

Research Integrity Annual Statement 2021-22

Introduction

The University is committed to meeting the Commitments of the Universities UK *Concordat to support Research Integrity*. As part of that commitment, the PVC Research provides an annual report on research integrity to the University Court which includes:

- a summary of key activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and the application of research integrity issues;
- a statement on how the institution creates and embeds an environment of research integrity;
- a summary of current processes for the investigation of allegations of research misconduct and a statement to provide assurance that the processes the institution has in place are transparent, timely, robust, fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation;
- a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken and a statement on lessons learned from any investigations;
- Governance structures relevant to the development and application of research integrity policy and guidance.

Key Activities in 2021-22

The following summary outlines actions and activity undertaken to support research integrity during session 2021-22:

- Following the review of the terms of reference and composition of the Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee (REIS) in 2020-21, the reconstituted Subcommittee met 4 times during session 2021-2022.
- Work on reviewing ethics guidance and processes was undertaken and revised Ethical Guidelines and Policies for Students, Staff and Research Ethics Committees was presented to Senate in June 2022. The Guidelines were approved but due to Senate's concern around the timing of implementation, particularly for undergraduate students, a soft roll out of the revised guidance was agreed in 2022-23, with the REIS gathering feedback from stakeholders and reviewing the guidance after one year. The key changes to the guidance are as follows:
 - A detailed description of the governance structure and governance arrangements which include the Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee (REIS) and School/local research ethics committees (RECs)
 - Guidance on the types of project that may be subject to ethical review.
 - Guidance on applications for, and conduct of, ethical reviews at School/local level (local RECs) and University level (REIS)
 - Revised procedures for applying for ethical approval, including a required project protocol (with template provided) and revision to the research ethics approval form (with template provided).
 - The roll out of template form for projects with existing external ethical approval.
 - Definitions of roles involved in projects requiring ethical approval (sponsors, chief investigators, investigators, students and gatekeepers).

- The guidance states that where any proposed project (staff, postgraduate and undergraduate) involving human participants is deemed to be non-routine, intrusive, or potentially contentious from an ethical perspective, the REC chair may refer these applications to the University Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee (REIS) for review, using the REIS referral form
 - Guidance on PGR students becoming ethics reviewers
 - Guidance on conflicts of interest for ethical reviewers
 - Guidance on preparation/training for ethical reviewers
 - Roles and responsibilities of ethical reviewers
 - Guidance on working with external partners (including NHS, Ministry of Defence, international research)
 - Guidance on research involving body tissues
- The REIS developed a role profile for local (i.e. School/Support Department/Research Centre) research integrity champions based on the requirements of the Concordat. A research integrity champion has been identified in the School of Health and Life Sciences and work is ongoing to identify local champions in the other Schools and non-School research areas, as appropriate.
 - The REIS participated in a Carnegie sponsored project by researchers at Edinburgh University which aimed to explore research ethics governance in Scottish Universities. This involved some REIS members participating in interviews and observation by the researchers at one of the REIS meetings.
 - Revised Data Protection Guidance for Researchers was produced by the Department of Governance and Legal Services
 - There is continued engagement with the Scottish Research Integrity Network (of Scottish Universities) in relation to the identification of research integrity training solutions and potential sharing of knowledge and resources
 - Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan 2022-24 is published. The work identified by the action plan will contribute to an environment for researchers in which research integrity is embedded.
 - The Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) survey for staff researchers is a biennial survey piloted at GCU in 2020 and now run every two years from 2021. The outcome of the 2021 survey informed the development of the Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan 2022-24.
 - GCU has retained the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research Award (HRER) following its eight-year external review by Vitae. The University has held the award since 2013, in recognition of our long-standing commitment to the personal, professional and career development of our researchers, and to creating an excellent working environment that enables our research staff to fulfill their potential. Overall the peer review panel was impressed with the maturity of the work being done at GCU, as well as the teamwork, ambition and ongoing commitment across the University to supporting and developing our researchers at all levels. The Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan and the GCU HRER Forward Plan 2022 – 2025 are now aligned to be the one and the same Action plan.
 - The University undertook a major revamp of its website and content is being refreshed and enhanced, beginning with the publication of the revised Ethics Guidance.

Environment

The REIS is undertaking a review of training opportunities in relation research ethics and integrity. Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan 2022-24 will contribute to a supportive and enabling environment for researchers.

Current Formal Processes and Procedures

The University is confident that the processes the institution has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, timely, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation. Nevertheless, as part of the gap analysis referred to above, the processes are under review to ensure that they continue to be robust and appropriate to needs of the University.

The *Code of Good Practice for Researchers* outlines procedures to be followed in cases of academic misconduct.

Other procedures relevant to staff:

- Research Data Management Policy
- Guidance for Researchers – Data Protection
- Conduct & Capability Policy - applies to current staff (but note that the University may continue the investigation to its natural end regardless of the complainant and/or the respondent resigning or otherwise withdrawing from the process; the complainant withdrawing his/her allegation; and/or an admission of guilt on the part of the respondent)
- Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing)
- Anti-Bribery Policy
- GCU Financial Regulations

Other procedures relevant to students:

- Procedures for Academic Misconduct in Research Degrees (referenced in *Code of Good Practice for Researchers*)
- Advice on Safeguarding (referenced in *Code of Good Practice for Researchers*)
- Code of Student Conduct (also referenced in *Code of Good Practice for Researchers*)
- Student Attendance & Engagement Policy (Research Students)
- Research Data Management Policy

It should be noted that issues of research misconduct can be received via the University Complaint Handling Procedure and are referred to the procedures under the Code of Good Practice for Researchers.

Formal investigations

- No cases of research misconduct were reported during session 2021-22

Lessons Learned (from previous session)

- The need to revise the Academic Misconduct procedures for research degrees to ensure harmonization with the Code of Student Conduct. This work is ongoing and will be presented to the Research Degrees Committee, University Research Committee and APPC before final approval by Senate.

Governance

The University Research Committee has overall responsibility for matters in relation to research integrity policy. The following subcommittees and groups have responsibility for supporting the

processes, procedures, guidance and development for research integrity matters:

- Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee (REIS)
- Research Degrees Committee (for postgraduate research students) (RDC)
- Developing Academic Researcher Excellence (DARE) Steering Group