

Annual Statement on Research Integrity

October 2024

The University of Stirling is strongly 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. The University of Stirling welcomes the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) and is committed to fulfilling its five commitments.

1. Upholding the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.
2. Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal, and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.
3. Supporting 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.
4. Using transparent, timely, robust, and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct when they arise.
5. Working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.

Commitment 5 of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity requires employers of researchers to provide a short annual statement describing the institution's commitment to research integrity.

This statement summarises the activities undertaken during the 2023/24 academic year at the University of Stirling to embed a culture of research integrity.

Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture

The University of Stirling has in place [policies and procedures](#) related to good research conduct and research misconduct. Oversight of research integrity activity at the University of Stirling is conducted at an institutional and operational level. At the institutional level this is led by the Deputy Principal for Research and Innovation through the University's Research Committee (URC) and the University's Research Ethics Committee (UREC). At an operational level, oversight of research integrity activity is led by the Research Integrity and Governance Manager and Team. The Research Integrity and Governance Team is responsible for managing the Institutional wide cross-Faculty ethical review process and developing and delivering training on research integrity and ethics. The team has strategic oversight of the University's research integrity and governance policies and processes and monitors compliance with relevant frameworks.

The current [University strategy](#) is guided by our institutional values: ambition, integrity and respect.

The University's electronic ethics review system, launched in November 2020, continues to be used by all staff and students undertaking research activities. During 2022/23 a thorough review of the ethics application form was undertaken. A revised version of the form was implemented through the ethics review system in March 2024.

Training and Development

Research integrity and research ethics training is available to all of the University community through the University's online learning environment. The Research Integrity and Governance Team delivers on demand ethics and research integrity training to specific groups/ Divisions of researchers/students.

Induction events for new staff, postgraduate research students and supervisors of postgraduate research students consistently contain dedicated content on research integrity, ethics and governance.

In March 2024 the University, working with UKRIO (UK Research Integrity Office), delivered "Good research practice and a healthy research culture" which was attended by a range of researchers from across the Institution. UKRIO provided the University with train the trainer materials to allow attendees to deliver their own research integrity training to research groups within their Faculties. This rollout has been successfully received.

External Memberships

To ensure that the University keeps up to date of best practice related to research integrity it is a member of a number of external bodies including:

- [UK Research Integrity Office](#)
- [Association for Research Managers and Administrators](#)
- [Understanding Animal Research](#)
- The University regularly attends meetings of the Scottish AWERB Hub
- The University is also a member of the Scottish Research Integrity Network

Progress and plans for future development

- The Research Ethics Panels continue to balance regular standing items with process development and in-depth discussion on ethics topics.
- In November 2023 the University Research Ethics Committee approved an updated version of the University's Research Ethics policy.
- In May 2024 the University ran our annual Research Culture Awards to celebrate people and groups who contribute towards a positive and vibrant research environment.
- In May 2024 the Research Integrity and Governance Manager ran a Research Integrity world café event as part of our Festival for Research. The event served as a means of consultation with our staff and postgraduate research students on a revised Framework for Research Integrity which will be developed in the coming year.
- All Faculty Research Committee meetings have Research Ethics and Integrity as a standing agenda item. Research Ethics and Integrity are discussed at every University Research Committee meeting.
- The University's REF 2021 results underline the positive impact the University's research has in tackling real world challenges. Between 2014 and 2021, the University has improved in each of the three pillars of REF assessment. The University's research environment – incorporating strategy, culture, facilities and interdisciplinary collaboration improved over the period, scoring 85% in the world leading or internationally excellent categories.
- The University of Stirling continues to be a subscriber of the UK Research Integrity Office and we have regularly engaged with their online webinars, annual conference and training. We also continue to engage with the Association for Research Managers and Administrators Special Interest Groups on research ethics and integrity.
- During 2023/24 the University of Stirling continued to be active in the Young European Research University Network (YERUN), a cluster of highly-ranked young universities in Europe that strengthens and facilitates cooperation in the areas of scientific research, academic education and services which benefit society.
- In 2023/24 a review of research ethics at the University was conducted focusing on continuous improvement of the existing process. Recommendations from the review have already started to be implemented and these will continue throughout 2024/25.
- The Research Integrity and Governance Team participated in the UK CORI research integrity indicators workshop.
- In June 2024 the University was subject to a successful Home Office Facilities Audit.
- During 2023/24 the Research Integrity and Governance Manager delivered a case study describing the University's approach to due diligence and assurance at the "Driving Research Security Cooperation Across Europe" event at the EARMA (European Association of Research Managers and Administrators) Conference 2024.
- Following the publication of a new template investigation procedure by UKRIO (UK Research Integrity Office) the Research Integrity and Governance Team has started to review the Research Misconduct Guidelines.
- Work in the coming year will include: reviewing the webpages and online guidance available to the research community.
- In the coming year the team will be focused on embedding a new induction process for new Research Ethics Panel members.

Research Misconduct

The University has [Guidelines for handling allegations of misconduct in research](#) which are administered by the Research Integrity and Governance Manager and includes clear principles and mechanisms to ensure that investigations are conducted in a transparent, timely, robust and fair manner.

Research Misconduct Investigations

The table below sets out the high-level details of investigations and findings on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, including data on the number of investigations.

	Number of formal investigations completed	Following formal investigation, number of allegations upheld (in whole or part)
	2023/24	2023/24
Fabrication	0	0
Falsification	0	0
Plagiarism	0	0
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	0	0
Misrepresentation (e.g. data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)	1	0
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	0	0
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)		
Other	0	0
Total:	1	0

The University conducted 1 formal investigation of research misconduct during this period. The allegation was not upheld.

Preparation of this Annual Statement

This Annual Statement was prepared by the University's Research Integrity and Governance Manager, Research, Innovation & Business Engagement. The Annual Statement was approved by the University's Research Ethics Committee.

Ms Rachel Beaton

Research Integrity and Governance Manager

October 2024

Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Prof Paul A. Townsend, Deputy Principal Research and Innovation
	paul.townsend@stir.ac.uk
Named member of staff who will act as first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Ms Rachel Beaton, Research Integrity & Governance Manager
	rachel.beaton@stir.ac.uk

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