

## Executive Summary Paper

<b>Committee:</b>	University Court			
<b>Title</b>	Research Integrity Annual Statement and Report 2020-21			
<b>Sponsored by</b>	Professor Andrea Nelson, PVC Research			
<b>Author (if different from sponsor)</b>	Paul Woods, Department of Governance			
<b>Please tick ✓ as appropriate)</b>	For information	<input type="checkbox"/>	For discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
	For noting	<input type="checkbox"/>	For approval	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	For endorsement	<input type="checkbox"/>		

### 1. Purpose of the Paper and Summary of Key Issues and Information

*What is the purpose of the paper and what key issues do you want to bring to Court's/Senate's/the committee's/Executive Board's attention?*

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 presents the annual statement on research integrity to the University Court which:

- provides a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues
- 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
- provides a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken and indicates any lessons learned from the process

The final version of the statement will be published on the University's Research Integrity webpage and provided to Senate for information.

### 2. Recommendations

*What decisions or actions are required by Court/Senate/the committee/Executive Board?*

Court is invited to approve the Research Integrity Annual Statement and Report 2020-21.

### 3. Freedom of Information

*Unless you specify otherwise, this paper will be deemed available for unredacted release under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) 2002 Act. If some, or all of the paper, should not be released, briefly explain the reason. Examples include: commercial sensitivity, personal information.*

<b>4. Consultation undertaken/required</b>	
Who have you consulted when developing the paper?	Director of Research and Innovation Director of the Graduate School Chair of the Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee University Research Committee
Has this paper been submitted to the Student Action Group for Engagement (SAGE)?	Not applicable
Have you already submitted this paper to any other committee for discussion and/or approval? If yes, please state which committee	No
Will you require to submit this paper to any other committee following its consideration/approval at this meeting?  If yes, please state the committee and date of meeting[s.]	The final version will be submitted to the University Senate following approval by the University Court.

<b>5. Promulgation of Decision/Actions and Implementation</b>	
Who will be responsible for ensuring the decision taken by the Court/Senate/committee and/or actions arising from the meeting are promulgated to the relevant people for implementation?	URC Secretary
Who will be responsible for overseeing any resultant changes or implementation plan as a result of the decision taken or actions arising from the meeting?	REIS/DARE and relevant colleagues

***NB. Please ensure that all sections of the form have been completed. Incomplete forms will be returned which may result in your paper not being included in the meeting papers and will have the result of delaying business.***

## Research Integrity Annual Statement 2020-21

### 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 2020-21

#### Covid-19

In common with the HE sector, the University faced significant challenges in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. Matters relating to research continuity were overseen by the Research Continuity Group, convened by the PVC Research and established as an operational subgroup of the University Research Committee, drawing on both academic and professional services expertise. The Group was first convened on the 16 March 2020 and has continued to meet during session 2020-21, providing periodic updates to the University Research Committee. Matters of policy remained under the authority of University Research Committee, Research Degrees Committee and Senate.

FAQs were created, and are regularly updated, to provide guidance on remote working and procedures for safe access campus, including laboratories.

Interaction with the Scottish Research Integrity Network (SRIN) slowed due to pressures of Covid but activity has recommenced with a meeting on 29 April, focused primarily on members' Covid experiences and SRIN is developing a programme of activity based on sharing of resources, expertise and good practice.

#### Actions and Activity 2020-21

The following summary outlines actions and activity undertaken to support research integrity during session 2020-21:

- A research integrity action plan for 2020-21 was agreed by the University Research Committee.
- The primary aim during 2020-21 was to review the terms of reference and composition of the Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee, with the intention of broadening the

role of the subcommittee to include oversight of the Research Integrity Action Plan. With the retiral of the existing subcommittee Chair in September 2020, a new Chair and vice Chair were nominated.

- In February 2021, a new terms of reference and composition was approved by University Research Committee which reflected this broader role and included a succession plan for the Chair and Vice Chair roles.
- Work on reviewing the current guidance and processes on research ethics, with a view to developing a research ethics, integrity and culture framework, has commenced. A revised process for referring ethical approvals and requests for guidance from School Ethics Committees to the University level has been endorsed by the URC and School Ethics Committee Chairs.
- A gap analysis to map current University policy and procedure to the revised Concordat in order to enable development of a research integrity policy and implementation plan will be considered initially by the REIS, with the intention of bringing forward proposals the University Research Committee and Senate.
- Work is underway to define the role of local (i.e. School/Support Department/Research Centre) research integrity champions based on the requirements of the Concordat.
- The Scottish Research Integrity Network has recommenced activity after a hiatus and University representation from RIO and Department of Governance attended a meeting on 29 April to discuss Covid impact on research integrity and a forward agenda of activity.
- The case for GCU to become a signatory to the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, including a gap analysis and action plan was approved by the University Executive Board. Research Integrity is highlighted explicitly and embedded throughout the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and throughout the GCU gap analysis and action plan. The outcomes of the new Vitae CEDARS staff researcher experience survey at GCU run in 2020 and in 2021 will be scrutinized for insight on the staff experience regarding research integrity. This will feed into ongoing development via the Developing Academic Researchers in Excellence (DARE) Group.
- GCU has also signed up to the Knowledge Exchange Concordat which refers to Working transparently and ethically as its twelfth principle, ensuring that 'published mechanisms are used to assure the ethical integrity and quality of its research, teaching and KE, and which reserve the right to decline work that cannot meet these standards'.
- Web and intranet content is being reviewed periodically and content will continue to be refreshed and enhanced.

## **Environment**

As noted above, the case for GCU to become a signatory to the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers was approved by the Executive Board and the accompanying action plan will be overseen by the Developing Academic Researchers in Excellence (DARE) Group.

Engagement with the Scottish Research Integrity Network is anticipated to facilitate sharing of resources, good practice and expertise.

## **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**

- 1 case of possible research misconduct by postgraduate research student reported in 2020-21 which is currently being investigated.

### **Lessons Learned**

- To update and publish guidance for ethical procedures and emphasise the importance of research ethics and integrity in PGR student training;
- Lessons learned in relation to any ongoing cases will be added upon their conclusion.

### **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