

Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2023

1.1. Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of 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)	Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee: 26 th October 2023 (Approved) Research Committee: 23 rd November 2023 Academic Board: 25 th November 2023 Governing Body: 27 th November 2023
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.cssd.ac.uk/research/our-research-culture/research-ethics-and-integrity
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Professor Selina Busby
	Email address: selina.busby@cssd.ac.uk
1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for	Name: Dr Joe Parslow

anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Email address: ethics@cssd.ac.uk
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1.2. 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

The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London, works to embed the commitments of the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* into its research culture. The Concordat is designed to help institutions continue to further embed research integrity into their activities and we have used them to guide and shape our training, our processes and, crucially, our behaviours. The Concordat is formed of 5 commitments. In line with the concordat, Central commits to:

- maintain the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research, which means maintaining honesty and rigour, transparent and open communication, and care and respect.
- ensure research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.
- support a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers. This includes clear policies and procedures, training and development opportunities for researchers, management systems to ensure policies are implemented, awareness of appropriate behaviour of researchers and systems to intervene at an early stage where researchers require support.

- use transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.
- work together to strengthen the integrity of research and to review progress regularly and openly.
- foster an environment of robust debate and engagement with research ethics and integrity.

Policies and Systems:

The School's commitment to the maintenance and enhancement of the *Concordat's* intentions can be traced through its policies and procedures, principally through:

- The Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook.
- The School's Strategic Plan.
- Ethical Policy Framework
- Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy.
- Handbook for Supervisors of Research Degrees Candidates.
- Research Degrees Programme Code of Practice and Specification.
- Research Degrees course documentation.

The School's Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee (REISC) develops and monitors ethics and integrity processes and systems, reporting to Research Committee and in turn Academic Board and the School's Board of Governors. The systems to support research integrity include the Research Ethics Review Forms which are completed by all staff and students before research requiring ethical approval takes place. There are also annual training sessions for all staff on research ethics and integrity, and regular sessions on research ethics and integrity delivered annually to postgraduate research, taught and undergraduate taught students. In addition, the Chair and Secretary of REISC provide regular informal support for queries surrounding research ethics and integrity, and Research Advisors provide further places for all researchers to discuss this aspect of their research. The Vice Principal (Research and Knowledge Exchange) also meets regularly with the Chair and Secretary of REISC in a culture of distributed leadership and mutual support. Furthermore, to support the development of internal funding, for research, impact

and Knowledge Exchange projects, staff are asked to consider and outline any ethical considerations of their work when making funding applications.

Applications that would benefit from external scrutiny can also be reviewed by the Conservatoire's UK Research Ethics Committee and members of the School's Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee are active members of this multi-institutional Committee. These policies and systems, from the Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook and its relevant appendices to the Research Ethics Review Form, are monitored, reviewed and updated on an annual basis by the Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee.

Communication and Engagement:

The commitments to enhance research integrity are not only present in our policies, but are also embedded through the cycles of training and development, including:

- Staff training and development.
- Postgraduate Research Student (PGR) and postgraduate and undergraduate taught student training and development.
- The Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee (REISC), which reports to Research Committee, Academic Board and The Governing Body.
- Regular review of policies and procedures.
- Visiting Fellows, where appropriate.
- Attendance at external training events.

As part of REISC, regular discussions are held on relevant policies, procedures and issues surrounding ethics and integrity at national and global levels. These discussions are used as starting points for guidance and development of policy where appropriate and help Members to contextualise these wider conversations within the local needs of Central. They are important opportunities for those with responsibility for ethics and integrity to further integrate a wider set of perspectives about the diverse needs of researchers at Central into policy and School-wide communication.

Monitoring and reporting:

Applications Received Between 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023:

Staff:

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Received	Low Risk	Full	Number to CUK
10	10	0	0

Postgraduate Research Students:

Received	Low Risk	Full	Number to CUK
5	2	0	3

Taught Postgraduate and Undergraduate Students:

Low Risk Received	Low Risk, number to REISC	Full	Number to CUK
45	0	0	0

In addition, the Chair and other Members of the Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee reviewed 4 applications from Conservatoires UK (CUK) Research Ethics Committee (REC) as part of their membership of that committee.

