

Research

Annual statement on research integrity: 2022 – 2023

The Concordat to Support Research Integrity requires employers of researchers to provide an annual statement outlining actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen the understanding, and the application, of research integrity considerations.

This statement summarises the University of Liverpool's efforts to foster high standards of research integrity and to meet the requirements of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

1. Key institutional information for the statement

- University of Liverpool, a Russell Group Higher Education Institution.
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact: [Professor Anthony Hollander](#)
- University of Liverpool Named Person for Research Integrity: [Professor Liz Perkins](#)
- University of Liverpool Research Integrity team: integrity@liverpool.ac.uk
- [Research integrity webpages](#)
- [Research Integrity and Governance Committee](#).

2. Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture.

2.1 University research integrity frameworks

The University has a number of frameworks, policies, and contacts to support good research practice.

Policies and systems

The University has policies and procedures in place to ensure that research is conducted to the highest levels of ethics and integrity, and these are available on the [research integrity webpages](#). The University recognises the importance of clear policies and guidelines in embedding a culture of integrity and ethics within research practices. Such documents support researchers in understanding and acting according to expected standards, values and behaviours.

The University's [Policy on Research Integrity](#) outlines a framework to ensure that all research is conducted in accordance with good research practice; while the University [Policy on Research Ethics](#) provides a framework to ensure that all research is conducted in accordance with fundamental ethical principles.

The University's [Policy on Misconduct in Research](#) outlines the procedure to be followed when there is an allegation of misconduct in research. This procedure has appropriate principles and mechanisms to ensure that investigations are thorough and fair, carried out in a transparent manner, and protected by appropriate confidentiality. Details of recent research misconduct investigations are provided at the end of this statement.

The University's research integrity policies are reviewed on a regular basis in light of experience to ensure that they meet the requirements of an evolving global research portfolio, and can be found on the University's [Research Integrity webpages](#).

The University's research ethics process provides rigorous safeguards and reduces harm wherever possible for all those involved in the research process by ensuring that the research is subject to active consideration of the ethical issues that may arise. The research ethics framework provides a mechanism for researchers to demonstrate engagement with ethical issues, and the process supports researchers in designing research to a high ethical standard.

The University's Research Ethics Committees are constituted and operate in accordance with the [Economic and Social Research Council Framework for Research Ethics](#) and include lay representation, as well as a broad range of discipline expertise.

Communications and engagement

Policies are made available to staff through the University webpages, and are referenced in staff and student handbooks. Further to this, communications on research ethics and integrity processes are made through the University's announcements system. Research ethics and research integrity are also a standing item on the University's Faculty Research Committees.

Information about University research-related policies and procedures is generally disseminated at induction via departmental and course programme handbooks. Induction for research students will normally include guidance about avoiding plagiarism and a requirement to undertake the University's online training in research ethics and research integrity.

Culture, development and leadership

At the heart of the University's research strategy is a research environment that reflects our place in the Liverpool city region, being both challenging and supportive. Researchers are supported to take risks and be innovative in a culture where ambitious ideas can flourish and develop into world leading research and impact.

Further information on the University's research culture can be found on the [researcher development webpages](#).

2.2 University actions and activities that have been undertaken to support research integrity

During the 2022-2023 academic year, the University undertook a number of initiatives aimed at enhancing good research practice.

The University has been undertaking a project entitled, 'Research in an Inclusive and Sustainable Environment (RISE)' which aims to better understand changes to the research environment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to collectively identify a range of new approaches and ways of working which support our researchers to reach their full potential and to solve the most pressing global challenges.

In addition to Project RISE, the University of Liverpool joined forces with Advance HE and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to launch 'Thrive' - a two-year project funded by Research England which is dedicated to redefining how research teams operate with a special focus on encouraging greater diversity and inclusivity.

Another initiative relates to the University process for honorary appointments. The University issues honorary appointment to a number of research and teaching active staff who are primarily employed by another organisation; or who are no longer in employment. As part of their contract, honorary staff members can be investigators on University research projects, or supervise students carrying out research or undertake teaching. However, a number of challenges have arisen in relation to the governance of research staff holding honorary appointments. A University working group has been established to better understand the challenges associated with honorary appointments, and to identify mechanisms to enhance the research governance structures in this area.

As discussed in previous annual research integrity statements, a number of initiatives have also been implemented in order to enhance understanding of the requirements when working with human material. While efforts continue to enhance the uptake of the University's research integrity training.

Changes and developments during the period under review

A number of important institutional changes occurred as a result of Project RISE. The University's contributions framework was updated in order to better recognise the range of contributions made to the research environment.

