The Concordat to Support Research Integrity

Annual Statement 2021/22

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 Integrity Manager (Ms Jill Morgan).

2. This annual statement reports on the University's compliance with the principles of the Concordat in the academic year 2021/22, and the steps we have taken to review our processes and procedures to ensure they remain aligned the principles of the Concordat.

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/ethics) to enable all researchers to understand and act according to expected standards, values and behaviours. We provided an updated Handbook for Ethical Review and Approval 2021-2022; alongside the existing University Ethics Policy and Code of Good Research Practice. These provide researchers with a framework of processes, but also articulate standards, values and behaviours. We have updated the ethics guidance webpage to support researchers to understand and act on these.

[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

5. 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. We have updated researchers of the revisions made in 2021/22 through the ethics committee, an all- staff email and staff newsletter.

6. In addition to the Handbook, the University has a number of policies and procedures which support the University's commitment to research integrity. 'Research Policies, Procedures and Guidelines' https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/ contain all relevant policies, for ease of use, whereas the 'Ethics Guidance' https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/ethics-guidance/ provides the repository for all ethics-related policies and processes. In 2021/22, we reviewed and updated the ethics handbook, the Research Indicators (Metrics) Policy and the Open Access Publications Policy.

7. We have added subject-based ethics resources to the website (organised by Faculty). We have created the post of Research Integrity Manager to support the University and researchers to adopt best practice in relation to research integrity and ethics. In 2021/22, we re-organised research administration in faculties and the new posts of Research Support Administrators include responsibilities for managing and supporting ethics processes.

8. We developed and implemented a new process for institutional sponsorship in line with Institutional sponsorship policy.

Embedding 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/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. In 2020/21, we provided additional guidance to researchers on COVID-19 related adjustments, including updated links to the NHS Health Research Authority Guidance.

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.

16. 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.

17. In 2021/22 we added a session on Research Integrity to the mandatory training for new academic staff 'Essentials of the Classroom'. This session familiarises staff with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, signposts resources and discusses a number of current integrity issues.

Research Misconduct

18. For staff (current, former and honorary), the Procedures for 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.

19. 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.

20. In the academic year 2021/22, we received one allegation of research misconduct. The allegation related to *'Misrepresentation of involvement, such as inappropriate claims to authorship and/or attribution of work where there has been no significant contribution, or the denial of authorship where an author has made a significant contribution.'* and warranted initial screening (Stage 1) to determine whether there has been a failure to abide by the University's Code of Good Research Practice and/or the Academic Authorship Policy. The allegation was not upheld following completion of Stage 1 of the Procedures.

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

21. The institutional lead received two enquiries from members of the public. One related to a historic knowledge exchange project, which was out of scope of the procedures. Following feedback from our institutional Knowledge Exchange Concordat submission, we will be commencing work on producing ethics guidance for Knowledge Exchange projects. The second one related to the content of a survey – this was investigated with the relevant faculty ethics leading to amendments in the participant information sheets and further guidance to subject ethics panels.

Commitment to Strengthening Research Integrity

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

23. UKRN local networks lead set up a grassroots initiative – the RIOT Science Club Wolverhampton – to promote Reproducible, Interpretable, Open & Transparent Science. The group provide a seminar series which is available through the OSF Centre for Open Science.

24. The University Ethics Committee takes the lead on research integrity in collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders. In 2020/21, we have completed the UKRIO Self-Assessment tool for the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, and started implementing the results in 2021/22. This included a new 'End of Study' monitoring process to allow us to capture learning. Guidance for staff is available via End of Study Monitoring Guidance (Word doc 19k).

Silke Machold

Dean of Research