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.

From 2022-2023, a new Chair of the Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee was appointed as the previous Chair left to take up a new role at a different institution. As well as Chairing the internal Subcommittee, the Chair is also a member of CUK's REC and an ethics and integrity advisor to UKRIO. Other committee members have been involved in wider national discussions on research integrity – working with the National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange (NCACE) on embedding the commitments of the Concordat into knowledge exchange, as a speaker on [accountability and integrity for small specialist institutions](#) for GuildHE/UKRIO, and as a member of the UK Committee on Research Integrity.

As reported above and in the previous Annual Report (2022), as part of the work

of REISC three important reviews were undertaken and are ongoing:

- An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA): using the School's EIA systems, a review of current ethics processes at Central was undertaken to determine the impact of ethics procedures on a wide range of staff at Central.
- Following the UKRIO Updated Guidance on Research Misconduct, a review of the School's Research Misconduct Procedures is in progress which we will complete in 2023/24.
- Following the EIA, a review of the Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook, as the key document communicating key principles and procedures around ethics and integrity to staff and students, has been undertaken with external consultation. This review aims to update the information in the Handbook, embedding the commitments of the Concordat more robustly into the work of the School, as well as ensure the handbook's usefulness and accessibility, and in particular ensuring plain language to enable access for all users.

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.

Reflections on Progress:

Developments for the year under review are determined by the agreed planned activities expressed in the previous report.

Subcommittee Membership:

In 2022/23, new Subcommittee members brought research expertise in political and activist theatre, censorship, cultural memory, and institutional change, as well as in important aspects of theatre and performance processes, including the need for environmental awareness in theatre making and research. Existing and new Members represent a range of career stages, contract types and positionality, bringing important perspectives to the issues, ideas and policies discussed and reviewed. We continue to have an external member of the committee with expertise from in the commissioning of research and development work and the charity sector.

Review and improve the recording of taught students data

Working closely with the School's Programmes Office who record and manage taught

students' data, and providing further staff training (see below), during this academic year we have been able to document a greater number of taught students' research data than in previous academic years (this data is detailed above). This is an improvement on previous years and the Subcommittee hopes to keep building on this data capture in future years through ongoing collaboration with the Programmes Office and the development and implementation of digitised ethics review forms (see below) which will enable more accurate collecting and recording of data.

1.3. *Develop all staff training on research ethics and integrity*

During the 2022/23 academic year, training in ethics and integrity – alongside training on Open Access and Open Research – was made available to all staff. This training, delivered by Members of the REISC, updated staff on the ethics and integrity landscape including the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*, as well as the processes of research ethics review at the School.

Review the usability of the Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook and Ethics Review Forms

A review of the usability of these forms during REISC meetings has led to three updates already indicated above. Firstly, the Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook will be reviewed and re-written with a focus on updating the guidance, usability and accessibility. Secondly, an Equality Impact Assessment of ethics processes is being undertaken to gather more information about the needs of researchers in relation to ethics processes at Central. In addition, the Secretary of the REISC is working with colleagues in IT and Governance to make an online version of the Research Ethics Review Form to ensure more-user friendly processes and better data collection.

Plans for Future Development:

In line with current practice, we will continue to engage with materials published by external organisations that examine and report on UK research ethics and integrity, including Universities UK (UUK), UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), and the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA), the UK Committee on Research Integrity and appropriate international sources and developments.

Policy and Guidance Review:

As indicated above, during the year there are several ongoing processes of reviewing and updating ethics policies, procedures and processes:

- An Equality Impact Assessment of ethics processes.
- A review and update of the Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook with external support.
- A review and update of Research Misconduct procedures and processes with external support from consultants and UKRIO.

In addition to these reviews, an audit of ethics processes and procedures will be undertaken led by an external expert in ethics. We will liaise with GuildHE to locate a suitable auditor.

Digitising Forms:

The Subcommittee's Secretary will work with colleagues in IT and Governance to move the Research Ethics Review Form online, with a view to updating the usability and accessibility of the form, ensuring version control is more robust and enabling more rigorous data storage and reporting.

