

# Annual statement on research integrity

## Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
<b>1A. Name of organisation</b>	University of Salford
<b>1B. Type of organisation:</b>  <b>higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)</b>	Higher Education Institution
<b>1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> May 2024
<b>1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)</b>	<a href="http://www.salford.ac.uk/research/research-culture/research-integrity">www.salford.ac.uk/research/research-culture/research-integrity</a>
<b>1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity</b>	Name: Professor Penny Cook, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise
	Email address: <a href="mailto:p.a.cook@salford.ac.uk">p.a.cook@salford.ac.uk</a>
<b>1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity</b>	Name: Rachael McKittrick, Research Governance & Policy Manager
	Email address: <a href="mailto:research-governance@salford.ac.uk">research-governance@salford.ac.uk</a>

## 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

Please describe how the organisation maintains high standards of research integrity and promotes positive research culture. It should include information on the support provided to researchers to understand standards, values and behaviours, such as training, support and guidance for researchers at different career stages/ disciplines. You may find it helpful to consider the following broad headings:

- Policies and systems
- Communications and engagement
- Culture, development and leadership
- Monitoring and reporting

The University of Salford is committed to excellent research with integrity. We promote individual researcher accountability for good research practice, underpinned by policies and processes that foster a culture of transparency, respect, honesty and rigour.

The Research & Knowledge Exchange Directorate is dedicated to facilitating high standards of research integrity and to the promotion of positive research culture. The Research Governance & Policy Team provides dedicated support for this, with responsibility for research governance policies and procedures, management of research ethics and integrity training, and acting as a first point of contact for research governance and integrity advice. The Researcher Development Team runs a cohort training programme for skills development to researchers from postgraduate researcher level upwards.

The University's Innovation Strategy (2021-26) underpins our commitment to provide a vibrant, inclusive and supportive research environment where we nurture talent at all career stages. Our approach for successful researcher development is through building connections and communities. Through community building we encourage peer-to-peer learning and promote a positive research culture that empowers researchers to achieve their full potential. Regular,

targeted opportunities are provided to our researchers and all are offered group and 1:1 meetings with the Researcher Development Team to support their professional development.

The University has a suite of research governance policies and procedures: the Research Code of Practice, the Academic Ethics Policy, the Research Misconduct Policy & Procedure and the National Security in Research Policy. These are supported by the institutional policies: Academic Misconduct, Student Conduct, Safeguarding, Health & Society, Whistleblowing and the University Ethics Framework. The research governance policies remain available on both the internal and external University websites, and they are embedded in the induction programmes for all staff, postgraduate researchers (PGRs) and PGR supervisors. They undergo annual light-touch review with oversight from the Academic Ethics & Research Integrity Committee and are provided to the Research, Enterprise & Innovation Committee (both committees of Senate) for information.

These policies outline the University's commitment to ensure its researchers are acting under best practice of ethical, legal and professional obligations and standards. The policies, complemented by guidance on the internal webpages and within training, outline where and how our researchers, and the staff supporting them, can seek advice at every stage of the research journey.

Monitoring and reporting are jointly undertaken by the Research Governance & Policy Team and the Research Governance Working Group, a working group of the Academic Ethics & Research Integrity Committee. Monitoring takes the form of:

- annual review to ensure policies and processes remain fit for purpose
- review of lessons learned from adverse event reports
- review of conduct allegations and investigations, and
- ongoing discussion and reporting into the committees and sub-committees of Senate.

### **Communications and Engagement**

The Research & Knowledge Exchange Directorate has developed a communications plan for internal and external news and information-sharing, in response to feedback from our culture review. Supporting this is a dedicated Communications Manager for the Directorate. The Research Integrity pages have been updated on the University website and are supplemented by detailed, internally-facing information, making routes for discussion and reporting clearer than before.

**2B. Changes and developments during the period under review**

Please provide an update on any changes made during the period, such as new initiatives, training, developments, also ongoing changes that are still underway. Drawing on Commitment 3 of the Concordat, please note any new or revised policies, practices and procedures to support researchers; training on research ethics and research integrity; training and mentoring opportunities to support the development of researchers' skills throughout their careers.

**Ethics Application Management**

This year the University procured and launched new ethics management software. The software provides increased visibility of, and greater accountability for (through sign off), processes around policy, data management and legislative compliance. Implementation involved a review of the governance structures for academic ethics and resulted in a rewrite of the Academic Ethics Policy to reflect these changes.

