University of Southampton

Annual Research Integrity Statement

From: University Executive Board **Date: January 2022**

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 2020** to **31 July 2021.** 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 revised Concordat. The University's *Simply Better* Strategy (2016) identified our core principles as collegiality, quality, internationalisation and sustainability. These principles were further underpinned by the values of excellence, creativity, community and integrity. The University fully recognises our responsibilities to researchers and the wider community, and we are strongly committed to fostering a culture and understanding of research integrity, responsible research conduct, governance, ethics, compliance and probity across the full spectrum of our research activities.

LEADERSHIP ON RESEARCH INTEGRITY

The Vice-President (Research and Enterprise) has the overall responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity including the oversight of research policies, research governance, ethics and compliance, as well as training and development opportunities for our staff and students. The following groups and/or 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 University Council on research integrity matters to ensure institutional oversight.

Faculty Deans have an overall responsibility for the performance management of researchers and academics in their respective Faculties. Deans 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 within their respective Faculties.

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

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

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 POLICIES

The University has in place a number of research policies, processes 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 and guidance 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 various communication channels, in line with our Research Policies and Guidance Dissemination and Communication Plan. The University aims to review and update our research policies every 3-5 years, or sooner where necessary in line with changes to relevant legislation, guidelines, codes of conduct 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 AND GOVERNANCE

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.

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 University insurance, and allows the RIG Team to provide digital research governance oversight and monitoring. 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 intuitive and 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 will constitute a breach of the University Research Ethics Policy.

Through ERGO II, in academic year 2020/2021, 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: 179
- Faculty of Medicine: 241
- Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences: 167
  - Psychology Sub-committee: 376
  - Geography and Oceanography Sub-committee: 111
- Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences: 305
- Faculty of Social Sciences: 489
  - Business and Law Sub-committee: 502

In addition, the RIG Team jointly with the Insurance Team reviewed 523 ethics submissions and amendments of high-risk/complex research projects and the University of Southampton sponsored studies. Out of those submissions, 394 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.

Since July 2019, the University has a new Policy for Involving Animals in Research and Education which was developed jointly by AWERB and the RIG Team. More information on the activities of AWERB, types of research involving animals, and examples of benefits arising out of such research 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 2020/2021, AWERB and its sub-committees reviewed and approved the following research projects:

- 2 ASPA project licence applications.
- 11 applications for amendments.
- 86 applications for non-ASPA research.
- 6 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.

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND GOVERNANCE TEAM

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

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

- Oversight and management of research ethics process through the University's ERGO II system, 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](#) (University staff) and ensuring that any allegations of research misconduct are investigated in a fair and timely manner.

- The RIG Team actively participate within the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum (RGRIF) which aims to share best practice in the area of research integrity among the Russell Group Universities, and regularly attend other events devoted to research integrity such as an annual conference organised by the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO).

RESEARCH INTEGRITY ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY

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 periodic induction, 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, research ethics and research governance (including ethics submissions on ERGO II), ethical issues in research with human participants and human tissue, Good Clinical Practice (GCP), good laboratory practice, animal research ethics, academic integrity, journal authorship, and data protection and management. Training is delivered both in-person and through online training modules, or via remote online sessions (due to COVID-19 pandemic). Information and advice is available on Faculties' Intranets and via regular newsletters, email communication or blogs.

- **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 holds the European Commission's [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.

- 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](#).

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. This includes Café Culture discussion sessions with researchers based on Wellcome's [Café Culture toolkit](#), articles devoted to research culture in various University newsletters (e.g. [October 2020](#) RIS

Newsletter), and presentations delivered by the Head of Research Integrity and Governance both to internal and external audiences.

RIS SharePoint

- 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. It also includes guidance on research integrity, ethics and regulatory compliance.

- 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/professional services staff.

University Library

- The University's Library has developed a wide range of resources offering advice and support on [research data management](#) and open research. To promote and foster best practice among staff and research students, the Library holds regular lunchtime sessions, briefings and workshops on the anonymisation and pseudonymisation of data, the correct storage and retention of data, copyright clearance and publishing best practice (either face to face or via remote means due to COVID-19 pandemic). 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 other information on measuring academic impact.

Research Integrity and Governance Committee (RIGC)

- The University's Research Integrity and Governance Committee (RIGC), established in 2015, meets regularly 3 times per academic year to provide leadership on policy development in line with the Research Policies Action Plan, and monitoring of implementation of regulatory compliance across the University. Its core responsibility is to foster and develop a culture of research integrity and responsible research conduct amongst the University's academic community. RIGC members provide Annual Research Integrity Reports for their respective Faculties/Departments which are considered by RIGC at the beginning of every academic year.

EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY ACTIVITIES (01 AUGUST 2020 TO 31 JULY 2021)

- In August 2020 the RIG Team, on behalf of the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), published an updated [Guidance on Electronic Mass Communication for the purpose of recruitment of research participants](#).

- The [October 2020](#) RIS newsletter included an article on research culture and signposted a series of related topics to be explored in future editions, including: open research, nurturing talent, EDI, the new culture related aspects of the updated Concordat to Support Research integrity, and tools to support a healthy research culture.

- In October 2020 the RIG Team, on behalf of UREC, published the new [Gatekeeper Guidance](#) to help researchers understand their obligations when recruiting certain groups of research participants and what University process should be followed.

- In December 2020 the University was inspected by the Export Controls Joint Unit (ECJU) on our compliance with the export controls requirements and licences we hold. The University passed the inspection successfully. Since the inspection the RIG Team has continued to engage with the ECJU and our academic community to promote awareness of the export controls rules by writing articles and blogs for University newsletters (e.g. [February 2021](#) RIS Newsletter), delivering export controls training sessions and regularly updating our [Export Controls Guidance](#). The University's Export Controls Compliance Statement is available [here](#).

- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the RIG Team developed, and has been regularly updating, a number of research ethics guidance documents including guidance for research involving human participants (both clinical and non-clinical) and guidance on remote data collection, which were made available via [RIS's COVID-19](#) SharePoint site.

- In June 2021 the University approved the new [Authorship, Contribution and Publishing Policy](#) which was widely consulted with our academic community. The Policy was developed jointly by the Library and the RIG Team and is supplemented by comprehensive [Guidance](#).

- In July 2021 the Library, jointly with the Centre for Higher Education Practice (CHEP), held an Open Research Symposium 'Credit where Credit is due' which focused on maximising credit and research impact; understanding the importance of appropriate attribution to research integrity; and exploring wider platform for research and publishing, including open peer review. More information about this event and some of the presentations are available [here](#).

- In July 2021 the RIG Team launched a new comprehensive [Research Ethics and Governance](#) SharePoint site which includes a lot of updated or brand-new guidance and general information for researchers on how to manage their research projects, including a lot of new information on clinical governance process, with links to further, relevant information.

- The University has been working on revising and updating its Conflicts of Interest Policy. The draft Policy and new Guidance were widely consulted with the main stakeholders and the University academic community. It is expected that the new version of the Policy will be published in academic year 2021/2022.

- In November 2021, the University's annual Assurance Statements to the President and Vice-Chancellor for the period of 01 August 2020 to 31 July 2021 were presented to the University's Audit Committee. The Assurance Statements are signed by Faculty Deans and by the Vice-President (Operations) on behalf of Professional Services. They cover a range of financial, legal compliance, health & safety and environmental questions, and specifically obtain assurance on matters of research integrity, ethics, research data management, conflicts of interest and information security.

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 an 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. The group holds regular events hosting external speakers on a variety of ethics topics which are widely attended by staff and postgraduate research students (PGRs).

- **Southampton Ethics Centre (SEC)** (launched 2013/2014) brings together a large community of researchers including PGRs 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 and Law at Southampton (CELS)** (established in 2010) is a multidisciplinary research group that explores the application of ethics and law in clinical practice through conceptual and empirical research, innovative teaching and public dialogue. It is actively engaged in national debates through its work with groups such as ELSI Research Group, Institute of Medical Ethics (IME) and UK Clinical Ethics Network (UKCEN).

- **National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM)** (established in 2004) provides training and capacity building activities in social science research methods which includes topics on good research practices and ethical issues. It was set up by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) at the University of Southampton and is now run in partnership with the Universities of Manchester and Edinburgh. In January 2020 NCRM entered a new phase with an ESRC award for 5 years which focuses on delivering a comprehensive programme of cutting-edge research methods training across the UK with its partners including: UCL, NatCen, WISERD, Bristol, Exeter, Essex, Leeds, Liverpool and Glasgow.

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)**

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. They include 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 2020/2021.

	Total number of research misconduct allegations/ concerns/complaints 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).
	2020/2021	**2020/2021**	**2020/2021**
Fabrication			
Falsification			
Plagiarism	3	2	0
Misrepresentation	1	0	
Breach of Ethics			
Breach of Duty of Care			
Authorship dispute/Lack of authorship credit			
Other e.g. unprofessional behavior.	1*		

*This case was ongoing at the time of publication.
** Blank box indicates no cases.

In addition to staff allegations/investigations, in academic year 2020/2021 3 cases of plagiarism 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

During the academic year 2020/2021 the RIG Team experienced an increased number of research misconduct allegations, from both internal and external sources, however not all of them proceeded to a preliminary investigation stage as per our Procedure. This suggests greater awareness of research misconduct issues, but also that more training is required for all our researchers (both staff and students).

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.

This Statement was approved by the University Executive Board (UEB) on 25 January 2022.