

University of Reading: Annual statement on research integrity 2023

If you have any questions about this template, please contact:
RIsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk.

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	University of Reading
1B. Type of organisation: higher education institution/ industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)	Higher education
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	3 July 2023
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.reading.ac.uk/research/research-environment/integrity
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Professor Parveen Yaqoob
	Email address: p.yaqoob@reading.ac.uk
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: Dr Mike Proven, Head of Quality Assurance in Research
	Email address: m.j.proven@reading.ac.uk

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

Research integrity is a key element of our University Research Strategy, which states that we will *“improve accessibility and transparency of our research through technology and open research practices; support the reproducibility of research through staff training and by making data and outputs open and accessible through the University’s Research Data Archive and the University’s institutional repository (CentAUR); sustain a culture of research integrity in line with commitments in the Concordat to Support Research Integrity”*.

A Working Group, established in October 2019, conducted a reflective institutional review of performance with respect to research integrity across the institution. This Group conducted a detailed self-assessment, using a framework compiled by the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO). Recommendations for improvement were formulated into an action plan, against which progress has been reported in this annual statement for the last few years.

While the key committee with oversight of matters relating to research integrity is the Committee for Open Research and Research Integrity (CORRI), other relevant committees include:

- i. The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), which meets 11 times per year and is comprised of 8 members of academic staff from Schools active in human research, a lay member and a member of staff from Academic and Governance Services. The UREC (i) assesses the ethical propriety of all research using human subjects, human samples or human personal data to be undertaken at the University, however funded; (ii) has the power to require modifications and the discretion to disallow research projects on ethical grounds; (iii) offers advice on ethical implications of proposed research and encourages high standards of behaviour with respect to University research involving human beings and (iv) monitors the progress of research projects submitted to it and has the discretion to terminate research on ethical grounds. Local ethics committees operate in Schools where there is a high proportion of research involving humans or animals; in these cases, there is significant interaction and communication between the School committee and the UREC. A Community of Practice of local ethics committees has also been established, led by the Head of

Quality Assurance in Research.

- ii. The Animal Welfare Ethics Review Body (AWERB), which normally meets three times per year. In addition, separate meetings are held to approve project licences (new and amendments). The AWERB is comprised of academic staff from those Schools undertaking animal research, two lay members, two named veterinary surgeons (large and small animals) and five named animal care and welfare officers. The meeting is Chaired by the University Licence Holder. The University maintains a publicly available website dedicated to the use of animals in research. Statistics on animal use are openly available on the site and are detailed by species ([Animal Research \(reading.ac.uk\)](http://AnimalResearch.reading.ac.uk))

A number of key individuals and groups play specific roles in supporting research integrity as follows:

- Head of Quality Assurance in Research: maintains the [University Code of Good Practice in Research](#) and is responsible for provision of QAR support and training for staff and postgraduate students. Acts as Secretary to the University Research Ethics Committee.
- Director of Research Services: acceptance of research funding awards on behalf of the University, ensuring researchers are aware of their obligations on grants and contracts and that research contracts entered into by the University are fair to all parties involved in collaborations.
- Head of Governance: is the Secretary to the University's AWERB and the University's Audit Committee, as well as being a member of the Committee for Open Research and Research Integrity; is responsible for managing processes in relation to student complaints/appeals/academic misconduct/fitness to practice and study; is one of the recipients of whistleblowing reports.
- Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary: holder of the institutional Establishment Licence.
- Co-Chairs of the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) and chairs of local ethics committees: see 2.1i above.
- UK Reproducibility Network senior academic representative and local network lead: the former is the institutional lead for the UKRN and external stakeholders, while the latter leads on internal networks of researchers.
- A research communications team, which has responsibility for all matters relating to open research and research integrity on the University website and all communications relating to open research and research integrity.
- The Research Engagement Team provides Open Research services with the purpose of increasing the accessibility, transparency and re-usability of research produced at the University. Support is provided for Open Access publishing, effective management, preservation and sharing of research data, and responsible use of metrics. The team is instrumental in delivering the University's Open Research Action Plan and manages the University's Open Research Champions Programme.

