Annual Research Integrity Statement 2021-2022

From: University Executive Board   **Date: January 2023**

INTRODUCTION

The University of Southampton ('the University') is strongly committed to fulfilling the principles of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (October 2019) ('the Concordat') to create a comprehensive framework for responsible research conduct and governance. The principles and commitments include:

- Upholding the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.

- Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.

- Supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers.

- Using transparent, timely, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.

- Working together to strengthen the integrity of research.

In compliance with the Concordat, the University publishes a Research Integrity Statement on an annual basis. All previous statements published by the University are available on our Research Integrity webpage.

The following Statement covers the period from **01 August 2021** to **31 July 2022.** It outlines the University's framework and activities in support of fostering a culture of research integrity and provides a high-level summary of research misconduct investigations undertaken by the University.

UNIVERSITY'S COMMITMENT TO FOSTERING A CULTURE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY

The University of Southampton recognises the importance of undertaking our activities responsibly, in accordance with the highest ethical standards, and in compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The University's new Strategy, launched in January 2022, is based on our core purpose, to inspire excellence to achieve the remarkable and build an inclusive world. The University fully recognises our responsibilities to researchers and the wider community and is strongly committed to fostering a culture of research integrity, responsible research conduct, ethics, compliance, and governance across the full spectrum of our research activities.

RESEARCH INTEGRITY LEADERSHIP

The Vice-President (Research and Enterprise) has the overall responsibility for compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity including the oversight of research policies, research ethics, research compliance and governance, as well as training and development opportunities for our staff and students. The following groups and committees support the Vice-President on matters relating to research integrity:

- **Research and Enterprise Executive Group (REEG)**
- **Research Integrity and Governance Committee (RIGC)**
- **University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)**
- **Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)**

The Vice-President (Research and Enterprise) reports regularly to the University Executive Board (UEB), University Senate, and Council on research integrity matters to ensure institutional oversight.

Deans have an overall responsibility for researchers in their respective Faculties. They are supported by Associate Deans Research (ADRs) who represent their Faculty on REEG and RIGC and are responsible for championing research integrity and implementation of research policies and processes within their Faculties.

Deans and ADRs are further supported by Research Integrity Champions (RICs) who have been appointed for each University Faculty. RICs contribute to promoting and fostering a culture of research integrity within the disciplines relevant to their respective Faculties.

The Research Integrity and Governance (RIG) Team supports the Vice-President (Research and Enterprise), ADRs and RICs on all matters related to research integrity, research ethics, research compliance and governance.

KEY RESEARCH INTEGRITY CONTACTS

Professor Mark Spearing, the Vice-President (Research and Enterprise), is the senior named person within the University of Southampton responsible for research integrity.

David Steynor, the Interim Head of Research integrity and Governance is the named first point of contact for queries or concerns about research integrity and/or allegations of research misconduct in line with the University's Procedure for Investigating Cases of Alleged Misconduct in Research and the Whistleblowing Policy.

Contact: researchintegrity@soton.ac.uk

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND GOVERNANCE TEAM

The University's Research Integrity and Governance (RIG) Team was established in 2016 and is based within Research and Innovation Services (RIS). Its responsibilities include:

- Leading on the compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity through facilitating review and development of research policies, guidance and processes.

- Oversight and management of research ethics processes through the University's ethics system ERGO, and governance review and monitoring of high-risk research projects.

- Providing expertise and advice on research integrity, research ethics, research compliance and clinical governance (including sponsorship of clinical trials and other externally regulated health and social care studies) in line with legal and ethical requirements and available guidance and codes of conduct.

- Providing advice and training to staff and students on all aspects of good and responsible research conduct including research integrity, research ethics, research compliance and clinical governance.

- Management of the University's [Procedure for Investigating Cases of Alleged Misconduct in Research](#) and ensuring that any allegations of research misconduct concerning University staff are investigated in a fair and timely manner.

RESEARCH POLICIES

The University has comprehensive research policies and procedures to meet the expectations of the Concordat, including the **Code of Conduct for Research** which provides an important framework for conducting research at the University and covers the entire research lifecycle.

The University's research policies can be found [here](#).

To ensure that our research policies are up-to-date, and that new policies are developed if required, a Research Policies Action Plan is maintained by the RIG Team and regularly reviewed by the Vice-President (Research and Enterprise) in consultation with RIGC, UREC, REEG and AWERB.

