

# University of Huddersfield

## Research Integrity

### Annual Narrative Statement 2021-22

The University of Huddersfield subscribes to the principles of the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) and is committed to excellence in all aspects of research. As an employer of researchers, the University acts in accordance with the commitments and the related responsibilities for employers of researchers as outlined in the Concordat. This includes fulfilment of the expectations held by funders of research for employers of researchers. The University [policies, framework and procedures](#) can be found on the University website.

The University's on-going commitment to the Concordat is reflected below.

#### **1. Supporting and strengthening research integrity understanding and processes**

*"a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and the application of research integrity issues (for example postgraduate and researcher training, or process reviews)"*

##### **1.1 School based training and support**

Training and support provided in 2021-22 within Schools is summarised as follows:

- **Applied Sciences** – The research governance website has been reviewed and refreshed. 55 ethics approvals have been granted. School training sessions for 16 new staff and 36 postgraduate researchers (PGRs) were included within induction processes. There were no research misconduct cases or data collection, storage and disposal issues.
- **Arts and Humanities** – The research governance website and procedural documents for ethical approval were reviewed. No changes were required. Refresher training for staff on ethics and integrity was held in May 2022 and was delivered by the Chair of the Ethics Committee and by the Director of Graduate Education for students and supervisors. All new staff and students receive training as part of their induction activities and all research students undertake Ethics and Integrity training at progression monitoring point 1. 60 ethics approvals have been granted, 1 application was rejected. There were 7 academic misconduct cases, resulting in 6 written cautions and 1 penalty. There were no data collection, storage or disposal issues.
- **Business School** – The research governance website has been reviewed and refreshed and the forms and guidance for the ethics application process have been updated. SREIC has established an integrated function to ensure that staff have appropriate training in research integrity and keep relevant records. 29 ethics approvals have been granted. 1 approval was not granted. 30 staff have received training. The Chair of SREIC has introduced training aspects of Ethics and Integrity to PGT and PGR courses.
- **Computing and Engineering** – The research governance website has been reviewed and refreshed. The terms of reference and membership of SREIC and procedural documents for ethical approval have been updated. Ongoing review of the processes to ensure staff development is in place to increase awareness of security sensitive research and ethics. All new PGRs and academics have received integrity training and awareness of Ethic approvals.

- **Education and Professional Development** - The research governance website has been reviewed and security sensitive research aspects updated to reflect the latest University guidance. 26 ethics approvals have been granted, 3 of which were externally led projects and 9 required amendments before being approved. 10 PGR ethical proposals were approved. All academic staff are trained and reviewed at appraisal and anyone who requires training or a refresher are referred to the online training video. 10 students have received training. There were no academic misconduct cases or data collection, storage or disposal issues.
- **Human and Health Sciences** - The terms of reference and membership of SREIC and procedural documents for ethical approval have been reviewed. The research governance website has been refreshed with updated additional resources and SREIC membership. Data storage and destruction of data has been raised and additional information is to be reviewed. Principles are being agreed into Ethical considerations regarding funding sources and research relationships and will be addressed at SREIC and University Research Group. A total of 104 ethics approvals have been granted, of which 56 were staff and 58 PGR requests. On-line training sessions in *Ethics and External Governance* and *NHS Research: Permissions, practicality and pragmatism* were provided to both staff and PGRs.

School websites include information about the approval processes for research proposals, which are based on the knowledge of discipline specific ethical, legal and professional frameworks. Each Associate Dean Research and Enterprise, supported by a Research Integrity Champion, is responsible for the communication of and continuous improvement in policy, procedures, support and information for staff, PGRs and student researchers within their School.

## 1.2 Research Integrity Champions Network

The network for the School Research Integrity Champions has been established through a series of online meetings held during the year. This has enabled discussion, sharing of training materials across disciplines and wider communication within and between the Schools. Awareness of the Epigeum Research Integrity packages and the importance of engaging staff in the CEDARS survey has been raised. The Champions were also made aware of the UKRIO and Vitae's [Research Integrity: a landscape study](#) document. A review at School level of the outcome from CEDARS 2020 was carried also out and work is now being carried out for an awareness campaign for CEDARS 2023, including how the University has addressed any areas of concern in relation to Ethics and Integrity..

## 1.3 Centrally based training and support

The University provides online training and support for research staff and postgraduate researchers (PGRs) in the form of modules within Epigeum's *Research Integrity* and *Research Skills* packages.

*Research Integrity: Concise* was purchased and released in summer 2019. In 2019-20 voluntary uptake was low and the course was actively promoted in 2020-21. Following a change in the University's regulations, from academic year 2020-21 evidence of research integrity training is required at PGR progression monitoring. This is now a compulsory part of PGR training and there is a requirement for all PGRs to submit a 'pass' certificate for *Research Integrity: Concise* as a means of evidencing compliance alongside any discipline specific in-School or external training. Uptake has improved considerably, with 455 users having passed the course as at October 2022.

<b>13 October</b>	<b>5 October</b>	<b>25 October 2022</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	

<b>Failed</b>	7	20	32
<b>Incomplete</b>	15	32	45
<b>Passed</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>455</b>

**Figure 1 Research Integrity: Concise online completions (totals)**

### 1.4 NHS Integrated Research Approval System (IRAS)

All NHS IRAS approvals for research activities in all Schools continue to be routed through Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange prior to submission. We are also working on an implementing a new process in relation to the new indemnity arrangements for 'NHS research' that has HRA/HRCW approval.

