

## Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2023-24

### Section 1: Key contact information

1A. Name of organisation	Keele University
1B. Type of organisation	Higher Education
1C. Date statement approved by governing body	27/11/24 (URC) 18/11/24 (Senate)
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page	<a href="#">Research integrity - Keele University</a>
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	<a href="#">Professor David Amigoni</a> Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation <a href="mailto:d.amigoni@keele.ac.uk">d.amigoni@keele.ac.uk</a>
1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Professor David Amigoni <a href="mailto:d.amigoni@keele.ac.uk">d.amigoni@keele.ac.uk</a>

### Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken

<p><b>2A. Description of current systems and culture</b></p> <p><b>Statement</b></p> <p>Keele University is committed to ensuring the highest standards of research integrity in all aspects of its research activities and expects its researchers to maintain a similar commitment. Keele University welcomes the <a href="#">UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity</a> and supports the five commitments contained within the Concordat.</p> <p>Research integrity is one of the strategic pillars of Keele University's overarching <a href="#">Research Strategy</a>. Our commitment is to the highest standards of research integrity through maintaining a research environment that supports and develops our researchers, with clear processes for responding to allegations of research misconduct. In addition to Professor David Amigoni, the Academic Lead for Research Integrity and Improvement at Keele University and the Director of Research Strategy Delivery (Research Integrity administrative lead) can be <a href="#">contacted</a>. This Research Integrity Group can be contacted through the dedicated email account: <a href="mailto:research.integrity@keele.ac.uk">research.integrity@keele.ac.uk</a></p> <p><b>Governance and Oversight</b></p> <p>Keele University's <a href="#">Research Committee</a> oversees the integrity of the University's research on behalf of the University Executive Committee, <a href="#">Senate</a>, and <a href="#">Council</a>, and review and approve this annual statement.</p> <p><b>Quality Management System</b></p>
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The University recognises the need to ensure standards and legislative requirements are met in a consistent and robust manner. The University has a Quality Management System in place to manage compliance with the standards governing our research activity. This Quality Management System comprises three main aspects:

- (1) the University's **policies and procedures** to define the standards and outline processes by which those standards are applied;
- (2) the **training and development** of research staff, to support them in applying and promoting these standards in their research; and
- (3) processes and mechanisms by which the University maintains **oversight** of the ongoing application of these standards and investigates concerns about research integrity.

The five key elements of research integrity (honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, care and respect, and accountability) outlined in the Concordat are reflected in the University's Quality Management System.

## Policies and Procedures

The [Keele University Research Integrity Policy](#) is part of the overarching Quality Management System. The University has a [Code of Good Research Practice](#) and a [Code of Practice for Student Academic Misconduct](#) which outline the University's expectations of the behaviour of all staff and students engaged in research. These documents also include the definition of misconduct in research. The code reflects a number of other policies including:

- Data protection
- Management of conflicts of interest
- UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research
- Research data management
- Research ethics

Where an area of work represents a significant risk or there is otherwise a requirement for it, the University will specifically describe processes required to meet standards or legislative requirements through standard operating procedures (SOPs). SOPs are subject to periodic review to reflect changes in legislation, regulatory and funder requirements as well as evolving research practice. Currently, the University has SOPs in the following areas:

- Clinical research, particularly Clinical Trials of Investigational Medicinal Products
- Scientific research involving the use of animals
- Research involving human participants, their data or bodily material
- Open Access to research publications
- Ethics Committee review of research

These policies are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they meet the requirements of our evolving research portfolio and can be found on the [University's Research Integrity webpages](#) and [Policy Zone](#). Communications on research ethics and integrity processes are made to staff and students through the University's internal communications channels. Research integrity is a standing item on the University and Faculty Research Committees.

In addition to this, Faculties are encouraged to develop local processes to promote a culture of research integrity; these may include:

- Peer review processes
- Symposium/Seminar series and academic discussion
- Engagement with research transparency, including (but not limited to):
  - Pre-registration of study protocols
  - Open access to research data
  - Open access to research materials
  - Open access to research software / analysis scripts
- Ethics Committee review of research

Keele is committed to the principle that researchers should publish their results freely, ensuring their work is available to other researchers and the public. The University proactively publishes publicly funded research outputs through its research repository [Worktribe](#), and actively manages situations where restrictions exist on publication accessibility. Currently, around 85% of the content on the repository is freely available to all through open access publication.

