

Annual Research Integrity Statement

2019-20

(P2021-217)



INTRODUCTION

This is the 5th Annual Statement of Research Integrity for Swansea University, covering the academic period of 2019/20.

Swansea University is a signatory to the **Concordat to Support Research Integrity**. To endorse and comply with the 5 principles set out in the Concordat, the University, in 2015, revised its Governance structures, policies and processes for Research Integrity. The University expects all its staff (including honorary staff), students, visitors and collaborators to undertake research, in accordance to the policies and principles set out in the Swansea University Research Integrity Policy Framework.

<https://www.swansea.ac.uk/media/P1415-956-Research-Integrity---Policy-Framework-updated-Jan-2020.pdf>

In 2019, the Concordat to Support Research Integrity was updated substantially. The revised concordat represents a renewed ambition to further strengthen the research culture of the UK Higher Education sector, and expected the employers of researchers to provide a publicly available annual statement on Research Integrity summarising the Institutions compliance to the 5 commitments.

This annual report provides a short summary of all the research integrity activities undertaken in 2019-20 by Swansea University to demonstrate its commitment to the 5 principles of the Concordat.

COMMITMENT 1: We are committed to upholding the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research

➤ **Training & Development:**

Research Integrity Online Training: The University renewed its license with the Oxford University Press (Epigeum) Research Integrity online training for a further period of 3 years. This **mandatory** training comprising of 5 core modules, is available to all Staff and Postgraduate students through the University Teaching & Learning portal (CANVAS).

The training covers topics in the areas of Good Research Conduct, Irresponsible Research Practice, Planning, Managing and Recording of research, and Scholarly publications. Seven further subject specific supplementary modules are also available to staff who wish to extend their knowledge of research integrity. Staff applying for funding and undertaking research with the NHS, are required to complete the training prior to receiving research funding or sponsorship.

The training has been promoted regularly through targeted all staff emails, by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & Innovation) & Heads of Colleges/Schools. Data on staff research integrity training has been uploaded into the staff Professional Development portal and discussed with line managers during their annual review. Staff training data has also been regularly discussed at the University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee meetings and circulated to Heads of Colleges/Schools for information.

Postgraduate Research students have been undertaking the research integrity training and are expected to complete all of the 12 mandatory modules during their first year of studies and prior to ethical review being granted and candidature confirmed.

Safeguarding Online Training: The site license for the online training package on ‘Safeguarding in Higher Education’ was renewed for a further year (2019/20). This training provides researchers working with children and vulnerable adults useful information and guidance on regulatory requirements and it is a **mandatory** training that has to be completed prior to an ethical approval being granted for a project.

Face to face/In person training: Delivered through the Staff Development & Training Services (DTS), and the Research Engagement & Innovations Services (REIS), is a further package of training on Research with Human Tissue, Clinical Trials, Research Governance, Research Ethics & Integrity is available for staff and students.

Seminars series on Research Integrity: The Research Institute of Ethics & Law (RIEL) delivered throughout the year, their seminar series covering various topics of research integrity, inviting participation from prominent Speakers and experienced researchers from UK and abroad.

UKRIO Webinar Series and Training for Research Ethics Committee members: Members of the University and College Research Ethics Committees attended a training session (via zoom). provided by Mr David Carpenter from the UK Research Integrity Office. Communication of monthly UKRIO Webinars were regularly distributed to members. Many of these webinars were well attended by staff who found them useful.

COMMITMENT 2: We are committed to ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.

➤ **Policies, Processes & Guidance:**

Research Integrity Policy Framework was reviewed to reflect changes in legislation, regulatory requirements and research practices. The University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee, approved the following new policies:

- P1617-1012: Policy on Risk Assessment of Research Projects
- Policy on Service Evaluation.
- P1920- 793: Policy on Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct (Revision; Version 2) (Approved also by Senate and the Committee for Research & Innovation Strategy)
- Procedure for Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct (Revision; Version 2) (Approved also by the Committee for Research & Innovation Strategy)

➤ **Online Ethical Review Systems:**

The College of Human & Health Sciences decided to extend their license with Infonetica; an online ethics review management system. This process would allow research applications for the entire College to be assessed online, thus reducing the burden on staff time to process applications, and would provide better reporting. In 2017, Infonetica had been piloted in the Department of Psychology who had found the system useful for reviewing and reporting on its large number of applications.

