TEESSIDE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH GOVERNANCE

ANNUAL STATEMENT ON ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING RESEARCH INTEGRITY

ACADEMIC YEAR 2019-20

Approved by Academic Board 12-05-2021

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 twice at a standard meeting during the 2019-20 academic year and then using a virtually hosted meeting for the period March to July 2020. 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 planned review of the remit and scope of this Framework was planned for academic year 2019-20 in accordance with the revised UK *Concordat to Support Research Integrity,* but the review was put on hold until 2020-21 due to campus closure and Committee meetings being significantly affected by Covid-19 measures.

A key element of the institutions 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. Associate Deans (Research & Innovation) nominate staff to act in this capacity.

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 2019-20, UREISC continued to review current training arrangements at each meeting and, as part of a substantial revision of research training undertaken by RIS each year.

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.

Significant new **policy and procedural developments during 2019-20** were:

- Design and implementation of an online ethics review system, to improve quality of review and audit capacity, including extensive review of review criteria, training for REC members, and the creation of a suite of new training and guidance resources for both reviewers and applicants;

- Further 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, to include automatic referral for legal and/or technical advice via the online application system.

- Improved systems of monitoring funding and IP for research projects via the online application system and audit functionality once projects are in process.

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 2020-21 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 (RIS) 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 against a member of staff concerning authorship accreditation was received. The relevant School conducted an internal investigation and concluded that the some of the issues contained in the allegation should be

reported to the journal in which the publication appeared, while also recognizing that the many of the elements of the allegation appeared to be vexatious.

An allegation against a member of staff was received concerning published work that should have included the complainant as one of a number of authors. An investigation was initiated in 2019/20 but paused due to Covid-19 and the sickness absence of key witnesses required for interview. The investigation has now resumed at the time of this report (December 2020).

Minor allegations about improper research ethics review processes were made by external complainants, 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%20
Regulations

Research and personal data
http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/research/personal_data.cfm