Policies relevant to the Concordat are listed in Appendix 1 (below), along with weblink addresses. The CORRI reviews the research integrity element of all policies over a 3-year cycle.

While research integrity is a core element of the University research strategy and the CORRI has strategic and operation oversight of research integrity, the allocation of ring-fenced QR funding from Research England specifically for research culture has enabled a number of projects and activities, including an evaluation of current research culture, an open research action plan and development of research integrity training for researchers at all career stages (detailed below and featured as a case study in section 2D).

Last year saw the launch of a Leadership Development Programme for Research Division Leads, which enables Research Division Leads to develop leadership skills, to link the University Research Strategy with their research division plans and to create a desirable research culture. This new programme complements two other Development Programmes (Inclusive Leadership and Leading Through Influence), which are available to research staff and Functions leads and which support the University Research Strategy, as well as its Leadership Framework.

The University is a member of the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN), an independent network of stakeholders in the UK dedicated to improvement in the quality, integrity and reproducibility of academic research. Each institutional partner has a senior academic representative (Dr Etienne Roesch for the University of Reading) and a local network lead (position currently vacant). The academic leads liaise with grassroots networks of researchers and with UKRN stakeholders, including funders and publishers. The UKRN received UKRI RED funding for a five-year programme of work across the consortium to accelerate the uptake of high-quality open research practices and the many benefits to research quality, integrity and public trust that will result. As a core member of the consortium, the University is benefitting from multi-institutional, high-quality training in open and transparent research practices, a framework for evaluation of institutional practice and opportunities to share good practice.

The University collates anonymised information on allegations of research misconduct on an annual basis. Preparation of the annual statement is led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation, but input is received from all members of the CORRI and there is further opportunity for input from the University Board for Research and Innovation, Senate and Council as part of the approval process. Preparation of the annual statement is informed by the UKRIO self-assessment framework for compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, a review of progress against our action plan and any new information or guidance which may be relevant, for example from research funders, the UKRI CORI or the UKRIO.

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.

This year we made significant progress in the development of research integrity training, which is described in detail as a case study in section 2D.

We launched our misconduct investigations training, which 85 members of staff have completed (from across the Leadership Group, within Schools and Functions

and including the Vice-Chancellor and the UEB); this training is ongoing and will be repeated again in future sessions.

We have completed a pilot research culture project and will be moving on to conduct a full research-led study (described below).

The first cohort of Research Division Leads completed the RDL Leadership Development Programme and a second cohort will complete the programme this year. The feedback has been excellent and we will be considering how to evaluate its impact.

We will be developing an export control policy.

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.

We have made much progress on developing research integrity training (see case study, section 2D), and will now focus on rolling this out, monitoring uptake and evaluating feedback. We are particularly keen to see our efforts with the Train-the-Trainer programme translating into a sustainable model for institutional RI training in collaboration with People Development. Resourcing for this has been facilitated by our QR Research Culture allocation.

Training for misconduct investigation will continue. Uptake has been very good so far. We may conduct some qualitative analysis of the confidence of investigators as a result of the training in the future.

We have undertaken a substantial project relating to current and desirable perception of research culture, which will continue into the next year. There will shortly be a survey of all researchers, as well as focus groups addressing the particular challenges faced by mid-career researchers. This work is also being funded by our QR Research Culture allocation and led by Professors Kevin Money and Carola Hillenbrand from Henley Business School.

There is ongoing work with HR to clarify how policies relating to research integrity and misconduct apply to visitors, consultant and emeritus staff.

2D. Case study on good practice (optional)

Please describe an anonymised brief, exemplar case study that can be shared as good practice with other organisations. A wide range of case studies are valuable, including small, local implementations. Case studies may also include the impact of implementations or lessons learned.

Over the course of the last year we have been developing 3 layers of RI training offering different approaches and depths, with the aim of providing beginner-level understanding for new researchers, building to reflective, case study-based training for more advanced understanding. We built a good relationship with

VIR2TUE and through this engaged with their Train-the-Trainer programme so that we could train staff to train others, either in their discipline or through our People Development programme. We had excellent uptake of the programme and now have 16 fully trained staff and a further 10 on the waiting list for training. The 3 layers of training consist of the following:

Layer I consists of a 1h tailored online module, developed in partnership with the UK Research Integrity Office, but providing information specific to the University's implementation of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. It is a self-paced online module comprising four videos of students and staff speaking about specific aspects of the training, combined with written material and interactive tasks. The training ends with a quiz. The training is currently being written up, and we expect additional videos to be recorded and the training completed and ready to launch by the end of April 2023. It will be available to all staff and postgraduate students engaged with research.