The College of Arts & Humanities successfully adopted the in-house, online, ethics review system developed by the College of Science.

The University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee discussed the benefits of an online ethics application review system and members agreed that a single system for the University would provide better data and help monitor the risks of research. The Academic Dean discussed this aspect with the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & Innovation) and the Chief Digital Officer for the University with an aim to make progress on the matter in the next academic year.

➤ **Research Integrity webpages:**

During 2019/20, the University research integrity web pages were kept up to date with information on new policies, training and research news. The research governance and Human Tissue segments of the webpages were updated with standard operating procedures and flowcharts.

As per the requirements of the Concordat, the landing page for research integrity was populated with names of Senior staff who oversaw research integrity within the University, and also with the name of staff to act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity.

The University continued to subscribe to the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and were assisted by UKRIO to clarify process and policy issues.

COMMITMENT 3: We are committed to 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.

➤ **Governance structures:**

University Research Ethics and Governance sub-committee

The University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee (UREGSC) continued to meet during the year providing strategic oversight to a number of University policies and processes, and supporting, advising, guiding College/Schools. Progress reports to the committee were submitted by the College/School Research Ethics & Governance committees, highlighting the number of applications received and their risk status. The University Committee also received reports from and other sub committees like Animal Research (AWERB), Clinical Trials (Swansea Trials Unit), Human Tissue governance (HTA) and the Research Institute of Ethics & Law (RIEL). Updates from Professional services departments particularly in relation to 'Prevent' Compliance, Security sensitive research, GDPR and Research, Research Data Management, Open access, Safeguarding & working with Children & Vulnerable Adults & Business Continuity and Resilience were also provided to the committee.

College Research Ethics and Governance Committees

All Colleges/Schools continued to have functioning Research Ethics & Governance committees which met regularly. The Chairs of College/School committees attended and provided regular reports to the University Committee. Wherever required additional sub-committees continued to support the College/School Research Ethics committees.

Research Governance & Sponsorship of research:

The Research Governance and Sponsorship processes were further established with standard operating procedures and protocols. The Academic Dean and the Research Governance Officer attended monthly meetings of the Joint Scientific Review Committee (JSRC). Staff were provided with training on Human Tissue and Research Governance protocols and procedures. A renewed Memorandum of Understanding is being drafted between Swansea University, Swansea Trials Unit and the local Swansea Bay University Health Board. A paper was put forward to Senior Management Team regarding the risks of non compliance due to lack of monitoring the areas of Human Tissue and current non CTIMP projects. It was agreed that funds would be secured for the recruitment of a Quality Assurance Officer to monitor and audit research projects.

COMMITMENT 4: We are committed to using transparent, timely, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct when they arise.

➤ **Research Misconduct:**

The University Policy on Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct was revised and approved by the University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee, the Committee for Research & Innovation

Strategy (CRIS) and by Senate at its June 2020 meeting. The revised Procedure for Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct was approved by the University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee, the Committee for Research & Innovation Strategy (CRIS). The revision took into account new guidance issued by UK Research Integrity Office, UKRI and the Russell Group Statement of Co-operation with respect to cross institutional research misconduct allegations and investigations.

The 'Named Contact' for receiving allegations of Research Misconduct was changed from the Chief Operating Officer/Registrar to the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & Innovation). Details of the 'named contact' along with a dedicated email address was advertised on the University webpages and staff made aware. The Research Integrity Manager was designated as the third party to act as confidential liaison for any person wishing to raise concerns about the integrity of research being conducted under their auspices.

