Annual statement on research integrity

If you have any questions about this template, please contact: RIsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk.

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	University of Wolverhampton
1B. Type of organisation:	Higher Education Institution
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	08/10/25
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/research-integrity/
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Professor Prashant Pillai, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research & Knowledge Exchange
	Email address: p.pillai@wlv.ac.uk
1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Name: Jill Morgan, Senior Officer Governance & Integrity
	Email address: J.Morgan4@wlv.ac.uk

Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken

2A. Description of current systems and culture

Please describe how the organisation maintains high standards of research integrity and promotes positive research culture. It should include information on the support provided to researchers to understand standards, values and behaviours, such as training, support and guidance for researchers at different career stages/ disciplines. You may find it helpful to consider the following broad headings:

- *Policies and systems*
- *Communications and engagement*
- *Culture, development and leadership*
- *Monitoring and reporting*

The University of Wolverhampton is committed to maintaining the highest levels of research integrity and adheres to the five principles of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

The University's senior lead for research integrity is the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research & KE (Professor Prashant Pillai), and the University's administrative lead is the Senior Officer Governance and Integrity (Ms Jill Morgan).

This annual statement reports on the University's compliance with the principles of the Concordat in the academic year 2024/25, and the steps we have taken to review our processes and procedures to ensure they remain aligned the principles of the Concordat.

In line with the Concordat, all researchers at the University are required to conduct research in accordance with the core elements of research integrity, namely honesty in all aspects of research, rigour in line with prevailing disciplinary standards and norms, transparency and open communication, and care and respect for all participants in and subjects of research.

The University provides Ethics Guidance (www.wlv.ac.uk/ethics) to enable all researchers to understand and act according to expected standards, values and behaviours. We provide a Handbook for Ethical Review and Approval, alongside the University Ethics Policy and Code of Good Research Practice. These provide researchers with a framework of processes, but also articulate standards, values and behaviours.

Policies and systems

Our central policy for Research Integrity is the Code of Good Research Practice. The revised version of the Code was approved in October 2023.

The University Ethics Policy, Code of Good Research Practice, and the Handbook for Ethical Review and Approval outline the policies and processes related to ethical approval. It is made available to researchers via the Ethics Webpages, which are referred to at induction and through ethics training.

In addition to the Handbook, the University has policies and procedures which support the University's commitment to research integrity. 'Research Policies, Procedures and Guidelines' www.wlv.ac.uk/researchpolicies contain all relevant policies, whereas the 'Ethics Guidance' www.wlv.ac.uk/ethics provides the repository for all ethics-related policies and processes.

We provide subject-based ethics resources on the website (organised by Faculty). The Senior Officer Governance & Integrity supports the University and researchers to adopt best practice in relation to research integrity and ethics.

Embedding a culture of research integrity

During 2024/25 all research governance committees were reviewed to bring together research and innovation. Oversight of research integrity, ethics, trusted research and open research lies with the new Committee for Ethics & Research Integrity (CERI), a sub-committee of the University Research & Innovation Committee (URIC). CERI is currently chaired by the PVC Research & KE, who is also the senior institutional lead for research integrity. The contact details are published on the University website: https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/research-integrity/ .

Previously each Faculty had a Faculty Ethics Committee (FEC). This has now been replaced by Faculty Ethics & Research Integrity Committee (FERIC) to reflect the importance of Research Integrity and good research practice alongside ethical research practices. FERIC is a sub-committee of the Faculty Research & Innovation Committee (FRIC). Each Faculty also has a number of Ethics Subject Panels which scrutinise and approve ethical submissions by researchers at subject level and provide additional guidance in respect of subject-specific ethical requirements. FERICs have lay person membership. Annually, each FERIC provides a standardised report to CERI, which enables the monitoring of FERICs and sharing of good practice.

Resources on research integrity are available through the website www.wlv.ac.uk/ethics. Training was made available by the Doctoral College via the University' Virtual Learning

Environment (Canvas) – Research Staff Development Programme and Postgraduate Researcher Development Programme.

The programme is signposted to staff via the University's Organisational Development webpages, and to research students via the Doctoral College webpages. We run an annual Research Integrity Symposium for our research students.

The University has made a commitment to supporting researcher development through subscription to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework Planner. This assists with professional development and career planning and provides developmental resources.

We regularly review and update our policies and procedures in the light of national and international developments.

Our research strategy highlights research integrity as an underpinning principle as well as identifying the development of a research culture that promotes rigour integrity and responsible research among the three strategic priorities.

We joined the UK Reproducibility Network https://www.ukrn.org/ and became signatories to the Declaration on Research Assessment DORA https://sfdora.org/ to contribute to best practice on research culture and research integrity.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

Please provide an update on any changes made during the period, such as new initiatives, training, developments, also ongoing changes that are still underway. Drawing on Commitment 3 of the Concordat, please note any new or revised policies, practices and procedures to support researchers; training on research ethics and research integrity; training and mentoring opportunities to support the development of researchers' skills throughout their careers.

Following a significant year for policy review in 2023/24, the 2024/25 academic year has been much quieter in terms of policy changes.

Our web pages were updated and revised for Research Integrity and Ethics Guidance, plus new 'Research involving Off-Site and/or Lone Working' and 'Undertaking Research Outside of the UK' guidance.

The Research Policies, procedures & Guidelines webpage www.wlv.ac.uk/researchpolicies brings together guidance for researchers on and links to University policies addressing issues of research integrity, responsible research, research ethics and general matters of good research practice.

