



Nottingham Trent
University

Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2022/23

Introduction

This is the tenth Annual Statement on Research Integrity produced by Nottingham Trent University (NTU). It covers the academic year of 2022/23.

NTU maintains its strong advocacy of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and the commitments that underpin it. The University requires that all staff, visiting staff and doctoral candidates involved in research either at or in the name of NTU, irrespective of the discipline/field of research, adhere at all times to the institutional Code of Practice for Research.

The Annual Statement for 2022/23 is based on the template developed by the UK Research Integrity Office with the Research Integrity Concordat Signatories Group.

1. Commitment 1: Key contact information

Name of organisation	Nottingham Trent University
Type of organisation	Higher Education Institution
Date statement approved by governing body	University Open Research and Research Integrity Committee (19/09/2023) University Research and Innovation Committee (04/10/2023)
Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.ntu.ac.uk/research/research-and-impact/research-integrity
Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Professor Richard Emes, Pro Vice-Chancellor – Research & Innovation
	Email address: Richard.emes@ntu.ac.uk
Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for	Anton Muszanskyj, Head of Research Governance & Policy

<p>anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity</p>	<p>Email address: anton.muszanskyj@ntu.ac.uk</p>
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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 and systems

Two key documents underpin NTU's system and culture of research integrity and ethics. These are:

1. The Code of Practice for Research, available on [NTU's website](#). The Code is applicable to all staff, visiting staff and doctoral candidates involved in research in the name of the University, with the exception of undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, irrespective of the discipline or field of research. It set out the principles of practice and conduct by which the University expects research to be carried out either at or in the name of NTU and covers a range of subjects including personal and professional research integrity, research funding, research data, research authorship, training and development and research misconduct. The Code is highlighted in the researcher induction programme for new researchers at NTU. It is subject to regular review and update and was last updated in January 2023.
2. Research Ethics Policy and Procedure, also available on [NTU's website](#). The Policy and Procedure applies to all individuals conducting research within or on behalf of the University. The intention of the Policy and Procedure is to provide an overarching framework of principles designed to promote a quality research culture, clarify internal procedures and structures relating to research ethics, and mandate that all research projects carried out within or in the name of NTU involving primary research with human beings should be subject to ethical review. As with the Code of Practice for Research, it is highlighted in the researcher induction programme for new researchers at NTU. It is subject to regular review and update and was last updated in January 2023.

The University has robust procedures in place to investigate instances of unacceptable behaviour in the conduct of research, and also operates a Whistle-Blowing Policy. Please see section 3 for further details.

The University operates a Research Data Management Policy that sets out expectations around, and support for, research data management throughout the data lifecycle. It is an expectation that every research project has a data management plan. The Library Research Support Team, in particular the Research

Data Management Officer, provide extensive and bespoke support to researchers in completing data management plans. Data management plans must be included as part of research ethics applications submitted to all research ethics committees (RECs).

The University conducts research with animals and is a signatory of the Concordat for Openness in Animal Research. The Concordat informs the University's standard and governance and is NTU's pledge of working towards a more transparent and engaged approach to animal research. The University also promote the use of the [Animal Research: Reporting in Vivo Experiments \(ARRIVE\)](#) guidelines. This is a checklist for researchers designed to improve the quality, reliability and reproducibility of their published research.

- Communications and engagement

The Doctoral School run workshops in the Project Approval series for new starters; the first of these provides guidance to doctoral candidates on what ethical research looks like, how to consider ethical dimensions of research in projects and data management including how to produce a data management plan, while the second focuses on completing project approval and a further dive into research ethics and data management. Ethical issues are also raised and considered in various workshops in the Research Methods and Analysis series, linked to different methodological approaches for example in relation to participatory research, ethnographic research or research with vulnerable people. Plagiarism, falsification and fabrication are also covered in training and development sessions provided to doctoral candidates.

Researcher Induction and the Research Induction Checklist, overseen by the Researcher Development Team, establish researcher responsibilities for research conducted at NTU. The Individual Research Plan and Individual Researcher Development Plan reinforce researcher responsibilities. Together, they ensure researchers are familiar with specific NTU policy and procedure: the Code of Practice for Research, Research Ethics Policy and Procedure, Annual Statements and the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. This provides a foundation for NTU research that fosters research integrity and promotes a positive research culture in practice.

The Research Support SharePoint site, which has been subject to considerable update in the 2022/23 academic year, acts as a home and signpost for research integrity-related guidance and resources, including the Code of Practice for Research Ethics Policy and Procedure. All NTU staff and doctoral candidates have access to the SharePoint site.