Before official release, each new or revised research policy is widely consulted with the University community. Changes to existing policies, or introduction of new policies and procedures, are communicated to staff and students via a number of communication channels, in line with our Research Policies and Guidance Dissemination and Communication Plan. The University aims to review and update its research policies every 3-5 years, or sooner where necessary in line with changes to relevant legislation, guidelines or requirements of regulatory bodies and funders.

RESPONSIBLE COLLABORATION / RESEARCH FUNDING

The University is committed to the highest standards of research integrity and ethics across all our activities including research, education and enterprise. The University has in place a [Statement of Responsible Collaboration](#) which states our position on considering research opportunities and funding in relation to potentially contentious organisations and sectors.

RESEARCH ETHICS

University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

The University has an overarching [Research Ethics Policy](#) and a number of ethics sub-policies. The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), chaired by the Vice President (Research and Enterprise), meets 3 times per academic year and has the overall responsibility for the process of ethics review at the University, and for oversight, development and review of policies and guidance related to research ethics. Each University Faculty has a Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) which is tasked with providing ethics reviews and approvals for research projects undertaken within the Faculty. All FRECs report annually to UREC and all FREC Chairs are UREC members. UREC membership also includes the Chair of the Animal Committee, Academic Registrar, Student representative and Lay Members. UREC reports to the Research Integrity and Governance Committee (RIGC).

ERGO II - Ethics and Research Governance Online

Since 2012 the University has been using an internal system ERGO (Ethics and Research Governance Online) which is an integrated platform for obtaining ethics approvals, sponsorship and insurance, and allows the RIG Team to provide digital oversight of research governance. The current system, ERGO II, was rolled out in March 2018, and since then its functionality has been continuously updated and expanded. ERGO II has improved and streamlined the ethics review process across the University, making it more user-friendly, as well as broadening the scope of ethics review to new areas raising ethics considerations.

All staff and student projects (including undergraduate and postgraduate students) which require an ethics review (notably but not exclusively studies involving human participants, animals, cultural heritage or analysis of data about people) must be registered, reviewed and approved through ERGO II. The system includes filter questions that allow researchers to check whether ethics review of their study is required. Retrospective ethics review is not allowed under any circumstances and where ethics approval was not obtained, this constitutes a breach of the University Research Ethics Policy.

Through ERGO II, in academic year 2021/2022, the Faculty Research Ethics Committees received the following number of staff and student research projects which were granted ethics approval:

- Faculty of Arts and Humanities: 228
- Faculty of Medicine: 215
- Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences: 198
  - Psychology Sub-committee: 403
  - Geography and Oceanography Sub-committee: 97
- Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences: 306
- Faculty of Social Sciences: 672
  - Business and Law Sub-committee: 1750

In addition, the RIG Team jointly with the Insurance Team reviewed 595 ethics submissions and amendments of high-risk research projects and the University of Southampton sponsored studies. Out of those submissions, 455 preceded externally regulated health and social care Research Ethics Committees (REC) reviews.

Research involving Cultural Heritage

Since October 2018 the University has the Ethics Policy on Cultural Heritage which applies both to land-based and underwater cultural heritage. The Policy aims to help researchers working with cultural heritage to consider the impact of their research, including the potential loss or damage to tangible cultural heritage, provenance and acquisition of artefacts, and working with human remains more than 100 years old.

Research and education activities involving Animals

The University Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) ensures that animal related research and activities are carried out according to ethical principles and the 3Rs (**R**eplacement, **R**eduction and **R**efinement). Its role is to ensure awareness of the highest standards of animal welfare and promoting a culture of care within the University academic community.

The University has a Policy for Involving Animals in Research and Education which was developed jointly by AWERB and the RIG Team. Information on the role and work of AWERB, examples of research involving animals, and number and types of animals used in regulated procedures, is available via the AWERB webpage. The University supports and is a signatory to the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK.

In academic year 2021/2022, AWERB and its sub-committees reviewed and approved the following research projects:

- 5 ASPA project licence applications.
- 15 applications for amendments.
- 107 applications for non-ASPA research.
- 18 project licence-holder 2-and 4-year progress reports and no retrospective assessments (as required by the Home Office).

