

Concordat to Support Research Integrity

The University is committed to supporting the highest standards of research integrity which are reflected in the 2019 [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#).

- Commitment 1: To uphold the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.
- Commitment 2: To ensure that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal, and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.
- Commitment 3: To 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.
- Commitment 4: To use transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.
- Commitment 5: To work together to strengthen the integrity of research and to review progress regularly and openly.

The University Research and Innovation Committee is responsible for ensuring adherence to these commitments which it discharges via the University Research Ethics Sub-committee (URESC). We have a range of policies, codes and processes to support researchers in maintaining these standards, including:

- Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research
- Code of Practice for the Investigation of Research Misconduct
- Research Ethics Policy (REP) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
 - URESC Ethical Guidance for Undertaking Research with Children and Young People
 - URESC Ethical Guidance for Undertaking Research with Vulnerable Adults
 - URESC Ethical Guidance for Undertaking Research with Edge Hill University Students
- Human Tissue Quality Manual
- Research Risk Assessment Guidance
- Open Access Policy
- Research Data Management Guidelines
- Policy on Researching and Handling Sensitive Material
- Health-related findings guidance
- Guidance when applying for sponsorship

All documents relating to research governance are all available on the University's [documents webpages](#). The Research Office oversees the review and updating of these codes and policies on behalf of Research Committee. A review of the following documents is currently underway:

- Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research
- Code of Practice for the Investigation of Research Misconduct
- Code of Practice for the Research Ethics Policy
- Open Access Policy
- Health-related findings guidance.

Training opportunities for researchers are reviewed annually and a number of new sessions, particularly around ethics and the ethics process have been added to researcher development programme. Newly enrolling PhD students have training sessions which cover the codes of practice, the ethics approval process, risk assessment and working with human tissue. All those undertaking research involving human tissue are required to complete specific training.

There is an additional policy on intellectual property that is owned by Governance, Quality Assurance, and Student Casework (GQASC) and is held on the University's [documents webpages](#). This is under review currently.

Research Governance Structures

Research and Innovation Committee (URIC) is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research. It has representatives from each faculty and ex-officio and appointed members from the Research Office, URESC, Learning Services and the Governing Body. The Committee delegates the responsibility for the ethical approval process to URESC which meets three times a year. Among its ex-officio members are the chairs of each Subject Research Ethics Committee (SREC) which, in turn, oversee the ethical approval processes of research conducted in their areas. The SRECs were established in academic year 2020/21, there are five in total: Arts & Humanities, Education, Health-related, Science, and Social Sciences. Departmental review is encouraged but not mandatory. All applications must be endorsed by the head of department with post graduate researcher (PGR) applications requiring the endorsement of the supervisor before the head of department. Where a SREC does not feel able to grant ethical approval, it may ask URESC to review the application. It is the nature of the project not the applicant's department that determines which research ethics committee (REC) reviews the project.

In addition to the ethics committees, there is a Human Tissue Management Sub-committee (HTMSC), which has oversight of the work carried out under a Research licence issued by the Human Tissue Authority. All projects carried out under the licence must receive ethical approval from the Science Subject Research Ethics Committee (SSREC) or Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC). HREC should review and approve if the project also needs approval from the Health Research Authority. The 'Designated Individual' under the terms of the HTA licence is an ex-officio member of HTMSC, URESC and SSREC.

All governance policies are reviewed regularly and changes are consulted on with relevant stakeholders before being approved by an appropriate Committee. Procedures and pathways for the development and approval of governance documents are owned by Governance, Quality Assurance, and Student Casework (GQASC).

The Director of the Research Office is the named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity and ensure that this information is kept up to date and publicly available on the institution's website. The secretary to URESC

is a named staff member who acts as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity, and contact details are publicly available on our website.

Activities and developments in 2023-24

(The relevant Concordat commitment is indicated in parenthesis.)

The five Subject Research Ethics Committees were launched in November 2020 and their activity is monitored via URESC, via regular reports and shared membership (representative from at least two other SRECs). This is allowing best practice to be shared, and it ensures that procedures and decision making is consistent across the University. All RECs have lay representation, URESC appointed no new lay members during 23/24, having appointed two new lay members in the previous year. URESC also has positions for external representatives from other research organisation to provide a perspective on our procedures and to support the exchange of best practice across the sector.

The online ethics system (Haplo) was launched in November 2020, which also acts as a register for all research projects. Additional policy and guidance documents were created and the central team based in the Research Office is developing further guidance. (#1; #2; #3; #5). The contract ends in 2024 and, following an assessment of options, a decision to renew the contract until 2028 has been made. During this time, we expect to migrate to a standardised product.

Training sessions on the GDPR and research are now delivered online. In order to access NHS related data, the University is required to undertake an NHS Data Security Protection Toolkit. The key area was ensuring that all staff had recently undertaken GDPR and data management training and stricter protocols regarding the storage of data. The Health Research Institute (where all NHS data related research is undertaken) renewed its DSTP registration for the twelve months to 30 June 2025 and is now compliant (#1, #2, #3, #5)

Last year, the Human Tissue Authority conducted a periodic audit of the institution's HTA processes. The report has now been received and work to address the issues identified has been completed.

Research misconduct

There have been no cases of research misconduct in relation to PGR matters and no cases relating to an academic member of staff.

Chris Hughes

Director, Research Office October 2024