The Concordat to Support Research Integrity

Annual Statement 2019/20

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. Upholding 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, timely, 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 review 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 2019/20, and the steps we have taken to review our processes and procedures to ensure they remain aligned the principles of the Concordat.

Upholding 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/ethics) 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.

5. We have participated in the consultation on the revised national Concordat, and have reviewed our policies, procedures and processes in line with these revisions.

[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."

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

6. 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.

7. In addition to the Handbook, the University has a number of policies and procedures which support the University's commitment to research integrity. We have reorganised our website to group all relevant policies under 'Research Policies, Procedures and Guidelines' https://www.wlv.ac.uk/researchpolicies for ease of use.

- Policy Statements on Equality and Diversity https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/equality-and-diversity/policies-and-governance/policy-statement/
- 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/about-our-research/policies-and-ethics/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/about-our-research/policies-and-ethics/ethics-guidance/nhs-research/
- Data Management Policy (including open data) https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/
- University of Wolverhampton Research Indicators (Metrics) Policy https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/
- Academic authorship policy https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/
- Institutional Sponsorship Policy – Health and Social Care Research https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/

8. In 2019/20, we have developed a Code of Good Research Practice, which brings together sector best practice and our own guidance and procedures.

Supporting a culture of research integrity

9. 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. The contact details are published on the University website, with a click-through link to ease reporting https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/concordat-to-support-research-integrity/.

10. 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.

11. Resources on research integrity are available through the website, and via the University' Virtual Learning Environment (Canvas) – Research Staff Development Programme and Postgraduate Researcher Development Programme.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. We regularly review and update our policies and procedures in the light of national and international developments. For example, in 2019/20, we revised our processes and procedures for health and social care research, amended our procedure for dealing with allegations of misconduct in research in line with the revised Concordat, and developed the Code of Good Research Practice. We also developed an Open Research Statement as a way of cementing our commitment to Open Research.

15. 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.

Research Misconduct

16. For staff (current, former and honorary), the Procedures of Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct in Research (Staff) govern how we deal with allegations. For research students, misconduct processes are encompassed in the University's Regulations and Procedures for Academic Misconduct. Both are published on the University website https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/ethics-guidance/research-misconduct/, and kept under regular review.

16. 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 for such disclosures is transparency@wlv.ac.uk.

17. In the academic year 2019/20, we dealt with the following allegations of misconduct in research:

	Number of allegations for which an investigation has been undertaken	Number of allegations upheld, fully or in part
Fabrication	1 (6 staff)*	0
Falsification	1 (6 staff)*	1 (2 staff)
Plagiarism	2 (student)**	1 (student)
Misrepresentation	1 (6 staff)*	0
Breach of duty of care		
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct		
Other	1 (6 staff)*	0

* there was one allegation and the investigation covered 4 possible areas of misconduct
** one investigation ongoing

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 2020/21 include:

- Develop and embed best practice on research integrity related animal research (current research in animal conservation) – delayed from 2019-20 due to C19.
- Further enhance resources and training on research integrity, especially at subject level (in response to outcome of research misconduct investigation).
- Membership of UK Reproducibility Network and associated commitments (in response to research misconduct investigation)

Silke Machold

Dean of Research