All research misconduct screening and investigations were undertaken in accordance with the University Policy and the investigation panels consisted of an external member from another UK Higher Education.

In 2019/20, the University received the following allegations under the University's Research Misconduct procedures:

Year	Allegation	Nature of alleged misconduct	Outcome
2019	1	Authorship dispute & Plagiarism (investigation continuing from Dec 2018)	Upheld in Part with Sanctions. (The panel concluded that on the balance of probabilities, the allegation of research misconduct were ' upheld in part '. The evidence supported deviation from commonly accepted practices in research, and misrepresentation of involvement including denial of authorship where an author had made a significant contribution (improper authorship).
2019	2	Breach of Duty of Care and Authorship dispute	No prima facie evidence of research misconduct that merited any further investigation.
2020	1	Fabrication and Falsification of Data	Screening Panel established. Prima Facie evidence. Investigation ongoing.
2020	2	Authorship dispute (Cross Institutional)	Resolved through Mediation

2020	3	Plagiarism (Cross Institutional)	Screening stage
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COMMITMENT 5 : We are committed to working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.

Challenges for 2020/21:

- **Training**

The Epigeum Research Integrity Training (Version 2) has been introduced and can be accessed by staff and students via the new Canvas E- learning Portal. A challenge for the next academic year would be to ensure that staff uptake of the training is maintained and timely and appropriate reports of staff training are made available to both the staff and the Senior Management Teams. The possibility of extending the training to Postgraduate Taught Master’s and Final year Undergraduates is being explored through the Learning & Teaching Committee. This process would ensure that we train better researchers for the future who understand how to undertake research with Integrity.

- **Standardising ethics applications & introducing an online system of ethical review**

A Task & Finish group has been set up to work towards standardising all ethics application forms (Paper versions and online forms) to include questions that assess appropriately, the levels of risks in research. The aim is to take on board the recommendations of the joint review report from the UK Research Integrity Office and ARMA. An expectation would be for the application forms to have a checklist that will determine the level of risk. The monitoring and audit of the research can then be carried out in relation to the risk.

Having an effective online system for ethical review of all research applications will assist with the above process and reduce the administrative workload on staff. An online system would provide transparency and easier reporting for compliance.

- **Engagement and raising awareness of research integrity**

The past few years has seen a massive drive in relation to implementing and supporting the University’s commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. As a result, the University is better placed, than it has ever been, in relation to policies, processes, protocols, training, and information for staff and students. There is however still, a lot to be done to ensure a ‘cultural shift’ to ‘raise awareness’ amongst researchers, of the benefits of undertaking research with integrity. The focus of research integrity activities in the forthcoming year would be further training and conducting collaborative activities with other Institutions within the University like RIEL and the Morgan Institute of Advanced Studies.

- **Raising awareness about reporting cases of Research Misconduct**

The commitments of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity has been the driver which has required the University to revisit its policy and procedures in relation to reporting allegations of research misconduct. The University research integrity webpage now has a dedicated email address and a contact for reporting such allegations. The funder requirements of reporting instances of breach in relation to Safeguarding, statistics on Bullying & Harassment and Conflict of Interest means that a joined up approach for reporting would have to be established, process further revised and staff informed. These changes would bring in transparency in research processes and a better research environment for future researchers.

- **Research Governance & Sponsorship of research:**

Further establishment of appropriate research governance & sponsorship processes and protocols, Clinical research webpages with policies, processes, and flowcharts and information for staff, appropriate training etc. would be the ongoing activities for research governance. Setting up standard operating procedures for monitoring and audit of projects and prevention of adverse effects is high on the list of priorities for this area for 2020-21. Staff resources would be needed to enable the above to occur.

Further information:

This statement has been prepared by the Research Integrity Manager and approved at the October 2020 meetings of the University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee (UREGSC) and the November 2020 meeting of the Committee for Research & Innovation Strategy (CRIS).

For any queries and information on research integrity matters, please contact researchintegrity@swansea.ac.uk

End of Report