The Thrive professional development platform is used to house training and development resource. The Researcher Development Team are responsible for creating and commissioning research-focused content for Thrive. All NTU members of staff have access to the platform.

Training on specific matters of research ethics and integrity are provided as and when required at local level, often orchestrated by research ethics committees (RECs).

The NTU Researcher Network, described as an 'inclusive network for researchers' was launched in the 2022/23 academic year. The Network includes researchers across different career stages, from Senior Lecturers to Professors. Planned activities include a workshop on research integrity and ethics in each term. The proposed areas of focus are: authorship issues and disputes; transparency and reproducibility; and, equitable partnerships and collaborations. Researcher development will be linked to NTU priority areas, identified through shared anonymised information on instances of research misconduct or questionable practices that have been undertaken.

- Culture, development and leadership

The University Research & Innovation Committee (UR&IC) has overall responsibility for research integrity at NTU. It has delegated powers to the University Open Research and Research Integrity Committee (UORRIC) to provide strategic oversight and leadership of research integrity and the ecosystem which supports it. Further details on the terms of reference and membership of UR&IC are available on the University's [Research Governance web pages](#). Corresponding information on UORRIC is available on the University's [Research Integrity web pages](#).

A new role of Director of Research Culture and Environment has been created and it is expected that the post holder will take up their position in the 2023/24 academic year. This position will lead on a package of activities that are designed to enhance the overall research environment and culture, including aspects of research integrity. The package of activities will be overseen by the Valuing Idea Board, which is the body charged with delivering on the research-focused aspects of the University's Strategic Plan. The appointment of the new director and package of activities evidences the significance NTU places on research culture and environment, including integrity.

- Monitoring and reporting

The University requires that each REC reporting into UORRIC generates an annual report based on a standardised template. The reports contain details on the number of applications received and the outcome of reviews undertaken, as well as summary information on key developments in the REC relating to training, guidance and processes. Through the reports, institutional monitoring of research ethics is undertaken, and allows for points of challenge or query to be raised.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

The Research Ethics Policy and Procedure was updated to include a statement that explicitly requires that ethical review of projects should, as a matter of course, be undertaken prior to the commencement of data collection.

The Consultancy Project Proposal Form was also updated to ensure ethical dimensions of proposed consultancy activity had been considered. The form was amended to include questions on participant information and informed consent, voluntary participation, data management and incentivisation to participate in projects.

UORRIC considered implementing a fully open process of review of research ethics applications but the high risk of negative consequences, such as damage to working relationships and degrading of integrity if reviewers feel less comfortable in expressing fully any concerns they might have about an application, meant it was not taken forward.

The University received a Human Tissue Authority (HTA) Licence in October 2022. Licence information has been displayed in all locations where human tissue is stored. Mandatory training for those wishing to work under the License has begun and is currently delivered via Teams in sessions of up to two hours. As of August 2023 139 researchers have been trained. Training is to be offered four times a year and all researchers working under the Licence are required to update their learning every two years. NTU's HTA Licence is overseen by the University HTA Steering Group, which has a dotted line to the Human Invasive Research Ethics Committee. It is anticipated that NTU will be inspected by the HTA within the next 18-24 months. A quarterly system of internal audit has been operationalised.

A number of position notes on various ethics and integrity related matters have been developed by UORRIC, including on self-experimentation and autoethnography, retrospective ethics review, surveys for accreditations and transference of live research projects to NTU, while guidance on the use of online surveys for research purposes is under development. The intention is for these to be added to as and when issues arise on which additional guidance is required. All position statements are freely available on the NTU Research Support SharePoint site.

A statement of expectations for research ethics committee reviewers was developed to address a small number of instances of inappropriate feedback being provided to applicants. This is also available on the NTU Research Support SharePoint site.

A note of clarification on the University's position regarding contacting its students to participate in research projects was developed. This was undertaken to prevent students' inboxes being inundated with requests and being viewed as an easy source of data for research projects. This helps to address the ethical principle of distributive justice in research.

A Research Privacy Notice was developed and implemented. This sets out how personal information is collected during research and will be managed, and how participant rights will be protected. The Notice places responsibility for appropriate data management on the researcher and is designed to provide flexibility for future reuse of research data. It is supplementary and complementary to participant information sheets and consent forms used in individual research projects. It is freely available on [NTU's website](#), allowing researchers to easily link to it in relevant project documentation provided to participants.

An online resource under the banner of 'The Only Way is Ethics' was launched at the beginning of the academic year. It takes the form of a series of short conversational videos around different aspects of ethics and integrity. They are available to all members of staff on the Thrive professional development platform.

