

Annual statement on research integrity for 2023/2024

University of the Highlands and Islands

This statement utilises the standard national template for research integrity as developed by the UK Research Integrity Office in conjunction with the Research Integrity Concordat Signatories Group.

Section 1: Key contact information

1A. Name of organisation	University of the Highlands and Islands
1B. Type of organisation:	University
1C. Date statement approved by governing body	12 December 2024
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	Research Policy and Ethics - Research Integrity (uhi.ac.uk)
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Professor Derek McGhee, Dean of Research and Innovation
	Email address: derek.mcghee@uhi.ac.uk
1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Name: Professor Derek McGhee
	Email address: derek.mcghee@uhi.ac.uk

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

How the organisation maintains high standards of research integrity and promotes positive research culture. It includes 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.

Policies and systems

The University's Research Resources SharePoint page hosts the undernoted policies:

Research specific frameworks and policies

- UHI Research, Impact and KE Strategy 2022-2025
- Research Values Framework
- Postgraduate Research Student Code of Practice
- Ethics framework
- Intellectual Property Policy (staff and students)
- Due Diligence Policy and Process
- Researcher Development Concordat
- REF Code of Practice
- Using research metrics responsibly - policy and guide
- Research Publishing – Open Access Policy 2022
- Research Data Management policy
- Fees policy
- Lay member information

Wider university policies

- Data Protection, including GDPR
- Turnitin Policy and Guidance
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusiveness

- Health and safety policies
- Anti-bribery policy
- Values Framework

Further university policies (Freedom of Information, Academic Standards, Risk Management, Travel and Subsistence, adverse events) are available on the University governance webpage.

The University's Research Ethics webpage hosts the undernoted documents:

- Adverse Events Policy
- Animal and Environmental Research
- Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986
- Arts and Humanities Business Ethics Publications
- British Psychological Society Internet Mediated Research Guidelines document
- Consent Form checklist
- Consent form template
- Data Protection Information
- Data protection policy
- ESRC Points for Planning Research
- Ethics PIS template-personal data
- Faculty Information re HRA-IRAS-Student Research
- Food standards agency
- General Data Protection Regulation presentation
- General Ethics Publications and Articles
- Getting informed consent for user research
- Guidance on researching emotionally sensitive subjects
- Guidance on the operation of ASPA
- ICT and library support for research
- Internet Mediated Research Guidelines
- MRC ethics series Human Tissue and Biological Samples for Use in Online application for ethical approval
- Online Survey Guidance 2022
- Participant information sheet checklist
- Participant information sheet template-no personal data
- Professional Associations and Codes of Practice
- Research data management
- Research email template
- Research Governance and Integrity Framework
- Research: Operational and Ethical Guidelines

- Research with potentially vulnerable people
- Risk assessment template
- Safeguarding in International Development Research: Evidence Review
- Science Health Engineering Ethics Publications
- The Research Integrity Concordat
- The University Research Ethics Framework
- University student research in NHS Scotland
- UHI core technologies for research students
- UK Research Integrity Office resources
- Video guidance (with Clive Fox) on completing an application for ethical approval including research with animals and / or the environment

The Graduate School's Public (staff) access SharePoint pages host the undernoted document:

- Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees

Communications and engagement

- The University produces quarterly research newsletters (University Research Update) to inform their research community about opportunities for training, funding applications, research activity, calls for collaboration, publications, events, resources, job vacancies, lectures and grants.
- The University hosts an active Yammer Page entitled 'Research Community' to which regular posts are added to keep the University's research community informed about all relevant research news, opportunities and regulations.
- The Graduate School offer training to support good practice and regulatory knowledge relating to research student supervision.
- The Graduate School hosts a VC drop-in twice yearly (one in each semester) for postgraduate research students, to provide updates (UHI and sector-wide) and answer any general queries that arise. Notes from the drop ins are circulated to all research students and made available on their Postgraduate research intranet area, Brightspace.
- Announcements are made on the Postgraduate research Brightspace area, to notify research students of e.g., external training, funding or career opportunities.