The University also has a [repository for research data](#) underpinning published research made available for open access. It builds on and greatly facilitates existing good practice within the University as highlighted by key stakeholders in recent publications.

Keele is committed to supporting transparency in research and to developing approaches to improve the quality of the research we produce. As part of this, Keele has developed a [Statement on Transparency in Research](#) which sets out key expectations of Keele researchers to engage with Open Science and Reproducibility best-practice. Such best practice includes Open Data (public sharing of data underpinning our publications), Open Materials (public sharing of research methods / analysis scripts / software) underpinning our research, as well as engaging in pre-registration of study protocols and analysis plans, where appropriate.

Keele is also committed to recognising and rewarding engagement with Open Science and Reproducibility best practices in its promotion and hiring decisions. Our promotions criteria encourage candidates to comment on their engagement with Open Science and Reproducibility best-practice in their applications. Keele has also developed a [Statement on Responsible Research Assessment](#) to guide hiring and promotion committees in the responsible use of bibliometric data. Keele is also a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) which emphasises the assessment of research on its own merits rather than relying on bibliometric data (such as journal impact factor).

## **Training and Development**

The University recognises that the ultimate responsibility for personal and professional development of researchers lies with the individual and provides a supportive environment with open access to opportunities for training or personal reflection. The University benefits from membership of Vitae and the UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) and benchmarks development opportunities against the Researcher Development Framework in order to develop more effective and successful researchers with a specific emphasis on research integrity.

The University seeks to ensure that all researchers are aware of and understand the policies and principles relating to ethics and integrity. The University supports researchers through the provision of learning and development opportunities to ensure compliance with policy in mandating training in certain key areas.

The training programme provides opportunities for recommended training in areas supporting research integrity such as:

- Good Clinical Practice as legislated by the Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations
- Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Requests
- Discipline specific research methodology and ethical considerations
- Publications and presentations
- Intellectual Property management including conflicts of interest and transparency
- Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act
- Human Tissue Act
- Plagiarism and Research Misconduct
- Information Security

The University recognises the need for a flexible and dynamic training package to respond to changes in research focus in the staff and student populations, as well as external forces such as changes in legislation or funder requirements.

The University's research integrity training needs are held under review by the Research Committee.

The [Research Governance Toolkit Research Integrity webpage](#) is regularly updated. We also have an [internal hub](#) for academic colleagues with pages dedicated to Research Integrity.

Research integrity training is available to postgraduate research students. As part of the Keele Doctoral Academy Researcher Training Centre an introductory session on, integrity, research governance and ethics explains the differences between the three and when each is relevant along with real-time examples and support for students to think about their own projects.

An Academic Lead for Research Integrity and Improvement at Keele along with Faculty Research Integrity Leads for each Faculty have been appointed. These individuals continue to work with the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation and the Director for Research Strategy Delivery to foster a stronger culture of research integrity, open research, and reproducibility at Keele. The Academic Lead sits on University Research Committee, and the Academic Lead and Faculty Research Integrity Leads are members of the Research Leaders Network at Keele and their respective Faculty Research Committees.

## **2B. Changes and developments during the period under review**

In the 2023/24 academic year, the team have provided various advances centered around 7 key objectives: (1) Consolidate transparent research practice as our standard; (2) Embed open research training across all academic disciplines; (3) Build a cohesive, university-wide network for Open Research; (4) Authentically align institutional incentives & structures to support and reward Open Research practices; (5) Establish Keele as a leader in Open Research; (6) Ensure our practices in Open Research are current and best-in-class; and (7) Confront and address inequalities in Open Research practices.

We have developed and delivered the University's new [Open Access & Rights Retention Policy](#). This policy makes important updates to Keele's Open Access publishing policy (ensuring close alignment with UKRI and REF requirements) but introduces a Rights Retention element. This element enables retention of the rights of journal manuscripts and conference proceedings submitted by our researchers for publication, rather than transferring these rights to publishers. The Policy means Keele University and our researchers can disseminate our research as freely and widely as possible—whilst complying with funder and research assessment requirements around Open Access—immediately after acceptance, regardless of journal embargo periods.

The Policy was approved by Senate in June 2024, and the team are now supporting roll-out of the policy by speaking with key stakeholders across the University (most notably by visits to School meetings). We have also [developed an internal Sharepoint page providing guidance](#) to researchers on how to comply with the policy, and [delivered an information webinar](#) in October 2024.

