Vice Chancellor's Office

University of Reading

Annual Statement of Compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity 2019-2020

1.   Introduction

1.1   The Concordat to Support Research Integrity, published in October 2019, provides a national framework for good research conduct and governance. Its signatories include the Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, the National Institute for Health Research, the Scottish Funding Council, UK Research and Innovation, Universities UK and the Wellcome Trust.

The Concordat is based on commitment to five principles:

i.   To uphold the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research;

ii.   To ensure that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards;

iii.   To support a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice, and support for the development of researchers;

iv.   To use transparent, timely, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise;

v.   To work together to strengthen the integrity of research and to review progress regularly and openly.

1.2   This annual statement outlines the University's compliance with the governance requirements mandated by the Concordat, highlights progress towards embedding a culture of research integrity across the institution, and sets out an improvement plan to further enhance good practice in research.

1.3   This statement has been considered and approved by the University Board for Research & Innovation, the University Senate and the University Council.

1.4   The senior lead on all matters relating to research integrity is Professor Parveen Yaqoob, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation (PVC R&I), and Chair of the University's Committee for Open Research and Research Integrity (CORRI), which oversees implementation of the Concordat. The membership of CORRI comprises a Research Dean, the Head of Research Services, the Head of Governance, the Head of Quality Assurance in Research, the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee, the Head of Research Communications and Engagement, the Research Data Manager, the Head of Planning and Reporting, the Associate Director of Library Services, a Specialist Teaching and Research Support Analyst and two academic representatives.

1.5   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".*

2.   Policies and systems

2.1   The key committee with oversight of matters relating to research integrity is the CORRI. However, other relevant committees include:

i.   The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) meets 11 times per year and is comprised of 8 members of academic staff from Schools active in human research, 3 lay members and a member 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.

ii. The Animal Welfare Ethics Review Body (AWERB), 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 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 are detailed by species.

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

Head of QA in Research: maintains the University Code of Good Practice in Research (Appendix 1) and is responsible for provision of QAR support and training for staff and postgraduate students. Acts as Secretary to the University Research Ethics Committee.

Head 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 contact for the UKRN and external stakeholders, while the latter leads on internal networks of researchers.

Research Engagement Team: this group includes a Research Data Manager and the team collectively provides a research data management service to all researchers, supports preparation of data management plans for funding applications, advises on services for data storage, computation and archiving, manages the University's data repository, provides research data management training and plays a key role in supporting an open research culture.

2.3 A Working Group established in October 2019 conducted a reflective institutional review of performance with respect to research integrity across the institution. This Group met three times over the course of the academic year and conducted a detailed self-assessment. Recommendations for improvement were formulated into an action plan, which is reflected in this statement, and will be overseen by the CORRI. This will form the basis of a programme of work to be initiated during the next academic year. Progress against the action plan will be reported in the next annual statement.

2.4 Policies relevant to the Concordat are listed in Appendix 1, along with weblink addresses. The CORRI reviews the research integrity element of all policies over a 3-year cycle. The current locations of the policies within the University website are somewhat dispersed and not clearly linked to the research integrity pages; this is a matter for action early in the next academic year.

2.5 The Code of Good Practice in Research (Appendix 1) was last updated in June 2018 and is available on the research integrity pages of the website. The next update will be informed by new joint guidance on research ethics from the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and the Association for Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA).

2.6 The CORRI is committed to improving the availability of existing resources and guidance relating to research integrity and is developing a communications plan to support understanding of the Concordat, the legal/ethical frameworks and standards and behaviours relating to research integrity,

and to raise awareness about support for researchers in need of assistance and processes for staff to raise concerns.

3. **Culture and development**

3.1 Current provision of training is targeted to postgraduate research (PGR) students and early career researchers (ECRs). Specific online training on research ethics involving human participation, on the Human Tissue Act and on Good Clinical Practice is also provided for those working in areas that require this.

3.2 Recognising that training and development of good practice in research is relevant through all career stages, the CORRI will oversee an audit of current training provision, clarify training provision for members of ethics and governance committees, and investigate the nature of research integrity training across the sector, before making recommendations for a comprehensive refresh of training across all career stages.

3.3 The University subscribes to the UKRIO and exploits the tools available via subscription. The University is also a member of the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN), a newly established 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 Phil Newton, Research Dean for Environment for the University of Reading) and a local network lead (Dr Etienne Roesch, PCLS). The academic leads will liaise with grassroots networks of researchers and with UKRN stakeholders, including funders and publishers.

3.4 The CORRI plans to establish Communities of Practice for local ethics committees and for research integrity and open research, which will benefit from the UKRN's initiatives to develop common training across career stages, align promotion and recruitment criteria to support open and reproducible research practices and sharing best practice.

4. **Addressing research misconduct**

4.1 *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 (Appendix 1), enabling a rigorous, fair and transparent approach, in line with Commitment 4 of the Concordat.

4.2 *For staff:* Allegations of research misconduct against a member of staff are subject to the University's disciplinary procedure (Appendix 1). 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.

4.3 During 2019-20, there were no new allegations relating to research misconduct. In May 2019, one case involving allegations of research misconduct against an academic member of staff (investigation first initiated in July 2017) was concluded. The allegations related to misuse and re-use of images published in academic journals and to inappropriate storage of human tissue. The outcome of the formal disciplinary process was a sanction. The University informed the Chair of the journal's Ethics Committee and the funders of the research, and also communicated with the Human Tissue Authority regarding the inappropriate storage of human tissue. The member of staff was also required to undertake training relating to the Human Tissue Act and to data management.

4.4 In February 2020, one case involving allegations of research misconduct against a student (investigation first initiated in July 2017) was concluded. The allegations related to misuse and re-use of images included in a thesis and published in academic journals. The outcome was poor academic practice rather than research misconduct.

4.5   The institutional review of research integrity highlighted the need to modify staff disciplinary procedures to make explicit reference to research integrity, to revise SCAM procedures to reflect UKRIO guidance on support for whistle-blowers, to consider how procedures relate to non-staff and students (e.g. visitors) engaged in research, to seek guidance on appointment of external members to investigation panels, and to implement training for staff involved in investigations.

4.6   Training for conducting investigations, led by Eversheds, has been arranged for autumn 2020.

5.   **Monitoring and reporting**

5.1   The University collates anonymised information on allegations of research misconduct on an annual basis.

5.2   An institutional review of research integrity will be conducted by the CORRI every 3 years. In the interim, progress against the action plan will be reported in annual statements.

5.3   As the action plan is progressed, researchers will be surveyed to assess understanding of policies and processes and to get feedback on training and communication about research integrity.

Professor Parveen Yaqoob

Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research & Innovation

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Regulations, Policies and Procedures

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

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

- Research Integrity
- University Code of Good Practice in Research
- University Research Ethics Committee Guidance Notes
- Responsible Use of Metrics
- Openness in Animal Research

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

- Information Compliance Policies
- Data Protection
- Freedom of Information

http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/imps/policiesdocs/imps-policies.aspx

- Academic Misconduct (student)

http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-misconduct.aspx

- Staff disciplinary procedure

http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/policiesandprocedures/ResolvingProblems/humres-disciplinary.aspx