

# **TEESSIDE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH GOVERNANCE**

## **ANNUAL STATEMENT ON ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING RESEARCH INTEGRITY**

**ACADEMIC YEAR 2018-19**

**Approved Academic Board 8/07/2020**

### Institutional context of this statement

Research integrity activity is co-ordinated by Research and Innovation Services (RIS) and the University Research Ethics and Integrity sub-Committee (UREISC). Research Governance functions within RIS are overseen by the Secretary to UREISC and, who in tandem with Chair of UREISC, is responsible for leading the University's work in research integrity assurance.

The terms of reference of UREISC are:

- (a) To oversee the research ethics and research integrity training provided by the University.
- (b) To consider issues relating to research ethics and integrity, including the ethical propriety and legal compliance of research projects, as referred to it by RIC, PRAB, RESCs of Schools, or individual staff or students.
- (c) To review, on a regular basis, the University's policies, procedures and guidelines relating to research ethics, research conduct and research integrity.
- (d) To report annually to the Research and Innovation Committee
- (e) To provide information and advice to researchers in the University on issues relating to research ethics.
- (f) To consult internally/externally as necessary.

UREISC met four times over the 2018-19 academic year. The Committee's agenda covered all aspects of research ethics review done by School RESCs; and a specific section of each meeting agenda devoted specifically to strategy and policy on research integrity in all its aspects.

## Supporting and strengthening research integrity: strategy and implications of changes to institutional context

The *Framework and Code of Practice for Ensuring Research Integrity* in its current form has been in place since academic year 2012-13. A list of the relevant documents applicable to research ethics and integrity is given at the back of this statement. A review of the remit and scope of this Framework is planned for academic year 2019-20 in accordance with the revised UK *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*.

A key element of the approach has been the creation of the role of *Research Integrity Liaison Officer* (RILO) as ex-officio members of UREIC, attending UREIC meetings alongside School REC Chairs and other University staff with duties associated with ethics, integrity, and compliance. During 2018-19, the Chair and Secretary of UREISC – in tandem with RIS- established the new liaison function with the appropriate senior management in each of the Schools. Associate Deans (Research & Innovation) were provided with the requirements of the RILO role and asked to nominate sufficiently senior staff to act in this capacity for 2018-19 under the new structures operating in Schools. Changes to staffing have meant a number of appointments to this needed to be made and, as of 31-July-2019, two out of five Schools were still unrepresented, with the remit of the liaison role largely being handled by the Chair of the relevant SREC.

## Supporting and strengthening research integrity: guidance, support, training

Formal training is led by the Secretary of UREISC. All materials used are bespoke and based on international standards and principles. Advice and guidance is also provided frequently to individual members of staff and students by appointment. All new PGR students attend a mandatory ‘Research Values and Standards’ session, which is also open to other students and staff. Bespoke training is also provided for research ethics committee members.

During 2018-19, UREISC continued to review current training arrangements and, as part of a substantial revision of research training undertaken by RIS

The standard training offer covers research ethics, research integrity, data compliance, conflicts of interest, publication ethics, and general regulatory issues for research. In addition, training is provided in open science and open data.

## New policy and procedure

Significant new **policy and procedural developments during 2018-19** were:

- Procurement of an online ethics review manager system, to improve quality of review and audit capacity, for implementation in 2019-20
- Revision of referral mechanisms for security-sensitive research improving oversight for projects requiring legal and/or technical expertise, on the basis of an audit of activity
- The formation of a new School REC to manage local ethics review

## Addressing research misconduct

The University has two documents relating specifically to reporting and investigation of allegations of research misconduct. The *Framework and Code of Practice for Ensuring Research Integrity* is an institution-wide document setting out principles, standards, and responsibilities for research integrity, as well as definitions of research misconduct and procedures for allegations and investigations. In addition, the *Regulations Relating to Research Misconduct on Research Degrees* sets out definitions and procedures applied specifically to research degree programmes, including stages of reporting by supervisors, examiners, or other parties. The definitions of misconduct are the same in both documents, with extended definitions where misconduct applies in examination situations that do not apply to other students or to staff. These Regulations will undergo a full review in 2019-20 to ensure alignment with the revised UK *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*.

## Instances, allegations and investigations of research misconduct

The responsibility for receiving of research misconduct allegations and for convening screening processes or formal investigations lies with the Director of Research and Innovation Services with monitoring responsibilities by UREISC. Reporting of misconduct on research components of professional doctorates and taught postgraduate courses is collated retrospectively annually by OSCAR (Office of Student Complaints, Appeals and Regulations).

**An allegation** of Stage Two (serious offence) research misconduct against a research student was made during 2017-18. During 2018-19, a formal misconduct panel investigated the case and a formal outcome was reached that misconduct had been proven. As a result, the student's degree Registration was withdrawn.

**An allegation by an external complainant** about a staff project was investigated by the University Research Ethics & Integrity sub-Committee on

the basis of a complaint related to the process of research ethics review. The investigation was conducted and the outcome reported to senior management at local (School) and institutional level. It was found that there were no flaws in the ethics review process but that the content of the review application by the applicant was partly inaccurate and that some recommendations following review had not been followed, both aspects that were implicated in the complaint. After a response was made to the complainant, a second complaint was received that was investigated by a senior manager of the Vice-Chancellor's Office and a further response, providing further detail on the outcome of the investigation conducted by UREISC, was made. As a result of this case, a number of recommendations relating to collaborative research governance, dissemination of recruitment materials for research, and management of internet-mediated research data were made for implementation in future review of projects. All recommendations were included in design of the online ethics review system for implementation in 2019-20.

A number of **minor allegations** about improper research ethics review processes were made by external complainants during 2018-19, all of which were found either to be without foundation or that they related to undergraduate student projects not governed by the standard research ethics policies. The latter cases were referred to the appropriate academic Schools for consideration via channels linked to course module risk assessment.

### Summary of relevant research integrity documentation

*Policy, Procedures and Guidelines for Research Ethics*  
<http://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/DocRepo/Research/ethics.pdf>

*Framework and Code of Practice for Ensuring Research Integrity*  
<http://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/docrepo/research/code%20of%20practice1.pdf>

*Regulations Relating to Research Misconduct on Research Degrees*  
<http://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=Student%20Regulations&name=Research%20Regulations>

*Research and personal data*  
[http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/research/personal\\_data.cfm](http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/research/personal_data.cfm)