



UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA

Concordat to Support Research Integrity 23/24 Annual Statement

September 2024

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1. Introduction

The University is committed to supporting the highest standards of research integrity as outlined in the 2019 [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#). The five commitments are outlined below:

- Commitment 1: To uphold the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.
- Commitment 2: To ensure that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal, and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.
- Commitment 3: To support 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.
- Commitment 4: To use transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.
- Commitment 5: To work together to strengthen the integrity of research and to review progress regularly and openly.

2. Policy Context

The University's *Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC)* is responsible for ensuring adherence to these commitments. Day-to-day management is undertaken by the *Research Ethics Panel (REP)*, a sub-committee of RKEC. A number of policies, procedures and guidance documents are in place to support researchers and to uphold integrity, and these are available on the University's public [webpages](#) and staff intranet (Staff Hub). These include:

- Code of Practice for Research
- Postgraduate Code of Practice for Research
- Research Ethics Policy
- Open Access Policy
- Lone Worker Procedures for Research
- Intellectual Property Policy
- Data Protection Policy

The *Research, Knowledge Exchange and Graduate School Directorate (RKE-GS)* is responsible for reviewing and updating these codes and policies on behalf of RKEC. The *Research Skills Development Programme* is open for PgRs and staff, featuring sessions on Ethical Research and Ethical Approval as well as an *Induction* and *Introduction to Research*.

These policies also interact and refer to, relevant corporate policies, including the *Corporate Public Interest Disclosure Policy* (outlining support for whistle-blowers) and the *University's Disciplinary Policy*. These are available on the University's staff hub pages.

Research integrity is discussed at the corporate and policy level as well as at local levels via our Research Centres and Networks. This ensures an open and honest culture of research integrity and disclosure.

RKE-GS works closely with Library Services and the Head of Library Services and University Librarian, who is also a member of RKEC. Additional resources to support research integrity are available via the Library webpages, including:

- Principles of good data management
- Managing References
- Copyright and Research
- Research Output Metrics

3. Research Governance

Research governance is enabled through:

The Research Ethics Panel (REP) which is a sub-committee of the RKEC and is chaired by Associate Professor Paul Miller in the Institute of Health and comprises of representatives from each academic area as well as PGR student representatives. There are two external panel members too, an academic from another university, and a non-academic lay member. The REP is responsible for ensuring that proposed research submitted for consideration meets required ethical standards, and that feedback to applicants will help support and develop their understanding of good ethical research conduct

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) is chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) and comprises of Institute Directors, Research Centre Directors, Chair of the Research Ethics Panel, Professoriate Representative, academic representatives from each Institute, Students' Union Representative, PGR Student Representative, Library Service Representative, HR Representative, as well as relevant staff from the Research, Knowledge Exchange and Graduate School Directorate. This enables effective coordination of research activity and integrity. RKEC subsequently reports to the *Academic Board* and relevant governance documents are reviewed by both REP and RKEC before being taken to Academic Board for final approval.

Ethical approval is prospectively required for all research and experimental development (R&D) work carried out by staff and students at the University. It is the responsibility of the research supervisor (at both undergraduate & postgraduate level) to ensure that research complies with University ethical guidelines. The REP is primarily concerned with staff and postgraduate student research, and is tasked with ensuring that the dignity, rights and welfare of research participants are protected.

The REP will scrutinise proposals, from staff and PGRs, for research involving human participants (that are not otherwise subject to Health Research Authority [HRA] ethical approval) and where appropriate, non-human animals as identified. Proposals requiring NHS ethical clearance are expected to follow the most recent guidance provided by the NHS Research Ethics Service (NRES).

The *Head of Research and Knowledge Exchange* is the named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity and ensure that this information is kept up to date and publicly available on the institution's website. *The Head of Research and Knowledge Exchange* is also listed as a contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity. Contact details are publicly available on our website.

4. Code of Practice and research misconduct

The University of Cumbria (UoC) Code of Practice for Research is a comprehensive document, and its provenance is founded in accepted international standards for research integrity which have not changed over the years save for the addition of detail via the development of local policies. The Code of Practice for Research describes inter alia, the process in place at UoC for conducting research with integrity and also how UoC should respond to allegations of research misconduct. Those allegations may originate from any member of the University community or indeed from external sources and the University is under a duty to investigate and discharge allegations appropriately. The process is set out in paragraph 5 of the Code. In short, the Code puts into practice the five commitments set out in paragraph 1 above and the requirements within the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/field/downloads/2021-08/Updated%20FINAL-the-concordat-to-support-research-integrity.pdf> p.16)

5. Developments

Across the academic year 23/24, the following activities were undertaken to ensure continued support of research integrity and implementation of the concordat:

- The [Research Ethics Policy](#) was revised
- The research [ethics guidance and templates](#) for staff and students, and tips for preparing a good ethics application were updated
- The university became a member of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) in September 2024.
- A refresher training for all panel members was delivered in February 2024
- We have subscribed to an online 'Introduction to Research Integrity' training course which was co-developed by UKRIO and University College London and 101 members of staff have registered for this course. 13 staff completed this training course in 23/24.
- PGRs have continued to access training on research integrity and ethics proposals via the *Research Skills Development Programme*.
- A new training programme for staff on research ethics has been developed for rollout from the beginning of the academic year 2024-25

As required by the concordat, we can confirm there were **0** formal investigations of research misconduct undertaken during 2023/24.