IP and Commercialisation Review

The Director of Research & Enterprise commissioned Symbiosis IP who are experts in commercialisation of discoveries and ideas. An IP policy framework was developed which includes student IP, staff IP, consultancy, spin out and a conflict-of-interest policies.

HR Excellence in Research Award

Our submission in 2025 for the HREiR award reflects our heightened priority for research over the coming decade.
Our approach has been grounded in understanding the needs of our research community in an evidenced based way. In seeking the HREiR award we are responding to the voice and needs of our research community, being ambitious in key areas of need, while not over committing at the expense of ensuring our core activity is fit for purpose.
The approved action plan will move to the Committee for Researcher Development & Doctoral Studies (CRDDS) to drive implementation.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

This should include a reflection on the previous year's activity including a review of progress and impact of initiatives if known relating to activities referenced in the previous year's statement. Note any issues that have hindered progress, e.g. resourcing or other issues.

In 2024 the university appointed a Director of Research & Enterprise to create a new Research & Enterprise Directorate. During 2024/25 the University underwent an organisational change process to build the Directorate resulting in team restructuring and changes in staffing. Following this the remaining roles were advertised externally in early 2025 and recruitment is ongoing. It is anticipated that the Directorate will have a full complement of staff by the start of the 2025/26 academic year.

The university will then look to appoint an academic lead for Research Integrity.

The project to implement the new Ethics Management System, WERM (Wolverhampton Ethical Review Manager) remained on hold whilst the new Directorate was being formed and will recommence once system administration is in place. The Institutional Sponsorship Policy - Health & Social Care Research and Institutional Sponsorship application process will be reviewed alongside the implementation, with a view to incorporating the application process into WERM.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

Please provide:

- *a brief summary of relevant organisation policies/ processes (e.g. research misconduct procedure, whistle-blowing policy, bullying/harassment policy; appointment of a third party to act as confidential liaison for persons wishing to raise concerns) and brief information on the periodic review of research misconduct processes (e.g. date of last review; any major changes during the period under review; date when processes will next be reviewed).*
- *information on how the organisation creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct (e.g. code of practice for research, whistle-blowing, research misconduct procedure, informal liaison process, website signposting for reporting systems, training, mentoring, reflection and evaluation of policies, practices and procedures).*
- *anonymised key lessons learned from any investigations into allegations of misconduct which either identified opportunities for improvements in the organisation's investigation procedure and/or related policies / processes/ culture or which showed that they were working well.*

Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research

The Procedure underwent a major review and was approved in January 2024. This review was scheduled but provided the opportunity to align to the new UK Research Integrity Office's Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research (2023).

The Procedure now applies to research students. Alleged misconduct relating specifically to the assessed element of a research degree, i.e. Annual Progress Review, Progression Stage, the thesis, or a resubmitted thesis will be dealt with under the Research Degree Regulations 'Appendix 13: Procedure for managing an alleged assessment offence'. However, alleged misconduct in a research degree programme relating to the conduct of the research itself will be investigated using these procedures.

To make it simpler for people to follow a flowchart was constructed that documents the process throughout the policy.

The Procedure sets out the safeguards in place for the complainant and respondent, when suspected instances of misconduct are reported. It is confidential, transparent, timely, robust and fair and protects the rights and interests of all parties to ensure accountability when things go wrong with clear rights of appeal.

Alternatively, the University of Wolverhampton has a new Speak Up Policy. In our Speak Up Policy 'Whistleblowing' means the reporting by any member of the University community of suspected misconduct, illegal acts, or a failure to act.

The number of investigations, via receipt of this statement, are reported annually at the Committee for Ethics & Research Integrity, the University Research & Innovation Committee and Academic Board.

For the first time we received three allegations which were made anonymously under the pseudonym 'Clare Francis'. 'Clare Francis' is used by a person (or group of people) since 2010 to call attention to suspected cases of plagiarism and fabricated or duplicated figures in research publications. Although some of the complaints have resulted in retractions, there have also been concerns from journals and universities that the claims are often unparticularised, difficult to verify and can often be a waste of time to investigate.

The University has to exercise particular care when dealing with anonymous allegations, as it also has a duty to protect researchers from ill-founded, frivolous, mischievous or malicious complaints.

This year we conducted one formal research misconduct investigation at the university, relating to two related allegations by Claire Francis. The investigation concluded that there was no misconduct on the part of the University of Wolverhampton researcher but that there may have been research misconduct by the remaining authors based at an overseas institution. The University will follow up the matter as far as possible with the overseas institution and will seek to rectify the record of research.

A further allegation made by Claire Francis was reviewed in accordance with our procedure, but no evidence of research misconduct was found. The table below notes the 3 allegations and 1 formal investigation which all related to possible Fabrication, Falsification or Misrepresentation.

3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken

Please complete the table on the number of **formal investigations completed during the period under review** (including investigations which completed during this period but started in a previous academic year). Information from ongoing investigations should not be submitted.

An organisation's procedure may include an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. These allegations should be included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column.

Type of allegation	**Number of allegations**			
	Number of allegations reported to the organisation	**Number of formal investigations**	**Number upheld in part after formal investigation**	**Number upheld in full after formal investigation**
Fabrication	*3*	*1*	-	*0*
Falsification	*3*	*1*	-	*0*
Plagiarism	-	-	-	-
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	-	-	-	-
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)	*3*	*1*	-	*0*
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	-	-	-	-
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)	-	-	-	-
*Other**				
Total:	**3**	**1**	**0**	**0**

***If you listed any allegations under the 'Other' category, please give a brief, high-level summary of their type here. Do not give any identifying or confidential information when responding.**

[Please insert response if applicable]