Culture, development and leadership

- The University joined a number of Scottish universities to form the Scottish hub of The British Academy Early Career Researcher Network.
- **Monitoring and reporting**
The research ethics officer reported to each REC meeting on applications for ethical approval.
- The Graduate School's training sessions are reviewed continually, with consideration given to any new sessions required, based on feedback, direct requests and through Graduate School Committee work when reviewing progress monitoring reports.
- **Mentoring**
The University's mentoring scheme, which included bespoke strands for research and scholarship, is now in its fifth year of operation.
- **Training**
The research ethics officer gave several training sessions on the application process for research ethics; to the new PGR students, new AWEC members, new REC members, new Associate Deans, the new Dean, student groups, staff and supervisors. These sessions are promoted through the University's training calendar and promoted through University Research Update, Yammer and the Research Ethics SharePoint page as well as being promoted through the Associate Deans.
- AWEC members were given Nagoya Protocol training by a colleague in SAMS.
- The research ethics officer completed the University of Edinburgh's ScotPIL module in ethics and legislation.
- Completion of the Ethics Reflection and Practice training module continues to be a mandatory requirement for all PGR students and staff submitting an application for ethical approval and for all supervisors, line managers and research directors who endorse such applications. It is also a requirement that all members of REC and REC sub committees complete the module.
Compliance continues to increase year on year.
- The development of transferable, employment-related and generic research skills is an important part of postgraduate research training. The University's research student training is aligned with the Vita Researcher Development Framework and supports the development of knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers. There is access to training and events run by the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities, the Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences and the Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland, and through the University of East Anglia's "live-taught" online format, delivering social science-focused training in a virtual classroom.
- Research students and their supervisors are encouraged to complete an annual Training Needs Analysis, and an online tool is available to do this within PGR Manager as part of their annual progress review.

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

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, noted are 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.

- A. UHI's Researcher Training and Development Programme has been launched in 2022/23. This programme offers the university's research community a wide range of training opportunities.
- B. Face-to-face inductions for Postgraduate Researchers take place twice yearly in Inverness and include as a standing item a session regarding research ethics. Students are strongly encouraged to attend in person, and funding is available for them to cover a level of travel and accommodation costs. Those unable to attend in person can attend by VC.
- C. Planning for the next UHI Staff/Student Research Conference, which will be hosted at Inverness College UHI in January 2025, is in its final stages.
- D. Regular communications are issued throughout comms team, University Research Update and Yammer to the research community to encourage mentoring partnerships.
- E. Several research ethics presentations were given to various groups, both Postgraduate and Academic Researchers.
- F. Several members of the Animal Welfare Environment Committee completed the University of Edinburgh's Ethics and National Legislation online module.
- G. The Research Ethics Officer continues to work closely with The University's Health Research Governance Officer to ensure good practice.
- H. The online application for ethical approval was further amended to ensure swift approval of applications for which the research is entirely text based and to make clearer some elements that were being captured for animal and environment research.
- I. We continue to use the members' area in SharePoint for Animal Welfare Environment Committee to host national guidelines and information of interest around animal and environment research.
- J. The Chair to the AWEC stepped down and prior to that they and the committee clerk worked closely with the new Vice Chair to mentor them into the role of Chair. Three new AWEC members were welcomed to replace three members who stepped down. A new lay member was recruited to the REC. We welcomed three new members to the REC to replace three members who stepped down. The terms of reference for

the Health Sub Committee were re-written to accommodate the departure of 50% of its membership.

- K. We continued to regularly monitor and update the Research Ethics Framework to reflect changes to both processes and responsible officers because of staff changes.
- L. The new Dean for Research and Innovation became the Vice Chair of RDC.
- M. The Dean for Research and innovation has become a member of the Scottish Research Integrity Network.
- The Research Office and the Graduate School Office have merged to become the Research and Graduate School Hub, led by the new Dean for Research and innovation.
- A new Graduate School Manager has been appointed, and onboarding is underway.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

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. Notes any issues that have hindered progress, e.g. resourcing or other issues.

Reflections on Progress

As we go through the university's restructure it has had a direct impact of the membership of our REC, AWEC and HSC from which we have lost a total of 11 Members, three of whom served on two committees. This has placed an increased burden on those members who remain as they take on more applications for review.

The Research Officer has collaborated with the Chairs of RDC, AWEC and HSC to replenish the membership of these committees.

Following feedback at a training session the application for ethical approval was updated to ensure that research that was entirely text based was granted ethical approval with 10 business days of an application being endorsed. Additionally, the application was updated to be more user-friendly given feedback received from colleagues in SAMS.

The AWEC, in collaboration with The University of Crete, The University of Nantes and Radboud University developed a memorandum of understanding in respect of research ethics for the ACES dissertation students to ensure the highest ethical standards in their collaborative research.

The AWEC launched their new training video to accompany the online application for ethical approval at the PGR student conference in Orkney in January.

The Clerk and Chair of the AWEC worked closely with Associate Dean Audrey Decou and prepared her to take over the role of Chair to the AWEC in June.

The Terms of Reference for the REC were amended to change the quorum and include ex officio members.

The REC recruited an additional lay member.

The Ethics Approval System (Ethics Monitor) set up for UHI by HAPLO has been taken over by Cayuse.

We are working with procurement to secure a new contract with Cayuse whilst at the same time exploring alternative options through different suppliers as Cayuse develop an amended standardised version of Ethics Monitor. The options have been presented to the Deputy Principal Research and Education, for consideration. As a consequence, UHI have decided to trial the standardised Cayuse version, when it becomes available.

