

University of Reading: Annual statement on research integrity

If you have any questions about this template, please contact:
Rlsecretariat@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)	1 July 2024
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: Abbe Davey (Head of Quality Assurance in Research)
	Email address: a.j.davey@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”*.

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 \(reading.ac.uk\)](#))

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](#), is responsible for provision of QAR support and training for staff and postgraduate students and for monitoring of compliance with research ethics standards. Acts as Secretary to the University Research Ethics Committee and is a member of the CORRI.
- 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. Leads on Trusted Research and related policy matters and is a member of the CORRI.
- 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 CORRI; 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 (UKRN) institutional lead is a member of the CORRI and leads on a number of strategic initiatives on reproducibility, research integrity and research culture, both within the organisation and for the UKRN.
- A research communications team, which has responsibility for communicating all matters relating to open research and research integrity, both internally and externally.
- The Library's 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 actively engages with the UKRN.

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 operational 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 those around research culture, open research and research integrity (detailed below).

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 as Institutional Lead (Professor Etienne Roesch for the University of Reading) and a local network lead. 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 leading on several projects, mainly within the remit of the Open Research Programme funded by Research England.

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.

The University's Research Data Management Policy, first introduced in 2015, was refreshed, with the new policy being more specific about scope and application, addressing the requirements and expectations of researchers and their responsibilities for data management at all stages of research, and containing a guidance section linked to relevant pages on the research data management website, so that relevant information about how to comply with the policy requirements is easily accessible. The link to the new policy has been added to Appendix 1.

A new 5-year Open Research Action Plan was developed and approved for the period 2024-29, building on the progress resulting from the previous plan and stating a clear intention to embed a culture of open research.

In autumn 2023, the Chair of the CORRI and the Head of Research Services led a presentation and discussion at both Senate and Council on how the University assured itself on the quality of its research.

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.

The outcomes of the University's research culture survey were published in the form of a report in January 2024 and discussed at an all-staff briefing. Research integrity was generally perceived to be well supported by the University, with the main areas for improvement being protecting time for research and support for research. The CEDARS survey, completed by PGR students and early career researchers, also reflected a positive picture of the perception of research integrity at the University. It was agreed by CORRI that the CEDARS survey would capture all staff in future as it contained specific questions relating to research integrity which would provide a more detailed evaluation. The University Committee for Research and Innovation will be establishing a Research Culture Programme Board, led by the Dean for Postgraduate and Researcher Development and the Head of the Research Directorate, which will oversee a work programme covering all aspects of research culture, including research integrity. The programme will involve both academic and professional services staff and will require commitment from all individuals with research leadership positions, including REF leads.

RI training has progressed significantly in that the University now has >20 individuals who are trained trainers and are actively engaged in RI training across a range of disciplines. Interest in and engagement with the VIR2TUE Train-the-Trainer programme has remained high and this number is growing, to the extent that we are seen as a model institution for sustainable RI training. We have yet to complete the more basic virtual RI training modules, which we envisage will eventually be compulsory, but these are planned to be recorded by autumn 2024. The University is also benefitting from its membership of the UKRN with respect to broader opportunities for training.

There has been recent discussion about the implications of AI for research integrity. Although there are two University groups looking at this and one of the Research Deans is developing a University AI strategy, it is not clear whether issues around research integrity will be specifically addressed. The CORRI will be considering this during the coming year.

It was agreed by CORRI that systems for monitoring compliance with institutional and external ethics requirements required review, and this will be led by the Head of Quality Assurance in Research over the next year.

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.

The University has established a Statistical Community of Practice, supported by a 0.5 FTE Director role, funded through the University's Research Culture allocation. Its purpose is to (i) audit and analyse the use of statistics in research, (ii) evaluate the needs of researchers with respect to statistics, (iii) evaluate data-intensive activities in professional services, including use and practice of statistics, and training and support needs, (iv) raise the profile of appropriate use of statistics in research through engagement events and (v) provide a platform for sharing good practice with respect to the use of statistics in research in the future. The overall

ambition is to improve statistical literacy and the Director is considering how to capture baseline literacy in order to evaluate and monitor improvement and also how to review the use of statistics in grant applications. The CORRI considered it encouraging that nearly all areas across the University had been contributing to this work.

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 is ongoing.

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. An external panel member may be appointed to assist with a formal investigation; this will be determined on a case-by-case basis, with advice from Legal Services.

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. At a recent meeting of the CORRI, it was agreed that external members for formal investigations would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

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 continues to be delivered three times a year and is reaching a broad range of colleagues.

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	15 (UG)	15 (UG)		12 (UG)
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>				
Total:	15	15		12

***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 (see Governance Zone of University website)

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

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

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

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>