We established the [Keele Open Research Network \(KORN\)](#), a space for all those interested in research reproducibility and open research. It aims to bring together like minded people to advance openness in research, advertise training/participation opportunities, and facilitate discussion of best practice. Through this network we delivered 7 webinars on Open Research topics, including "Embracing Open Data", "Registered Reports", and "Open Data for Qualitative Researchers".

Through KORN we are also beginning to roll out a suite of comprehensive institutional training on Open Research as part of the UK Reproducibility Network's Open Research Programme. We are operating a "train the trainer" model, by funding Keele researchers to attend UKRN training who then to return to Keele and develop and deliver training locally. Over the next 2-3 years our aim is to develop and deliver a minimum of 10 training workshops. So far, we have workshops from Dr Christian Devenish ("Using project TIER for reproducible research"), Dr Juliana Morbec ("7 steps towards reproducible research"), Dr Delyth Wyndham ("VIR2TUE research integrity training"), and Professor Jim Grange ("Open Research 101: An introduction"). More training offers and KORN webinars will be released in early 2025.

We continue to work to ensure engagement with Open Research practices are recognised and rewarded appropriately. We have developed several case studies of excellence in engagement with Open Research across our faculties. Engagement with Open Research has prominence among academic promotion criteria as a criterion for excellence in research. In addition, we are delighted that Open Research is a new category in the institutional “Keele Excellence Awards”. We work with Faculty Deans of Research and School Research Directors to ensure Open Research has visibility in how research quality is assessed, and we provide formal recognition of all of our trainers volunteering to develop workshops. We are developing recommendations for inclusion of open research requirements in academic recruitment materials to provide the necessary visibility of this important activity for research excellence.

## **2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments**

During the 2024-25 academic year, the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation, the Academic Lead for Research Integrity and Improvement, the Faculty Research Integrity Leads, and the Director of Research Strategy Delivery will work together to deliver the following:

### **Research Integrity**

We will continue to develop and enhance our robust governance structures, professional support and academic leadership for research ethics, governance and integrity and essential backbones of our research mission. We have established a task & finish group to develop recommendations to University Research Committee of key indicators of research integrity. These indicators can be used to develop an evidence base of research integrity best-practice at the University. It is anticipated that the draft set of institutional indicators will be tabled at the first University Research Committee in 2025.

### **Research Misconduct Policy**

We are conducting a revision of the University’s Research Misconduct Policy to ensure alignment with recommendations set out by the UK Research Integrity Office. The new draft is currently under review and will be tabled at the November University Research Committee (and submission to Senate thereafter).

### **Open Research**

Open research remains a priority for the team. Maximising the transparency and openness of the research pipeline is essential to maximise the integrity and impact of the work conducted at Keele University and its partners.

Key Open Research priorities for 2024/25 academic year:

- Keele is leading development of “Open Research Week 2025” across the Midlands Innovation group. Preparations are in their early stages, but initial meetings have been incredibly positive and have put us in a great position to deliver a comprehensive set of online sessions throughout the week across all the 8 institutions. In addition, we are approaching several high-profile keynote speakers. More information will be announced early 2025.
- We will develop and deliver at least 5 new training sessions on Open Research, reaching a total of 75 colleagues across our faculties. This will be achieved via the UKRN Open Research Programme.
- We will develop and deliver at least 6 webinars via Keele Open Research Network to engage and encourage colleagues across our faculties to incorporate more sophisticated methods of open research into their work.
- To develop comprehensive guidance on sharing research data, including development of data management plan templates that support and encourage wide sharing of research data.
- To have fully established impact metrics around open research engagement, including development of a dashboard showcasing open research metrics (e.g., open access publications, open data, open materials, pre-print usage) for each School.

## **Section 3: Addressing research misconduct**

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

The University provides assurance that the processes in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair and that they are appropriate to the needs of the organisation. The University has a policy for the investigation of allegations of research misconduct which has been approved by the Universities Senate committee following the release of the revised concordat to support research integrity. The policy can be accessed in Keele's [policy zone](#).

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

Formal investigations completed during the period under review (including investigations which completed during this period but started in a previous academic year).

	Number of allegations			
Type of allegation	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	0			
Falsification	0			
Plagiarism	0			
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	0			
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)	0			
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	0			
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)	0			
Other*	0			
<b>Total:</b>	0			

\*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.