The Individual Research Plan, completed by all academic colleagues considered to have significant responsibility for research, was updated to require those completing it to confirm that they have completed 'The Principles of Research Ethics' training module the last 2 years.

Open research is now a key area of activity being supported by the University. The University Research Integrity Committee was renamed the University Open Research and Integrity Committee to reflect its additional responsibilities as custodian for the development of the agenda across the institution. An Open Research Strategic Plan has been developed and endorsed, and is underpinned by an action plan. The open research agenda is seen as complementary to research integrity, and it is anticipated that support for the agenda will result in greater rigour and robustness in research and associated processes.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

The University has made notable progress with research integrity-related developments during the 2022/23 academic year. The additional emphasis placed on open research at institutional level and bringing oversight of this agenda under the auspices of the University Research Integrity Committee (now University Open Research and Research Integrity Committee) has allowed two complementary strands of activity to be bound more closely together. The creation of the Director of Research Culture and Environment position and development of a broad range of ambitions and objectives under the research culture and environment banner gives confidence that interrelated strands of activity that interface with research integrity will be developed in a holistic, symbiotic way.

Receiving the HTA Licence was something of a game changer for bioscience and physiological research at NTU. It is anticipated that the HTA licence will allow researchers to continue to store valuable human samples for future research projects, providing the informed consent allows this. It will allow researchers to produce higher impact research. The HTA Governance SharePoint site currently hosts 58 projects which are working with human samples.

The University was pleased to see strong evidence from the 2023 Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) indicating that NTU has the highest standards of research integrity (72%) and is ahead of the national benchmark (69.3%) by +2.7%.

Forecasting to 2023/24 a number of activities are planned that are anticipated will lead to an enhanced research culture and environment underpinned by high levels of integrity. These are:

- Expansion of support and guidance on open research, which is anticipated will lead to an increase in uptake of open research practices, in turn leading to more robust, relevant and reusable research data and research outcomes.
- Focus on institutional response to the rapid growth in use of artificial intelligence (AI) platforms such as ChatGPT, and how these could impact on the integrity of research.
- Enhanced training on research ethics for doctoral candidates.
- Review of research-focused policies and procedures with a view to revising them to disincentivise questionable research practices.
- Deepening of engagement with the UK Reproducibility Network.
- Continuation of the mandatory HTA training to be provided to researchers and the development of information pages relating to the HTA for the NTU website.
- An internal communications campaign to further promote 'The Only Way is Ethics' to researchers is being planned, while the resource itself will be enhanced through collaboration with experienced researchers at NTU, based on identified priority areas for development at the University.

2D. Case study on good practice

The University developed a Position Note (see Section 2B) on self-experimentation and autoethnography. The Note was approved in December 2022 but, following consideration by a group of arts-focused researchers, requests were made to revise the Note to improve its relevance to researchers in all disciplines. The Note was iterated to take into consideration the detailed feedback from the arts-focused researchers and a revised Note, which reflects a more inclusive approach to research methodologies, will be issued at the start of the ensuing academic year. This is being shared as a case study because it has given us cause to reflect on how research is conceived, and to ensure future Notes with institutional applicability take a fully inclusive approach to research practices across all disciplines.

3. Addressing research misconduct

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

The University has robust procedures in place to investigate instances of unacceptable behaviour in the conduct of research. For staff undertaking research at, or in the name of the University, any allegations of research misconduct are dealt with through the University's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. For research students undertaking research in the name of University, allegations of misconduct are dealt with through the [University's Academic Standards and Quality Handbook](#) (Section 17D: University Procedure for Investigating Alleged Research Misconduct) while for taught students at the University, allegations relating to research misconduct are dealt through the [University's Academic Standards and Quality Handbook](#) (Section 17C: Academic Irregularities).

The University operates a Whistle-Blowing (Public Interest Policy) which provides a means for genuine concerns around possible wrongdoing to be raised and a transparent and confidential process for dealing with those concerns. The University advertises a contact name and address to whom any enquiries relating to research integrity, including those of confidential nature, can be addressed. The individual listed as the contact has received several communications over multiple years concerning allegations of questionable research practice and misconduct, providing assurance that the reporting route does function.

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

Only one instance of potential research misconduct was investigated in the 2022/23 academic year. An initial fact finding exercise was undertaken by a senior member of staff. Following the conclusion of this exercise it was determined that the allegation did not have substance, and as such the case did not progress to a full disciplinary investigation.

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				
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations				
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)				
<i>Other*</i>	1			
Total:	1	0	0	0