

Edinburgh Napier University

Research & Innovation Committee

**Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2024-25
University Research Integrity Committee**

Executive Summary:

This statement provides a summary of actions and activities undertaken to support and strengthen understanding of research integrity issues at Edinburgh Napier University in the 2024-25 academic year. It is a requirement of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

1. Purpose and Intended Outcome

Prior to publication, the statement must be reviewed and approved by the Research Innovation Committee.

2. Key Themes

- a) Description of current systems and culture
- b) Changes and Developments during the review period
- c) Reflections on progress and plans for future developments
- d) Addressing research misconduct and research misconduct cases

3. Highlights for Discussion

- a) Please note the updating of the research misconduct policy (this is underway), which will be ready for discussion at the next meeting and will include guidance on questionable research practices
- b) There is no current standard guidance around allocation of time for school research integrity committee convenors

4. Questions for Committee Consideration

- a) What is an appropriate time allocation for school research integrity committee convenors? Convenors recognise that workload is not even across schools but have suggested that the role should be allocated ½ day a week in all schools and then extra by negotiation at school level as appropriate.

5. Action Requested from the Committee

The committee is asked to approve the statement and highlight any suggested amendments for this approval if necessary.

6. Time Sensitivity and Deadlines



This is not time critical, but is normally published at the beginning of the academic year

C Hanson

**Senior Research Fellow and Convenor of the University Research Integrity
Committee**

08/09/2025



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Background

The refreshed Concordat to Support Research Integrity was published in April 2025 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 with 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

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|--|---|
| 1A. Name of organisation | Edinburgh Napier University |
| 1B. Type of organisation | Higher Education Institution |
| 1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY) | 17 th September 2025 via Research Innovation Committee |
| 1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable) | <u>Research Integrity</u> |
| 1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity | Name: Dr Coral Hanson |
| | Email address: <u>c.hanson@napier.ac.uk</u> |
| 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: <u>G.Barkess@napier.ac.uk</u> |



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 three times in the academic year 2024/25: 1 October 2024, 14 January 2025 and 29 April 2025, 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 2024-25 include:

Integrating DMPs into Worktribe

The integration of data management plans (DMPs) into Worktribe, our Research Data Management system, was piloted during 2023-24 and fully implemented during 2024-25. DMPs are now created as part of the Worktribe ethics application process and are reviewed by the research data management team at the same time as the ethics application, making a more streamlined process for researchers and this has reduced the time from initial application to ethics opinion.

Integrating OneTrust recording of data protection documentation onto Worktribe

The Governance team introduced a new online system called OneTrust during 2023-24, which has streamlined the process for reviewing and approving Data Protection documentation. This was fully implemented during 2024-25 but still requires researchers to use two systems (OneTrust and Worktribe). The PDF approval document from OneTrust is added to the DMP in Worktribe so that all documentation for an ethics application is stored in the same place. The committee and governance team are exploring whether it is possible to streamline this further.

Development of end of study reporting in Worktribe

Researchers are required to mark studies as completed in Worktribe once they are finished. However, there is no report within the system to allow an audit of activities undertaken (e.g., numbers recruited compared to target recruitment, study challenges). An end of study report has been created within Worktribe that will automatically be sent to a researcher at the end date of their ethics opinion. This has been reviewed by the Committee and will be piloted in the 2025/26 academic year.

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 one new convenor take over leadership of a school-level research integrity committee. The convenors will continue to be supported in their development in their roles and to ensure consistency in approach across the University. Dr Coral Hanson has completed her first year as convenor of the University Research Integrity Committee and will continue in this role for the 25/26 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. Convenors recognise that workload is not even across schools but have suggested that the role should be allocated $\frac{1}{2}$ day a week in all schools and then extra by negotiation at school level as appropriate. This will be tabled at the University Research & Innovation Committee for discussion during the 2025/26 academic year.

Areas for future development in the coming academic year include the piloting and roll out of end of study reports. This will enhance our approach to audit of research activity. We will also focus on developing a better understanding of the time taken for reviews, and reasons for any difference between schools or types of application. AI in research continues to be an emerging topic and in collaboration with the 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. This procedure is under review and will be updated in light of the refreshed Concordat to Support Research Integrity and this work will be completed before the end of 2025. The updated procedure will include the addition of a section on questionable research practices.

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. We also use and signpost to UKRIO resources on research misconduct.

The university completed the investigation of one allegation of research misconduct reported in academic year 2024- 25. In one case, the allegation was about plagiarism in published work. An investigation was initiated, however the student involved chose to withdraw from studies before the investigation was concluded.



| 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 | | | | |
| 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: | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |