



Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2023-24 University Research Integrity Committee

Background

The revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity was published in October 2019 and is a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and governance. The Concordat's fifth commitment requires a Research Integrity Annual Statement that:

1. Provides a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues;
2. Provides assurances that the processes they have in place for dealing allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation;
3. Provides a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken.

Section 1: Key contact information

1A. Name of organisation	Edinburgh Napier University
1B. Type of organisation	Higher Education Institution
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	29/10/2024
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	Research Integrity
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Dr Rory MacLean
	Email address: r.maclea@napier.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: Grainne Barkess
	Email address: G.Barkess@napier.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

ENU operates a Code of Practice on Research Integrity, which defines the research principles and practices to which all students and staff at the University must adhere; this was last updated in April 2022.

ENU is committed to providing an environment that recognises and supports research excellence. Research should be conducted to the highest levels of integrity, including appropriate research design and frameworks, to ensure that findings are robust and defensible. Researchers should also adhere to the highest level of research ethics, in line with requirements set out by national and international regulatory bodies.

All staff and students should be familiar with the Universities Policies and procedures that govern the research process.

The University Research Integrity Committee oversees development of university-wide practices and policies on research integrity matters, and includes representation from all academic schools, as well as from other University departments, including the Department for Learning & Teaching Enhancement; Health & Safety; Information Services; and Research, Innovation & Enterprise; and external representation. The University Research Integrity Committee met two times in the academic year 2023/24: 16 January 2024 and 23 April 2024, and reports to the University Research & Innovation Committee.

Each School has its own Research Integrity Committee and Convenor to deal with research integrity matters at local level, primarily the approval of ethics applications; the Department for Learning & Teaching Enhancement also has a committee to review pedagogy research ethics applications. The work of each school committee is reported to the University Research Integrity Committee, including information on the number of applications submitted in total, as well as numbers approved, rejected, or referred, and any issues/areas for further discussion at university level. If a school committee has an application which is deemed to be very high risk, or for which a decision cannot be made (e.g., due to lack of expertise), this can be escalated to the University Research Integrity Committee for consideration.

Staff and postgraduate research students submit ethics applications via the online Worktribe system, which are then reviewed by members of the appropriate research integrity committee. Undergraduate and taught postgraduate student ethics applications are usually dealt with at a local, programme level, with outcomes being reported to the relevant school research integrity committee.



The University offers training in research integrity via an in-house online training module, as well as ad hoc training sessions offered throughout the year. Postgraduate research students have a dedicated programme of Researcher Development training events, which includes sessions on research integrity matters.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

Some of the main developments related to research integrity over academic year 2023-24 include:

Integrating DMPs into Worktribe

During 23/24 Worktribe, our Research Data Management system, was upgraded allowing more customisation of the ethical approval process. The committee agreed that DMP should be integrated into the ethical module in WT to remove duplication between processes and to connect DMPs to wider research project data. The functionality became available in late AY23/24 with full roll out during AY24/25.

Introduction of OneTrust

The Governance team introduced a new system called OneTrust which has streamlined the process for reviewing and approving Data Protection documentation.

Training

As a member of UKRIO we offered research students and staff access to UKRIO's pilot of online training in ethics and research integrity. In addition, we have now integrated information about UKRIO webinars into the researcher development programme available to staff and students allowing us to cover topics such as AI in Research Integrity, Social Media and Research, Science communications, and Trusted Research.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

This year saw a number of new convenors take over leadership of school-level research integrity committees. The convenors will continue to be supported in their development in their roles and to ensure consistency in approach across the University. At the end of the academic year, Dr Rory MacLean stood down as convenor of the committee and Dr Coral Hanson, currently SHSC Research Integrity Convenor, will take on the University Research Integrity Convenorship for the 24/25 academic year.

Workload continues to be a major issue in the timely review of ethics applications. There is also an inconsistent approach across the University to workload allocation for convenors of school-level research integrity committees; this has been raised at the University Research & Innovation Committee.



Areas for future development in the coming academic year include the rollout of DMP functionality within Worktribe as well as customisation of ethical question sets in Worktribe. The changes to Worktribe workflows will also enhance our approach to audit/reviews of ethical applications during the lifecycle of projects. AI in research will continue to be an emerging topic and in collaboration with the new Doctoral College further support will be provided to students and staff.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

The University Code of Practice on Research Integrity (last approved 2022) outlines the policies and processes related to research misconduct, including a clear statement that researchers should report any suspected research misconduct to the appropriate authorities.

The University has a Research Misconduct Policy and Investigation Procedure (last approved 2021), which provides further detail on how claims of research misconduct are handled. Any allegations of research misconduct go through a preliminary pre-screening process to determine if the claim has substance and/or cannot be discounted entirely. If this is the case, a screening panel is convened, who will conduct a thorough investigation. Depending on the outcome of the screening panel's investigation, the case may subsequently be referred to the appropriate University committee (e.g., University Academic Conduct Committee) or HR.

Other University policies relevant to research misconduct include the University Research Safeguarding Framework, the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistle-blowing) Policy, and the Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure (Preventing bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation).

The University also offers training on research misconduct issues via its Moodle Research Integrity training course, available to all staff and research degree students.

There was a single case of research misconduct reported in academic year 2023-24 which was upheld. Key lessons learned from this case were to increase information and support for students and supervisors regarding plagiarism. A new section on research integrity (including discussion of plagiarism) is now part of all supervisor training.



3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken				
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				
Falsification				
Plagiarism	1	1	0	1
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	1	0	0	0
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)				
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)				
<i>Other*</i>				
Total:	2	1	0	1