Layer II comprises four 1h online training modules adapted from the VIRT2UE platform, on topics such as responsible supervision and mentoring and role modelling in research. The modules will be embedded into our training platform and into the Graduate School training platform so that it is available for all staff and students engaged with research by the end of April 2023.

Layer III comprises group-based in-person and virtual blended RI training involving a range of exercises designed to support participants in developing a reflective approach and understanding of their own position with respect to research integrity. This training can be adapted to suit the needs of different disciplines. People Development are taking ownership of this element of the training and will consider how to deliver it in a sustainable way. However, it can also be delivered by trained individuals locally in a discipline-appropriate manner.

Further work is needed to embed the training in University processes, including requirements for training of different groups of researchers and embedding in probation, awards and personal title processes. The training will initially be introduced as optional and feedback will be carefully evaluated to gauge whether it is appropriate for the needs of researchers, particularly those from non-STEM disciplines. In future, some of the training may become mandatory; this will require consideration of logistical issues for PhD students.

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.

For students: The University has specifically identified research misconduct as that arising in the course of research or its reporting, and which includes, but need not be limited to: (i) fabrication, falsification, misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement; (ii) plagiarism; (iii) failure to follow accepted procedures or to exercise due care in carrying out responsibilities for avoiding unreasonable risk or harm to humans or animals used in research or the environment and for the proper handling of privileged or private information on individuals collected during the research. Research misconduct also includes any activity in research and/or scholarship and in its dissemination, which brings the name of the University into disrepute.

All allegations are handled as described in the [Academic Misconduct and Academic Integrity policy](#), enabling a rigorous, fair and transparent approach, in line with Commitment 4 of the Concordat and the UKRI Guidance for Research Organisation on the Investigation of Research Misconduct [[UKRI-310322-GRP-Guidance2022.pdf](#)]. A review of the Academic Misconduct process for students was planned for 2022-23; this has been initiated, but is proceeding a delayed timescale.

For staff: Allegations of research misconduct against a member of staff are subject to the [University's Disciplinary Procedure](#). If there are grounds for formal action following an investigation, a disciplinary panel will be established and a disciplinary hearing held to determine whether a formal sanction should be applied. Where the allegation relates to research misconduct, the University will notify the research funding body where applicable.

At present, the University does not appoint an independent third party as part of

the process, although lay members of Council may be involved in whistleblowing cases and Student Appeals Committees always have an independent member.

A broad investigations training course has been designed, which is suitable for a range of roles and processes, and comprises a half-day in-person session with a series of case studies. This has been successfully rolled out during the last year and completed by 85 members of staff so far.

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				
Falsification				
Plagiarism				
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>	3	3		3
Total:	3	3		3

***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.**

Other refers to 3 cases involving both falsification and plagiarism.

Appendix 1. Regulations, Policies and Procedures

Regulations, Policies and Procedures

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/about/governance/governance-zone.aspx>

- Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy
- Public Disclosure Agreement (Whistleblowing)
- Travel, Gifts and Expenses
- Animal Research Ethics
- Conflict and Declarations of Interests
- Ethical Framework
- Fraud

Research Integrity

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/research/research-environment/integrity.aspx>

- University Code of Good Practice in Research
- University Research Ethics Committee Guidance Notes
- Responsible Use of Metrics in Research
- Openness in Animal Research (<https://www.reading.ac.uk/research/research-environment/animal-research>)

Information Compliance

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/imps/information-compliance-policies>

- Data Protection
- Freedom of Information
- Information Security Policy

Academic Misconduct (student)

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/exams/policies-and-procedures/academic-misconduct>

Staff Disciplinary Procedure

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/human-resources/policies-and-procedures/resolving-problems-at-work/discipline-and-misconduct>