Bitesize Documents:

Began in 2022/23, and paused in light of the review and audit of various policies and guidance, REISC will develop a set of Bitesize documents to give staff and students quick access to key ideas, policies and guidance surrounding research ethics and integrity, including informed consent, collaborative research and open data and ethics.

Training:

An additional training session on research integrity for Postgraduate Research Students – previously research ethics and integrity were handled in a single session. Both sessions are co-run showing distributed leadership in action and building conversations and dialogue into the design and delivery of the training. We are planning to run a training session on integrity and good research practices for academic staff during 2023/24 also.

2D. Case study on good practice (optional)

Please describe an anonymised brief, exemplar case study that can be shared as good practice with other organisations. A wide range of case studies are valuable, including small, local implementations. Case studies may also include the impact of implementations or lessons learned.

At Central, ethics and integrity are key areas of development and investment across the School and are seen as vital to the work of all staff and students. Therefore, we have a dedicated Early Career Researcher (ECR) role holding significant responsibility for research ethics and integrity, ensuring best practices are embedded across the School at all career levels. Often, ECRs are left out of the conversations on ethics and integrity in favour of more senior staff, which means there is often a lack of understanding about the impact of policy and decision making on ECRs. ECRs at Central are very much part of this conversation with ECRs as well as PGRs as Members of REISC and with the Vice Principal (Research and Knowledge Exchange) meeting regularly with the relevant ECR to ensure they are embedded into decision-making on matters relating to Research culture.

The role at Central also involves both a Secretarial role on REISC (and the Conservatoire UK Research Ethics Committee) as well as support for the Chairs of these committees in decision making, policy development and producing

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guidance. This work, and the creation of this role, was featured as a case study accompanying the UK Committee on Research Integrity's (UK CORI) [Research Integrity in the UK: Annual Statement 2023](#) and the case study can be accessed [here](#).

1.4. 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.

Detailed in the Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook, the School's Research Misconduct Procedures indicate the expectation that "all researchers – whether staff or students – to uphold the highest ethical, legal and professional standards in their work, and, specifically, to abide by its guidelines on research conduct and research ethics". The procedure for investigation of research misconduct applies specifically to staff where postgraduate research and postgraduate and undergraduate taught students follow procedures in Central's Handbook of Academic Regulations and Guidance. The Research Misconduct guidance draws on the guidance for investigating research misconduct provided by UKRIO. It outlines the key roles and responsibilities for handling investigations, including the School's Human Resources department in maintaining the wider Employment Policies, the role of the Chair of the Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee in reporting on allegations of research misconduct and the Head of Research and Knowledge Exchange Services in managing and administering investigations.

Research Misconduct Guidance was reviewed in 2021/22, and will be reviewed in 2023/24 as a priority (see information above) to ensure it is updated in line with UKRIO's *Updated Guidance on Research Misconduct*. As a small specialist institution, our structures have more in common with Independent Research

Organisations and we are looking at ways in which we can ensure we follow UKRIO's guidance while recognising some of the challenges posed by our operating scale.

At Central, research cultures are supported and developed through various processes, including: ongoing training of research staff in relation to ethics and integrity (and wider staff training, including training on peer review), regular meetings of Research Degree Supervisors to update on guidance and training for PGRs, an Early Career Research (ECR) staff network, research events, Visiting Scholars and Fellows, Research Advising and Mentoring structures and Line Management systems and support for conference attendance for staff and PGRs. These systems ensure ethics and integrity remain live and at the heart of the research culture at Central as well as encourage externality and wider reflections on research and ethical research everyone at Central. In addition, Members of the Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee, alongside other key staff such as The Head of Knowledge Exchange, Impact Lead and the Knowledge Change and Impact manager, attend regular training sessions and networking events run by external bodies (including UKRIO, GuildHE, NCACE and ARMA) surrounding research ethics and integrity, the ethical implication of co-research with participants and the changing landscape of Knowledge Exchange and ethics. This external training happens alongside internal training delivered to all staff to support Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the School, including Anti-Semitism Training and Anti-Racism and Inclusive Practice Training.

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

<i>Other*</i>	0	0	0	0
Total:	0	0	0	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.				