### 1.5 Human Tissue Licence

The University's School of Applied Sciences (SAS) is the largest user of human tissue in its research activities and the School's Research Committee oversees wider compliance with the Human Tissue Act across the University. The University holds a Human Tissue Licence for storage of relevant materials within SAS. (<https://www.hta.gov.uk/professional/establishments/university-huddersfield>).

## 2. Dealing with allegations of misconduct

*“a statement to provide assurance 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 University's procedure for identifying how allegations of misconduct in research are reported and investigated is documented in the staff handbook and was last reviewed in November 2019. The [procedure](#) follows UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) guidance.

The named person for receiving allegations of misconduct is Professor Tim Thornton (Deputy Vice Chancellor).

Misconduct in research by postgraduate researchers is covered in [Section 9 of the Regulations for PGRs](#).

The Regulations for postgraduate researchers were last updated in July 2022 by Registry and Graduate Board to bring the procedures in line with guidance from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. The review formed part of the regular annual review of processes by Registry in consultation with internal stakeholders and amendments made to improve clarity and the consideration of best practice. The 2022-23 Regulations were published on the Registry website on 1 August 2022.

The University's [Freedom to Speak Up: Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure](#) was reviewed and approved by University Council in March 2019 is available on the university website.

## 3. Formal investigations of research misconduct and lessons learned

*“a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, which will include data on the number of investigations. If no formal investigation has been undertaken, this should also be noted”*

and

*“a statement on what the institution has learned from any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, including what lessons have been learned to prevent the same type of incident re-occurring”*

For PGRs, 25 formal investigations have taken place relating to plagiarism. The number of cases identified (51) in 2019-20 highlighted a lack of robust guidance and frameworks to support PGRs and staff with issues relating to plagiarism and self-citation. In 2020, a Task and Finish group was rapidly established to work on developing improved guidance, training and support. The group was led by the Dean of the Graduate School and included representation from Registry, Research and Enterprise, Student Services, Schools and the Student Union. The group reviewed, updated and developed guidance, procedures, supporting documentation at School and University level, training materials, templates for investigation communications and the PGR Handbook. Registry completed a sector review and the Regulations were reviewed to check whether penalties were aligned to sector norms; there were and no Regulatory changes were made. The improvements implemented by the Task and Finish group resulted in a significant reduction in the number of research misconduct cases, decreasing from 51 cases in 2019-20 to 23 cases in 2020-21). In 2021-22 further guidance was written and the regulations changed around citing original but previously published work into a thesis. This was implemented to combat self-citation cases. Although the new procedures have been fully embedded into PGR induction and supervisor training the number of cases in 2021-22 is similar to the previous year. In 2021-22 there were 25 cases requiring investigation. It is important to note that this figure relates to all levels of plagiarism with most cases requiring the lowest level outcome – a written caution. In 2019-20 there were 10 cases escalated to the most serious Stage 3 level. This was reduced to 4 in 2020-21 and again to only 2 cases in 2021-22. This significant reduction suggests that the majority of cases are now minor breaches of our regulations and our processes and procedures as well as the training offered is improving standards.

Detailed analysis of allegations of misconduct are planned in 2022/23 and advice and guidance is to be provided to the School Research Ethics and Integrity Committees on best practices of recording and reporting on allegations.

#### **4. Institutional research environment**

*“a statement on how the institution creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct”*

In 2021 the second national CEDARS (Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey) provided feedback from our staff regarding aspects of research integrity as the survey included several relevant questions. The survey was sent to researchers and 32% (294) of University of Huddersfield academic staff responded to the survey compared to 29% (275) in 2020. Their responses are summarised as follows:

- 65.2% (67.6% in 2020) said that they had done training or other CPD in research integrity, a slight reduction compared to 2020 though above benchmark for the sector; with an additional 24.7% (23.9% in 2020) indicating that they would like to.
- 75.2% (71.8% in 2020) agreed or agreed strongly that they are familiar with the University’s mechanisms to report incidents of misconduct, an improvement compared to 2020.
- 79.8% (77.2% in 2020) agreed or agreed strongly that they would feel comfortable reporting any incidents of research misconduct, an improvement compared to 2020.
- 80.8% (73.2% in 2020) agreed or agreed strongly that they trust the University to investigate any reported incidents of research misconduct fairly, an improvement compared to 2020.
- 78.3% (69.6% in 2020) agreed or agreed strongly that the University would take action if appropriate after such an investigation, an improvement compared to 2020.
- 89.7% (88.6% in 2020) did not personally feel pressured into compromising their research standards or integrity, an improvement compared to 2020

- 23 (18 in 2020) respondents indicated that they had reported incidents of research misconduct, an increase compared to 2020.
- 75.4% (69.6% in 2020) agreed or agreed strongly that the University promotes the highest standards of research integrity and conduct, an improvement compared to 2020.
- 26.7% (23.4% in 2020) indicated that they had some understanding of the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*, an improvement compared to 2020. A further 29.4% (26% in 2020) stated that they know it exists but do not know the detail.

Although scores for uptake of training have reduced slightly, the survey results generally indicate a level of improvement in the awareness and understanding of research integrity and confidence in reporting instances of alleged misconduct and are broadly in line with or above benchmark scores for CEDARS nationally. Promotion of the online training materials will be re-energised in 2022/23. An awareness campaign will be commencing shortly to address the action plan from the last CEDARS survey, this will include communications, training and in depth discussions with Human Resources to ensure we are addressing any major issues that have been raised and to also raise awareness of the upcoming survey in 2023.

## **Publication of the Annual Narrative Statement**

This is the University's eighth annual narrative statement. The University annual statements are publicly available through its [Concordat to support research integrity pages](#) on the website.

## **Research and Innovation Services**

**7 November 2022**