in 2022-23. The Declaration of Interest feature on the Inside UCL staff app, which was introduced in 2022-23, along with clear communications from Innovation & Enterprise, has helped to improve compliance with this area of the policy.

Since 2020-21 UCL has had mandatory training on Conflicts of Interest which staff must complete as part of the onboarding process and every three years thereafter, thus most colleagues will have completed the training twice since its introduction. Confirmation of up-to-date mandatory training and compliance with the policy form part of the annual appraisal process for staff.

Innovation & Enterprise provides Conflict of Interest policy support, including an annual communications campaign to increase compliance, developing and maintaining the guidance pages, and responding to email queries. In 2024, Innovation & Enterprise launched monthly drop-in sessions for colleagues.

Data Protection Office: ongoing initiatives

The Data Protection Office (DPO) continues to promote a range of activities to support staff and students who conduct research at UCL. Following on from the very successful introduction of a new online form for research registration in October 2022, they have looked to build on this success. The new form broadened the scope of data protection registration review to include new areas requiring consideration. This includes the use of special category data in connection with AI, further processing permissions, and international data transfers. The new form has also made the process more intuitive and user-friendly.

The DPO are engaging with the analytics provided by the form to increase efficiencies and determine where more targeted support may be helpful. To that point, the DPO continue to review and assess the UCL data protection training available for researchers and to update the training as needed.

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.

Research ethics reform

The UCL Strategic Plan 2022-27 made a commitment to reforming research ethics processes. The reform will improve the agility and responsiveness of the review process and service and make a positive contribution to a research culture that encourages cutting edge inquiry while placing the highest ethical standards at the heart of everything UCL does. In the 2023/24 academic year the governance and committee structure was revised and implemented, introducing new reviewing committees, a Local Research Ethics (LREC) oversight committee and an overarching strategy and policy committee with clear roles, remits and escalation routes. Additional reviewers and committee members have been recruited to increase capacity and timeliness of review. A single online platform for ethics applications and reviews was procured, developed and implemented, successfully going live in October 2024 for all central reviews and early adopter LRECs. Further policy, process and system development will be undertaken during 2024/25, including ongoing implementation of the online system with LRECs.

Research Integrity function

Support for research integrity was transferred into the Compliance and Assurance team within Research & Innovation Services, creating closer links with all research management functions whilst maintaining working relationships with wider services.

The [Research Integrity website](#) was recently updated: the new format foregrounds UCL's commitment to research integrity and the functions that underpin it such as training and the Code of Conduct, making it clear and accessible for all UCL researchers as well as UCL collaborators.

Research Integrity training

UCL continues to fulfil its commitments to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity by providing relevant training opportunities for both staff and students.

- The newly revised 'Introduction to Research Support and Integrity' course offers PGRs an introduction to the research support available throughout their research journey. This course is a collaborative effort across the

university, reflecting the wide range of research support at UCL, and provides training sessions on research integrity, data protection, research ethics, research data management, research IT, open access and copyright. The training runs three times each academic year, providing ample opportunities for PGRs to attend. In the 2023-24 academic year, 318 PGRs completed the entire training series.

- As a complement to the 'Introduction to Research Support and Integrity' course, the new self-paced eLearning course entitled 'Research Integrity' was launched in March 2023. This course is aimed at both PGRs and research staff: it is a requirement for PGRs for their upgrade and is strongly recommended for all UCL research staff. In the 2023-24 academic year, 315 PGRs and 360 members of staff completed the course.

Open Science and Scholarship awards: encouraging and sharing best practice

In October 2024, as part of its Open Access week activities, UCL will host the second annual Open Science and Scholarship Awards. These awards are organised by the local chapter of the UK Reproducibility Network in conjunction with the UCL Office for Open Science and Scholarship (OOSS) and are sponsored by UCL Press.

The awards were launched in May 2024 at the annual Open Science & Scholarship conference and over 50 nominations were submitted. Students at all levels, and staff from any discipline, including professional services staff, were eligible for nomination for activities undertaken to promote open science in their area; for example, by implementing open science practices, enhancing their adoption or impact, using open access resources in research and teaching, or any improvements to open practices. The winners will be presented with their awards at the ceremony in October.

Since the first awards were launched last year, the OOSS has kept in touch with the winners and been able to show that the Office's support for Open Science and Scholarship, demonstrated by the awards, has had ongoing benefits for the recipients. To that point, the winners have continued to demonstrate support for open research practices.

