

## Research Integrity Annual Statement 2023-24

### 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 2023-24

The following summary outlines actions and activity undertaken to support research integrity during session 2023-24:

- The University *Safeguarding Policy* was approved by the University Court which provides all members of the University's community with guidance on their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, including researchers and research students.
- The Safeguarding Policy was considered by the Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee (REIS) in relation to implications for the University's research ethics policies, procedures and guidance. Ethics documentation has been refreshed to take account of the procedural implications of the Safeguarding Policy.
- Following the successful E-thesis pilot, the Research Degree regulations and guidance were updated to reflect the e-thesis process and the process rolled out to all research degree students.
- Following publication of *University Guidance for the appropriate use of generative AI by students for Education purposes*, initial scoping and discussion took place around the implications of the use of generative AI specifically in relation to research degrees and research more broadly. Further work will be undertaken 2024-25.
- The University Research Committee received a briefing from the Director of Research and Innovation on *Trusted Research*. Trusted Research is government guidance published by the NPSA and NCSC, created in collaboration with academia, to help universities and the wider UK research & innovation sector understand and manage risks to research. The Committee agreed to a programme of awareness raising within the research community and development of University guidance in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, as well as consideration of implications for the research ethics and integrity agenda via the REIS.

## 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.

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
- Safeguarding Policy

Other procedures relevant to students:

- Procedures for Academic Misconduct in Research Degrees (referenced in *Code of Good Practice for Researchers*)
- Safeguarding Policy
- 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

- 3 cases of staff research integrity issues were reported. 1 case has been investigated and found not be misconduct or a breach of research integrity. 2 other cases are ongoing.
- 13 cases of taught postgraduate student research ethics breaches were reported and proven, with penalties imposed.

## Governance

The University Research Committee has overall responsibility for matters in relation to research integrity. 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