Administrative Research Ethics and Quality Assurance (AREQA)

As part of the University Ethics Approval Process any administrative research (i.e. research activities for the specific purpose of monitoring, evaluating, or informing the development of the University strategy, plans, services, and activities) needs to be reviewed and approved via the [AREQA](#) process.

CLINICAL GOVERNANCE

One of the responsibilities of the RIG Team is to ensure that all clinical research sponsored by the University of Southampton is conducted in accordance with the principles of Good Clinical Practice and meets the relevant regulatory requirements set out by regulators.

The University has a trial portfolio of over 200 trials which have all had rigorous governance review and are subject to auditing and monitoring to ensure operational practices are maintained. During 2021/2022 55 new trials were sponsored and added to the portfolio.

Over the past year the team has worked hard to further develop the 'Greenlight Process' to enable studies to open much more efficiently. To date 5 new studies have benefited from this new process and the feedback has been extremely positive.

The team continues to work towards enhancing and improving the governance processes and has completed a full analysis to identify areas for action and review. This has formed the basis of an action plan for the year ahead.

RESEARCH INTEGRITY ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY

Research Integrity and Governance Committee (RIGC)

- The University's Research Integrity and Governance Committee (RIGC) is chaired by the Vice-President (Research and Enterprise) and regularly meets 3 times per academic year. Its core responsibility is to foster a culture of research integrity and responsible research conduct amongst the University's academic community. It provides leadership on policy development in line with the Research Policies Action Plan, and monitoring of implementation of regulatory compliance across the University. Membership of RIGC include ADRs, Lay Members and senior representatives from the Doctoral College, AWERB, Library, Finance, iSolutions and the RIG team. RIGC members provide Annual Research Integrity Reports for their respective Faculties/Departments which are considered by RIGC at the beginning of every academic year.

Training and professional development

- It is the University's policy that all researchers should receive appropriate training and development opportunities to enable them to conduct research to the highest standards.

- Each University Faculty organises regular training, workshops, and awareness raising events for both staff and students on research integrity and University research policies and procedures. Examples of these include: good research conduct, ethics submissions on ERGO II, ethics in research with human participants and human tissue, good laboratory practice, animal research ethics, academic integrity, authorship, and data protection and management. Training is delivered

both in-person, via remote online sessions and through online training modules. Information and advice is available on Faculties' Intranets and via regular newsletters, email communication or blogs.

- In addition to the training organised by the Faculties, the RIG team delivers training on all aspects of good and responsible research conduct including research integrity, research ethics, research compliance and clinical governance.

- University staff and students can also access a wide range of online skills training including technology, business, IT and creative thinking through the University's subscription to [LinkedIn Learning](#).

- **Doctoral College**

➢ Leadership on training and personal development for postgraduate researchers is provided through the University's [Doctoral College](#). The University strongly supports the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) and since 2012 has been holding and retaining the [HR Excellence in Research Award](#) for its ongoing work in implementing the Concordat.

- **Centre for Higher Education Practice (CHEP)**

➢ The University [Centre for Higher Education Practice](#) (CHEP) promotes academic professional learning for every member of University staff, in all areas of academic activity and at every stage of their career, by working in partnership with University Faculties.

Research Culture

- The University organises events dedicated to research culture with activities to promote conversations about challenges faced in research culture, reflections on what a better culture could look like, and possible solutions for how the current system could change. Research Culture activities are led by the joint Associate Vice-Presidents for Interdisciplinary Research.

Research and Innovation Services (RIS)

- Research and Innovation Services (RIS) developed the [RIS SharePoint site](#) which includes information for staff and students on all aspects of the research lifecycle (from research funding through to enterprise and commercialisation) with 'how to' guidance and signposting to important sources of information both elsewhere in the University and externally. This includes the RIG Team's guidance on research integrity, ethics, authorship, regulatory compliance and clinical governance. Some University Faculties created additional research integrity resources including case studies, reports, and links to relevant external websites which are available through the Faculty SharePoint sites.

- RIS publishes a monthly [RIS Newsletter](#) for researchers, and a termly publicly available magazine, [Re:action](#), both of which periodically include articles on research integrity, research culture, and University research policies and guidance written by the RIG Team in cooperation with relevant academics and professional services staff.