In the new software we have integrated what was previously known as the Incident Reporting Form, which we have retitled the Adverse Event (AE) Report. Integration of the AE form allows for clearer reporting through direct association with the ethics application. The name change was made to reflect more commonly used language in the sector. We have similarly looked at the vocabulary used to communicate outcomes of ethics review and settled on a Favourable Opinion in lieu of an "approval", reflecting the perspective that an ethics panel is offering a subjective assessment based on the information available at the time. We recognise and promote the belief that sometimes research can take an unexpected turn and institutionally we are open and able to support our researchers at all stages through this.

**University Fellowships and Grants Academy**

The University Fellowships and Grants Academy was launched this year, providing the resource and training home for early career academics who are in the first stages of developing their research funding profile. Under the umbrella of the Academy are two cohort programmes. The first is the University Fellows Programme, which offers a broad package of training and support to early career academics over five years. The University Fellows Programme is designed to develop the skills and profiles of early career academics to become future research leaders at Salford and beyond. The second is our Academy Cohort programme, run for early career academics and others new to research funding. Over six months, each cohort receives targeted and structured support to develop a competitive bid

for research funding. Training is wide-reaching and covers workshops from research-facing teams across the University. The Research Governance & Policy Team delivered two interactive workshops for the Fellows: producing ethical research, and research policies. The workshop format, which involved reviewing ethics application case studies, was well received and as such will form the basis of research governance training for new researchers and ethics panel reviewers from the 2024-25 academic year.

### **Ethics Review and PhD by Published Work**

In response to uncertainty regarding ethics policy for candidates of PhD by Published Work, a guidance document was produced. The guidance outlines the process of prima facie assessment of the ethical practice and standards put in place for research in existing publications (that would form the PhD by PW thesis), ensuring confidence that any research award conferred by the University has been undertaken to an agreed standard of ethical principles.

### **Academic Regulations for Research Awards and Code of Practice for the Conduct of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes**

The Regulations and Code of Practice undergo annual review. This academic year, in response to feedback from students and colleagues, both documents underwent major review and re-write. This involved consultation internally with students, academics, working groups and committees and externally with comparator institutions and our networks. Improvement changes were made to remove ambiguity and to safeguard equity of experience within our PGR community.

### **Working Groups**

Out of the Research & Knowledge Exchange culture review and similar sector reviews on experiences of the research environment, some of our institutional research policies and procedures were identified as requiring updates. As such, the University assembled several working groups throughout the year. These working groups have focused on a holistic view of improving the lived experience of the research lifecycle at all career stages, with integrity at the core.

In a year with a lens on AI in higher education, the University recognised the importance of providing steer for colleagues and students. The Research, Enterprise & Innovation Committee convened a working group tasked with developing a position on the responsible and ethical use of AI in research. Membership consisted of academic and professional services staff from across the institution at all stages of their career. Consultation on the statement of principles

spanned schools, professional and support services, PGRs and special interest groups.

In early 2024, the University convened a working group to identify and reduce internal research bureaucracy. The outcomes of the working group aim to reduce barriers to undertaking good research. The group will host colleague consultation reviews that will inform the shaping of the working group's recommendations.

A Rights Retention task group was convened to develop a policy. The Library has driven the work and ensured the task group has fed into and been informed by the redeveloped Research Data Management and Intellectual Property policies.

The University has joined the UK Reproducibility Network after many years of contributing on the periphery and launched this initiative institutionally in early summer.

As continued members of UKRIO, we are excited to be rolling out and trialling the Introduction to Research Integrity course. For the trial we will be focussing on PGRs, early career researchers, those in a research support role and those with an interest in developing their understanding of research integrity.

## **2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments**

This should include a reflection on the previous year's activity including a review of progress and impact of initiatives if known relating to activities referenced in the previous year's statement. Note any issues that have hindered progress, e.g. resourcing or other issues.

This year we trialled a new way of training delivery for research governance and academic ethics using a case study and cross-disciplinary approach. Feedback was positive and the Research Governance & Policy Team will be developing a fuller programme targeting the different groups of: PGRs, ethics panel reviewers, new starters, Research Fellows/early career researchers and PGR supervisors.

