# The Concordat to Support Research Integrity

Annual Statement 2017/2018

**Background**

1. The University of Wolverhampton (henceforth The University) is committed to maintaining the highest levels of research integrity and adheres to the five principles of the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*:

1. Maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research
2. Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards
3. 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
4. Using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct, should they arise
5. Working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.

The University's senior lead for research integrity is the Dean of Research (Professor Silke Machold), and the University's administrative lead is the Research Policy Officer (Ms Jill Morgan).

2. This annual statement reports on the University's compliance with the principles of the Concordat in the academic year 2017/18.

**Maintaining the highest standards of research integrity**

3. In line with the Concordat, all researchers[1] 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.

4. The University provides Ethics Guidance (https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/ethics-guidance/ ) to enable all researchers to understand and act according to expected standards, values and behaviours. The Handbook for Ethical Approval and Practice Procedures, which is revised annually and published on the University website, summarises good practice in relation to nurturing research integrity and outlines systems and procedures in relation to upholding research integrity.

**Conduct of research according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards**

5. The Handbook for Ethical Approval and Practice Procedures outlines the policies and processes related to ethical approval. It is made available to researchers at induction and through ethics training.

6. In addition to the Handbook, the University has a number of policies and procedures which support the University's commitment to research integrity:

- Policy Statements on Equality and Diversity https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/equality-and-diversity/policies-and-governance/policy-statement/

[1] We follow the guidance of the UK Research Integrity Office (2009) and define researchers as "…any people who conduct research, including but not limited to: as an employee; as an independent contractor or consultant; as a research student; as a visiting or emeritus member of staff; or as a member of staff on a joint clinical or honorary contract."

- Transparency Policy (including Anti-bribery, conflicts of interest, Fraud and Whistleblowing) https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/governance/legal-information/corporate-compliance/transparency/
- Data Protection https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/governance/legal-information/corporate-compliance/data-protection/
- Freedom of Speech https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/governance/legal-information/freedom-of-speech-/
- Health and Safety Policies https://www.wlv.ac.uk/staff/services/hsd/policies-procedures--forms/
- Intellectual Property Policy https://www.wlv.ac.uk/media/departments/office-of-the-vice-chancellor/documents/Intellectual-Property-Policy---Version-3---approved-July-2016.pdf
- Publications Policy, including Open Access https://www.wlv.ac.uk/media/departments/office-of-the-vice-chancellor/documents/University-of-Wolverhampton-Publications-Policy.pdf
- Policy for Use of Human Tissue for Research https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/ethics-guidance/use-of-human-tissue-for-research/uow-policy-for-use-of-human-tissue-for-research/
- NHS Ethics https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/ethics-guidance/nhs-research/
- Research Data Management Policy (including open data) https://www.wlv.ac.uk/media/departments/research/documents/Research-Data-Management-Policy.docx

**Embedding a culture of research integrity**

7. Oversight of research integrity lies with the University Ethics Committee (UEC), a sub-committee of the University Research Committee. The UEC is chaired by the Dean of Research, who is also the senior institutional lead for research integrity.

8. Each Faculty has a Faculty Ethics Committee (FEC), a sub-committee of the Faculty Research Committee, which scrutinises and approves ethical submissions by researchers at subject level, and provides additional guidance in respect of subject-specific ethical requirements. FECs have lay person membership. Annually, each FEC provides a standardised report to UEC, which enables the monitoring of FECs and sharing of good practice.

9. Resources on research integrity are available through the website, and via the Virtual Learning Environment (formerly WOLF, now Canvas).

10. 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.

11. Training on research integrity is provided by the Doctoral College. 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.

12. Awareness of the Concordat is monitored through the bi-annual CROS and PIRLS surveys. Responses to the surveys have also informed the development of new initiatives, such as a research leadership programme.

13. We regularly review and update our policies and procedures in the light of national and international developments. For example, in 2017/18 we have developed the institutional Data Management Policy, and work is underway on a policy on the responsible use of research metrics. Our annual research conference 2018 is themed 'Responsible Research' and includes sessions on new paradigms in research ethics, open access, and responsible research and impact. An ethics development review is underway identify good practice and how our systems and procedures can be improved.

**Research Misconduct**

14. The procedures for handling allegations of research misconduct are described in the Handbook for Ethical Approval and Practice Procedures. For research students, misconduct processes are encompassed in the University's Regulations and Procedures for Academic Misconduct, whereas allegations against staff are investigated in line with the procedures outlined in the Transparency Policy. In the case of the latter, consideration may be given to taking action under the University's Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.

15. The University's Transparency Policy identifies the procedures of making public interest disclosures ('whistleblowing'), and how the University deals with disclosures. The contact email address is transparency@wlv.ac.uk.

16. The University has robust processes and procedures for complaints, by staff and students.

17. In the academic year 2017/18, there were no formal investigations of staff or research students regarding research misconduct.

**Commitment to Strengthening Research Integrity**

18. The University is committed to reviewing policies, procedures and support towards strengthening research integrity, as evidenced in the initiatives already identified in this statement.

19. The University Ethics Committee takes the lead on research integrity in collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders. Initiatives planned for 2018/19 include:

- Review of procedures and processes for investigating misconduct to ensure these are aligned with best practice
- Embedding good practice on data management, including additional resources, training and infrastructure
- A review of ethics procedures, including digital support