University Library

- The Library has developed a wide range of resources offering advice and support on [research data management](#) and [open access](#) research. To promote and foster best practice among staff and research students, the Library holds regular workshops and training on data management and open research, copyright clearance and publishing best practice, either face to face or via remote means. These courses can be booked via Gradbook (open to Post Graduate Researchers) or Staffbook, and other bespoke training sessions and talks can be arranged on request.

- The University has a **Responsible Research Metrics Policy** which was developed by the Library and is available [here](#) together with information on responsible use of metrics.

EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY ACTIVITIES (01 AUGUST 2021 TO 31 JULY 2022)

- In February 2022, the RIG Team set up a generic email address for all Export Controls and the new National Security & Investment (NSI) Act queries – exportandsecurity@soton.ac.uk

- In March 2022 the RIG Team submitted the Institutional Assurance and Annual Report on Possible Research Misconduct to the US Office of Research Integrity (ORI), in line with the requirements under the Public Health Services (PHS) Policies on Research Misconduct.

- In April 2022, the University joined the [Higher Education Export Control Association](#) (HEECA) – the national network to develop, maintain and promote best practice in Export Controls compliance across the UK Higher Education sector.

- Following the approval of the University [Authorship, Contribution and Publishing Policy](#) (June 2021), the Policy has been promoted via various University communication channels and events. In April 2022 the Library, RIG Team and CHEP delivered jointly a workshop on the Policy which covered the variety of topics including: the reasons for the University Authorship Policy, authorship vs a contribution, authorship disputes, unethical practices, and the Q&A session. Apart from the presentations, the audience was invited to participate in live polls and had an opportunity to discuss the case studies and any other authorship related issues in the breakout groups.

- In June 2022 the University approved the new revised [Conflicts of Interest Policy](#) which was developed jointly by the RIG Team, RIS and HR and widely consulted with the main stakeholders. The Policy introduced a new conflicts of interest process which aims to deliver a more risk-based approach and promote integrity to improve compliance and management of conflicts of interest as part of the University culture. The Policy is supplemented by comprehensive [Guidance](#).

- On 27 June 2022 a Festival of Open Research took place to celebrate the University's work with the UK Reproducibility Network, our research integrity and research culture. This was a face-to-face event which included the plenary session on open research, followed by parallel sessions showcasing open research examples across disciplines and career stages.

- On 06 July 2022 the Library held their 3rd Open Research Symposium under the theme ['Reflecting on the new Open'](#) which considered the current open research environment, as well as made predictions as to how things might evolve. The session involved speaker from the University of Southampton, as well as external speakers from F1000, CRediT, Kudos, Jisc, cOAlition S (Jisc), and NIHR.

- The RIG Team, in cooperation with the Doctoral College and the Library, has been working on developing new online Research Integrity Training for postgraduate research students. It is expected that the full version of the training will be released in academic year 2022/2023.

- The Library developed new content for their training sessions to promote best practice around publishing research outputs, and updated their bibliometrics training to improve engagement and awareness of the University [Responsible Research Metrics Policy](#).

- In November 2022, the University's annual Assurance Statements to the Vice-Chancellor for the period of 01 August 2021 to 31 July 2022 were presented to the University's Audit Committee. The Assurance Statements are signed by Faculty Deans and a number of University Directors. They cover a range of financial, legal compliance, health & safety, risk management and research

questions, and obtain assurance on matters of research integrity, ethics, data security and conflicts of interest.

A RICH ENVIRONMENT PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING RESEARCH INTEGRITY

The University has a number of academic lead groups, centres and initiatives that develop and support aspects of ethics, integrity and good research practices, including:

- **Health Ethics and Law (HEAL)** (established in 2005) is a leading interdisciplinary research group which explores the nature of health care law and its impact on society. It actively promotes engagement between academics, health professionals and policy makers, and makes substantive contributions to theory and practice. HEAL regularly takes part in important public consultations that shape policy approaches and professional guidelines, and its members hold numerous editorial positions and board memberships of leading journals in the field.

- **Southampton Ethics Centre (SEC)** (launched 2013/2014) brings together a large community of researchers working on ethics and ethics related issues across the University. The Centre provides newsletters and information on national events and hosts events locally.

- **Clinical Ethics, Law & Society (CELS)** (established in 2010) is a multidisciplinary research group that explores the ethical issues of rapid medical technological advances through research, education, policy engagement and public dialogue. Since 2021 the CELS group includes members both from the University of Southampton and the University of Oxford.