Phase one of the HAPLO PGR Manager system (which was also taken over by Cayuse) was launched on 1st November 2021, delivering online workflows for key processes relating to student progress monitoring and programme management. Although phase two which was to include thesis submission and examination processes has been requested, these new processes will be further delayed indefinitely as Cayuse is also attempting to shift its PGR Manager system into a standardized format for all its customers. As above, UHI will trial the trial the standardised Cayuse version, when it becomes available.

The Graduate School's annual report forms part of the University's evidence in assuring internal and external stakeholders of the quality of postgraduate research provision across the University of the Highlands and Islands and provides an opportunity to reflect on our current provision and consider enhancements for the following year. The report is submitted to the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and forms the basis of discussion during the University's quality monitoring dialogue process, which the Graduate School attends biennially.

As part of the Graduate School's on-going process of continuous enhancement, a yearly review of the Postgraduate Research Degree Code of Practice and Research Degree Regulations, along with associated documents/resources, is undertaken. Any significant changes or updates are undertaken in consultation with relevant colleagues and identified within the annual report.

Plans for future developments

The new Dean for Research and Innovation will work closely with the Research Data Officer to:

- Provide training and support for Research Integrity Officers in each academic partner to take greater responsibility for administering and reporting on research misconduct in their academic partner, including encouraging greater uptake and use of available Research Integrity and Research Misconduct reporting opportunities on SharePoint, that will provide the data for populating table 3B.

The new Dean for Research and Innovation will work with the Vice Principal (Research and innovation) and the Deputy Principal (Education and Research) to:

- Incrementally implement best practice gleaned from interacting with other Scottish Research Integrity Network HEIs at their symposia and Teams site.
- Establish consistency across Academic Partner's Research and Knowledge Exchange committees to ensure that Research Integrity becomes a standing agenda item reported on by Research Integrity Officers.
- To include the Annual Research Integrity Statement as an item for note at UHI's RKEC in the Autumn, prior to be submitted to UHI Court for approval.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

- *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.*

The University has in place several mechanisms to ensure that processes for dealing with research misconduct are transparent, robust and fair.

Supervisors and researchers are reminded of the need to secure ethical approval prior to any research commencing and the fact that approval cannot be granted retrospectively is highlighted. Applications received from students after the research for which they are being submitted are noted.

In terms of dealing with issues of staff academic misconduct in relation to research, there are two broad routes. By way of context, the University consists of several individual academic partners that are bound together constitutionally and financially to form the University of the Highlands and Islands. One partner (SAMS UHI) has a specific policy related to investigating concerns about the conduct of research and subsequent arrangements for progressing any incidences where research misconduct is proven. For other partners any cases relating to staff research misconduct are aligned with generic staff discipline arrangements, including investigations.

The University has continued to strengthen its arrangements relating to alleged misconduct involving research students and has specifically developed a procedure for investigating allegations of academic misconduct – bespoke to research students – including appropriate penalties. These procedures and penalties have been brought in line with the existing academic misconduct processes for taught students and are now integrated within the Academic Regulations, ‘Section 19 academic misconduct policy and procedure.’ The Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees includes statements regarding non-academic and academic misconduct, with links provided to relevant policies. Links and references are made to relevant University-wide policies, i.e. Promoting a Positive Learning Environment (PPLC), the Student Code of Conduct and the Academic Regulations and Procedures.

The concordat refers to the need for institutions to have “clear, well-articulated and confidential mechanisms for reporting allegations of research misconduct” (UUK, 2019, p.15). The University has a public interest and disclosure policy and procedure and the scope for this includes all activities conducted under The University’s name, which would include contracted research where the contract is with The University, and also the activities of all research students registered with The University. In relation to students, there is also a confidential students complaints procedure which provides an opportunity for students to raise formal complaints relating to their academic experience in The University. In addition, academic partners also have whistleblowing policies.

Although these mechanisms have served UHI well in the past, as noted in 2.C, above, the new Dean for Research and Innovation believes that there is room for improvement in UHI’s current approaches to addressing and reporting on research misconduct. As such he will incrementally implement the plans outlined in 2. C, above, starting in 2024-25, to encourage greater consistency on the reporting of research misconduct across academic partners through training the Research Integrity Officers in each academic partner to use available reporting mechanisms on SharePoint and to regularly report on Research Misconduct through standing Research Integrity agenda items in Academic Partner’s RKECs.

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

The table details 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 included.

The procedure includes an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. Any recorded allegations are included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column.

There were no formal investigations relating to alleged research misconduct at The University of the Highlands the academic year 2023-24

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 (e.g., 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
<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.**