Positive impact of research culture initiatives

During 2023/24 25 faculty-led and 16 cross-UCL research culture projects were funded through the Research Culture Programme (RCP). The Research Culture Team led projects to improve academic promotions, increase collaboration and team science, support career development of ECRs and technical staff, and grow and embed open research practices.

During the next academic year, faculty-level activity funded through the RCP will be complemented by a grassroots seed-funding scheme. The Research Culture Team will work with delivery partners across the institution to develop a three-year action plan to deliver on priorities within the Roadmap. UCL will also increase its external engagement, to support sector-wide change and exchange learning.

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.

The developments described above in section 2B remain ongoing into 2024/25 and beyond, such as the Research Culture Roadmap and reform of research ethics review. UCL has made substantial progress in the last year and continues to develop and deliver ambitious plans, although we are aware that ongoing prioritisation of work will be required considering sector-wide pressures and competing demands. Some other initiatives under development include:

- Building on the establishment of the Compliance and Assurance function, further improvements in research and innovation security are currently in their planning stages. This includes a particular emphasis on collaborative work across different services and continuing to build up networks in both academic units and professional services.
- UCL has been involved in the review of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, through direct response to consultation and various network events, and will carefully consider how any revisions impact the approach to research integrity and the areas of work described above.
- Following the publication of the UKRIO (UK Research Integrity Office)'s second model procedure in March 2023, UCL set up a Working Group drawn from its Research Misconduct Committee, and wider relevant groups, to determine further changes to be made to the UCL version. UCL currently has a three-stage process to deal fairly and effectively with research misconduct allegations, which closely mirrors the three-stage process set out in the new UKRIO model. We therefore do not anticipate a major reform of the existing procedure, apart from the introduction of an appeals process.

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.

Relevant misconduct policies

- UCL has a procedure for investigating and resolving allegations of misconduct in academic research which is heavily based on the UKRIO's model whilst allowing some minor variations to fit with local circumstances and usage of terminology. UCL also has a Public Interest Disclosure policy for UCL employees and/or other persons connected with UCL and /or UCL students wish to disclose concerns about misconduct in research anonymously as 'whistleblowers'. UCL has a Prevention of Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy and a Report +Support tool for UCL staff and students to report such matters anonymously or with their contact details. UCL also has a Mediation Service to support staff to informally resolve workplace issues with a neutral third party on a confidential basis.
- UCL's research misconduct procedure is under continual review, and the version that was in place in 2023-24 was implemented on 1 November 2022.

UCL's Research Misconduct Committee was instituted in 2021 to increase the consistency and transparency of the research misconduct process at UCL. Its members have compulsory training in and bespoke guidance materials for conducting fair hearings of allegations of misconduct. It has provided screening panels constituted from its membership to consider any allegations referred for screening in 2023-24, which is working well with panels able to complete their work well within the required timescale.

Enabling the reporting of research misconduct

UCL's research integrity inbox works as a first port of call for all matters relating to research integrity and for those seeking advice on related issues. It is also a first point of contact for expressing concerns about potential breaches of UCL's Code of Conduct for Research. To enable better understanding of the research misconduct procedure for anyone wishing to raise research misconduct concerns, UCL's Research Misconduct Committee has developed simplified/FAQ guidance about the procedure, and this is freely available on UCL's research misconduct webpage to both potential complainants and respondents.

Lessons learned

UCL's Research Misconduct Committee conducts an annual analysis of research misconduct, which examines all allegations and findings of misconduct over time. It currently covers a 14-year period (from 2010-2024). In the reporting period there has been no increase in findings of research misconduct at UCL. The annual analysis also enables UCL to identify the most frequent types of allegations, and to ensure that the members of the Research Misconduct Committee have training to develop their expertise and skills for dealing with such allegations. In addition, UCL's Research Misconduct Committee receives regular anonymised briefings on all resolved allegations during the academic year, highlighting any lessons learned and wider action taken.

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	4			
Falsification				
Plagiarism	1			
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	2*			
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*				
Total:	7			

***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.**

*These cases came under the UCL definition of "failure to obtain appropriate ethical permission to conduct research with ethical implications"

UCL's Procedure is a three-stage process of: initial assessment; screening; formal investigation.

In relation to the 7 cases completed in 2023-24:

- 5 cases were closed off at the initial assessment stage
- 2 cases were closed off at the screening stage.