- **National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM)** was established by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in 2004 and was originally coordinated from the University of Southampton. Since 2014, NCRM has been a partnership between three universities with international reputations in methodological research and training in the social sciences: University of Southampton, University of Manchester and University of Edinburgh.

EXTERNAL MEMBERSHIPS

To ensure that the University keeps abreast of best practice in matters related to the Concordat and research integrity, it is a member of several external bodies including:

- **UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO)**
- **Association for Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA)**
- **Understanding Animal Research (UAR)**
- **Russell Group Research Integrity Forum (RGRIF)**
- **UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN)**
- **Higher Education Export Control Association (HEECA)**

Russell Group Research Integrity Forum (RGRIF)

The RIG Team actively participates within the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum (RGRIF) which aims to share best practice in the area of research integrity and research compliance among the Russell Group Universities.

UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN)

Since June 2020, the University has been a formal institutional member of the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN), a national peer-led consortium that aims to ensure that the UK retains its place as a centre for world-leading research.

Moreover, since 2019, the University has had a Local Network Lead in place as a point of contact for UKRN and to oversee grass-root groups (including Early Career Researchers) that meet periodically across the University to discuss issues related to reproducibility and open research, including the ReproducibiliTea journal club at Southampton. More information can be found at: https://library.soton.ac.uk/lovedata/reproducibiliTea . A new website was also set up to promote Local Network activities at Southampton.

ADDRESSING RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

University Students

Any concerns about research misconduct in relation to University students can be reported to the Curriculum and Quality Assurance (CQA) Teams based in every University Faculty. Such concerns will be treated as potential breaches of Academic Integrity (AI) and investigated by Academic Integrity Officers (AIOs) in line with the University's Regulations Governing Academic Integrity.

University Staff

The University has the Procedure for Investigating Cases of Alleged Misconduct in Research ('the Procedure') which has been revised and updated in February 2019 in line with the new requirements of research funders. The Procedure is managed by the RIG Team and includes clear principles and mechanisms to ensure that any investigations are conducted in a fair, thorough, objective and timely manner. All allegations are treated with confidentiality and in line with data protection legislation. Any allegations concerning University staff (both present and past) can be reported at the Faculty level by contacting the Faculty's Research Integrity Champion (RIC) or the Associate Dean Research (ADR), or directly to the RIG Team. As per the University's Procedure, all those raising concerns in good faith will be protected, supported and not penalised, in line with the University's Whistleblowing Policy.

Research Misconduct Investigations

The table below sets out the high-level details of investigations and findings in relation to research misconduct allegations covering University staff in academic year 2021/2022.

	Number of research misconduct allegations received. Academic Year	Number of allegations for which a preliminary investigation has been undertaken. Academic Year	Number of allegations upheld (in whole or in part). Academic Year
	2021/2022	**2021/2022**	**2021/2022**
Fabrication			
Falsification			
Plagiarism			
Misrepresentation			
Breach of Ethics			
Breach of Duty of Care			
Lack of authorship credit	1*		
Other e.g., unprofessional behavior.	1 1*	1	0

*These cases were ongoing at the time of publication.
** Blank box indicates no cases.

One more allegation was received by the RIG Team, but it turned out to be outside the jurisdiction of the University of Southampton and was therefore not investigated.

In addition to staff allegations/investigations, in academic year 2021/2022, 3 cases of plagiarism and 3 cases of breaching ethical standards were upheld for post graduate research (PGR) students.

As per our Procedure, where an allegation concerned funded research, or involved another third party, all relevant funders/third parties were informed about the allegation being investigated (in line with their policies and terms and conditions), as well as the outcome of the investigation.

Lessons learned

The RIG Team has been receiving at least a few research misconduct allegations every year, which suggests a good awareness of research misconduct issues amongst the academic community, but also that more training is required for all our researchers.

Based on investigations carried out to date, our Procedure needs to be slightly updated to cover some scenarios experienced during the investigations that are currently not mentioned in detail in the Procedure. A log of lessons learnt is being kept and the Procedure will be updated accordingly during the next review. The Procedure will be also updated, where necessary, in line with the revised UKRIO's Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research, once the final version is published.

This Statement was approved by the University Executive Board (UEB) on 17 January 2023.