It has been recommended to the Research, Enterprise & Innovation Committee that the Research Misconduct Policy & Procedure undergoes major review next academic year through the Research Governance Working Group. The primary aim of this review will be to incorporate PGRs in both the policy and procedure, where currently only the policy applies. The major work will ensure the new policy encompasses changes in practice for improved equality, diversity and inclusion for

PGRs, further to the significant update to the Regulations for Research Degrees. This will result in a clearer, fairer policy and procedure for handling allegations of misconduct in research for our colleagues and PGRs.

Each year we reflect on actions set the previous year and work undertaken to get there:

2022-23 Objective	2023-24 Action Taken
To revisit the possibility of pursuing the potential to create Integrity Champions within our different research areas.	This was an objective we had to postpone in 2022-23 and we have not directly pursued it again this academic year due to resourcing. Through the working groups discussed in this statement and their efforts this year, we have made progress in securing We an environment underpinned by a culture of integrity. Additionally, the delivery of new ethics management software and the consultation with research-relevant areas such as information governance, data management, open access publishing and legal and compliance, has been a testament to this.
Integration of misconduct policies	This objective has been started this academic year with a recommendation to consult and implement next academic year. It was felt that a minor change could be made to change the routing of postgraduate research student research misconduct allegations, however more in-depth work consulting across the University over a full academic year would have a greater, more immediate impact. Year-long review would also allow the updated policy to be aligned with the other research and research adjacent policies being redeveloped between the 2023-24 and 2024-25 academic

	years, removing the need for multiple intervening edits.
Commitment to an inclusive, supportive research environment free from discrimination and hatred.	<p>We continue to emphasise the importance and role of the Equality Impact Assessment in all new and updated policies. Changes to governance and processes in taught programme ethics have been considered through the lens of staff and student wellbeing, with the changes representing a significant impact anticipated over the next academic year, with a commitment to review all feedback after a full academic year.</p> <p>Any commitment to an inclusive, supportive research environment free from discrimination and hatred is an ongoing one, that cannot be completed within a year and checked off. Instead, we will continue to identify positive and negative behaviours, take feedback and sector guidance and ensure we seek to continually improve our research environment.</p>



## Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

Please provide:

- a brief summary of relevant organisation policies/ processes (e.g. research misconduct procedure, whistle-blowing policy, bullying/harassment policy; appointment of a third party to act as confidential liaison for persons wishing to raise concerns) and brief information on the periodic review of research misconduct processes (e.g. date of last review; any major changes during the period under review; date when processes will next be reviewed).
- information on how the organisation creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct (e.g. code of practice for research, whistle-blowing, research misconduct procedure, informal liaison process, website signposting for reporting systems, training, mentoring, reflection and evaluation of policies, practices and procedures).
- anonymised key lessons learned from any investigations into allegations of misconduct which either identified opportunities for improvements in the organisation's investigation procedure and/or related policies / processes/ culture or which showed that they were working well.

Overall responsibility for research integrity and governance sits with the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research & Enterprise. The Research Governance and Policy Manager may be addressed as the first point of contact on research integrity matters, and this is communicated on internal and external University websites as well as in internal guidance. The Research Governance & Policy Manager is also the Named Person for reports of allegations of misconduct in research, with contacts details available on the University's [public](#) and internal websites.

The Research Misconduct Policy details the University's expected standards for good research conduct and informs members of the University about the types of activity or behaviour that constitute research misconduct. The Research Misconduct Procedure outlines the agreed process for making and managing allegations of research misconduct, and details how such matters will be addressed

by the University when research conduct falls short of the expected standard.

Colleagues have evidenced confidence in the Named Person process and confidential reporting of concerns, evidenced through discussions this year and the subsequent raising of two allegations, as detailed in the below table. Nevertheless, the institution felt it was important to acknowledge the low reporting numbers and will be assessing these against the sector and reporting findings and recommendations to the Academic Ethics & Research Integrity Committee at the first meeting of the next academic year.

It is our standard practice to review our policies every 2-3 years, with new policies reviewed within the first 12 months of publication. As detailed earlier, the Research Misconduct Policy & Procedure will be undergoing significant reworking next academic year.

### 3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken

Please complete the table on the number of **formal investigations completed during the period under review** (including investigations which completed during this period but started in a previous academic year). Information from ongoing investigations should not be submitted.

An organisation's procedure may include an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. These allegations should be included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column.

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

**\*If you listed any allegations under the 'Other' category, please give a brief, high-level summary of their type here. Do not give any identifying or confidential information when responding.**