

TEESSIDE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH GOVERNANCE

ANNUAL STATEMENT ON ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING RESEARCH INTEGRITY

ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-1

Approved: Academic Board 18-05-2022

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 using virtual meetings during the 2020-1 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

A list of the relevant documents applicable to research ethics and integrity is given at the back of this statement

The *Framework and Code of Practice for Ensuring Research Integrity* in its most recent form had origins in a document established in academic year 2012-13. During 2020-21 a full review of the remit and scope of this Framework was conducted in accordance with the revised UK *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*. The review concluded in July 2021 and the following changes were made:

- Updated references to revised national and international guidance;
- Specific changes to monitoring and reporting requirements for complaints and allegations at the local level;
- Minor amendments to procedure for staff to permit for capacity linked remedies to first offence allegations if resulting from lack of understanding rather than from deliberate misconduct;
- Major amendments to definitions of misconduct to include authorship irregularities and to incorporate PG Research specific categories;
- Major revision to include the entire Procedure for Investigation of Allegations for PG Research Student and discontinuance of the separate regulations for PG Research;
- Updating PG Research procedure to include new procedure for an Appeal stage and General Principles in line with Office of Independent Adjudicator (OIA) requirements.

A key element of the institution's 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. Staff movements to new roles and departure from the University have created a number of vacancies which has made continuity difficult in some Schools. This issue is now monitored closely by UREIC as part of Standing Items at each meeting and followed-up when necessary.

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 2020-1, 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.

It was agreed in 2020-21 to design and deliver a new mandatory research ethics and integrity training package for all staff and supervisors of students to be included in the standard HR monitored training requirements, on a three yearly cycle. This training package will be put in place during 2021-22.

New policy and procedure

Significant new **policy and procedural developments during 2020-1** were:

- Complete review and revision of the *Framework and Code of Practice for Ensuring Research Integrity*;
- New annual audit policy was agreed and approved for using the online ethics review system to improve quality of review and audit capacity, with first annual audit to be conducted October 2021;
- New quarterly audits for all research ethics activity, reporting to each meeting of UREIC;
- A new Due Diligence process for funded projects;
- Audit of international activity, with reference to ethics and integrity functions;
- Inclusion of open data requirements using DMP as part of online ethics applications;
- Criteria for undergraduate research ethics review were changed to require *all* undergraduate work involving recruitment of human participants to undergo review and not just those in the final year of an undergraduate degree.

Addressing research misconduct

In 2020-21, as part of a policy review, it was agreed to combine the two previously separate documents relating 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. As part of the policy review, the investigatory procedure from the second document, *Regulations Relating to Research Misconduct on Research Degrees* which applied specifically to research degree students and included stages of reporting by supervisors, examiners, or other parties, was incorporated into the revised Framework and the remaining definitions and supporting text discontinued. All relevant policy and procedures now sit in the same document with the same supporting text and definitions rather than across two documents to ensure clarity and consistency.

Instances, allegations and investigations of research misconduct

The responsibility for receiving of research misconduct allegations and for convening screening processes or formal investigations under the *Framework* 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).

It should be noted that until the review and revision of the Framework in 2020-21, authorship irregularities *per se* were not defined as 'misconduct' and so did not fall under the remit of the Framework but were referred to the relevant School and/or journal/publisher concerned. This has been changed in the updated policy document as noted in the section above.

- An allegation against a member of staff was received during 2019-20 and remained in process in the report made for 2019-20. This investigation was initially conducted informally by the relevant School and did not proceed to a formal investigation and so has been concluded.
- An allegation against a member of staff concerning authorship accreditation was received in 2020-21. The relevant School conducted an internal investigation and found the allegation not justified as there was a lack of evidence that authorship irregularities had occurred.
- 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.

The recurrence of such complaints – as referred to in previous annual statements - was the impetus for undertaking a brief evaluation of the criteria for undergraduate research ethics review and during 2020-21 the criteria for undergraduate projects were changed to require *all* undergraduate work involving recruitment of human participants to undergo review and not just those in the final year of an undergraduate degree.

Summary of publicly available research integrity documentation

Policy, Procedures and Guidelines for Research Ethics

<https://extra.tees.ac.uk/sites/publicdocuments/Legal%20and%20Governance%20Services/Policy,%20Procedures%20and%20Guidelines%20for%20Research%20Ethics.pdf>

Framework and Code of Practice for Ensuring Research Integrity

(As revised):

<https://extra.tees.ac.uk/sites/publicdocuments/Legal%20and%20Governance%20Services/Framework%20and%20CoP%20for%20ensuring%20Research%20Integrity.pdf>

Research and personal data

http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/research/personal_data.cfm

DISCONTINUED in 2021-22 but still a current document in 2020-21
Regulations Relating to Research Misconduct on Research Degrees
(no live link as document now discontinued)