The discussions through the honorary contracts working group provided an opportunity for honorary appointment processed and letters to be updated and harmonised.

The Human Material Governance team made a number of updates to the University's human material policies and guidance, and rolled out human material awareness training. The team also run weekly 'drop in' where researchers can ask questions on good practice for research involving human material.

Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

The University looks forward to identifying opportunities to redefining how research teams operate through Project Thrive.

In addition, the discussions through the honorary contracts working group have highlighted a number of areas for potential enhancement, which will require cross-institutional collaboration during the forthcoming year.

The newly appointed 'Research Integrity Leads across the University will continue their work to enhance awareness of good research practice, and to increase completion rates for the University's training in research integrity.

Further, during the forthcoming year the University will review its [authorship guidance](#) in order to identify areas for enhancement of the guidance.

3. Research misconduct

3.1 Issues of potential misconduct in research

The University's [Research Integrity and Governance Committee](#) oversees the integrity of the University's research on behalf of the University Council. The University's 'Named Person for Research Integrity' (Professor Elizabeth Perkins, integrity@liverpool.ac.uk) oversees the University's research misconduct process, and provides a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information or to discuss concerns relating to [research integrity](#).

The University has policies and procedures in place to ensure that research is conducted to the highest levels of ethics and integrity, and these are available on the [research integrity webpages](#). The University recognises the importance of clear policies and guidelines in embedding a culture of integrity and ethics within research practices. Such documents support researchers in understanding and acting according to expected standards, values and behaviours.

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These policies are reviewed on a regular basis in light of experience to ensure that they meet the requirements of an evolving global research portfolio, and can be found on the University's [Research Integrity webpages](#).

Policies are made available to staff through the University webpages, and are referenced in staff and student handbooks. Further to this, communications on research ethics and integrity processes are made through the University's announcements system. Ethics and integrity are also a standing item on the University's Faculty Research Committees and Faculty Regulatory Affairs Committees.

Information about University research-related policies and procedures is generally disseminated at induction via departmental and course programme handbooks. Induction for research students will normally include guidance about avoiding plagiarism and a requirement to undertake the University's online training in research ethics and research integrity.

A research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct

The University recognises that concerns relating to research integrity can be complex, challenging and highly sensitive; and can impact upon the emotional and mental wellbeing of those involved.

Any person wishing to raise concerns about the integrity of research being conducted under the auspices of the University can do so in confidence through the Named Person for Research Integrity by emailing integrity@liverpool.ac.uk as part of the University's 'Policy on Misconduct in Research'. Concerns can also be raised initially at a local level within the institution via, or with the assistance of, an intermediary such as a Line Manager, Tutor or Supervisor, Head of School, Trade Union representative, Guild advice service representative, or colleague.

3.2 Research misconduct data

Each year, the University receives details of a wide range of concerns relating to research integrity. The University considers such concerns under the framework of the [Policy on Misconduct in research](#).

A significant number of the concerns raised can be dealt with through competency, education, and training mechanisms. During the 2022-2023 academic year, over fourty research integrity issues raised through the Policy on misconduct in research were dealt with via these informal mechanisms at the Initial Assessment stage of the Policy.

Occasionally, concerns are investigated by a Screening Panel who determine whether there is sufficient evidence of misconduct in research to warrant a Formal Investigation; or whether the concerns raised are mistaken, frivolous, vexatious and/or malicious.

Some research integrity concerns which are uncovered require Formal Investigation by research misconduct panels as part of the later stages of the [Policy on misconduct in research](#).

During the 2022-2023 academic session, there were two cases of potential misconduct in research which progressed to the 'Screening Panel' and 'Formal Investigation' stages of the University's [Policy on research misconduct](#). These cases concerned the alleged failure to give appropriate recognition to others involved in research activity, and the alleged misrepresentation of research data.

During this period, the University completed one Formal Investigation of potential misconduct in research. This case involved a range of research misconduct allegations, including an alleged reckless, negligent, or deliberate deviation from accepted good practice in carrying out research, as well as an alleged misrepresentation of data. The Investigation Panel determined that research misconduct had occurred, and that the Respondent was responsible. An Appeal Panel accepted additional mitigating factors put forward by the Respondent, but upheld the Investigation Panel's conclusions that research misconduct had occurred, and that the Respondent was responsible. Recommendations from the investigation are being taken forward by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor's Office and Human Resources.

Lessons learned from the research misconduct cases

The University recognises the importance of using issues of research misconduct as important learning opportunities. Each research misconduct investigation concludes with a series of recommendations and lessons arising from the investigation. These recommendations are taken forward as part of the work of the University Research Integrity and Governance Committee; and a number of such recommendations have been described earlier in this statement.

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