

Annual Research Integrity Statement

2020-21

(P2122-202)



INTRODUCTION

This is the 6th Annual Statement of Research Integrity for Swansea University, covering the academic period of 2020/21. This report provides a short summary of the activities undertaken by the University to demonstrate its commitment to the 5 principles of the **Concordat to Support Research Integrity**.

As a signatory to the Concordat, the University in 2015, revised its Governance structures, policies and processes for Research Integrity, Ethics & Governance.

The University expects its staff (including honorary staff), students, visitors and collaborators to undertake research, in accordance with the research integrity policies and processes published in the Research Integrity Policy Framework [Research Integrity: Ethics and Governance - Swansea University](#) and on the University Research webpages. ([Research Integrity: Ethics and Governance - Swansea University](#))

Further guidance and training on research ethics and governance processes are available to University Staff and Students through the University's Intranet pages.

1. Strengthening Research Integrity

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS & ACTIVITIES (2020-21)

➤ **Research & Innovation Strategy (2020-2025)**

The University's Research & Innovation Strategy for 2020-2025 was revised and approved by University Senate. The strategy has the following commitments in relation to research integrity and culture:

1. "We will promote a positive research culture that allows us to achieve our ambitions, harnessing the cumulative value of research leaders' knowledge, time and endeavour. We are signatories to the Researcher Concordat and our open research approach will ensure that we publish research of the highest quality and integrity. Our culture will augment opportunities for our researchers to reach their full potential"
2. "We will sustain a research community and research culture that empowers individuals to conduct research with the highest standards of integrity. As an internationally engaged University committed to solving global, as well as national, problems our strategy outlines our research and innovation approach through partnership. We are aware that this increases potential for risk exposure in all that we do. We will signal reputational, ethical and security risks in our formal processes and will refine the best processes at home and overseas to protect the institution, our people and their research"

By 2022: we will have

- Further strengthened a culture of research integrity and open research knowledge sharing by senior researchers/managers, so assuring the publication of robust research outputs of the highest calibre.
- Enhanced our robust due diligence processes for international research collaborations, mitigating risks and implementing policies and contractual agreements to protect IP, so keeping pace with the rest of the world's standards.
- Established our Open Scholarship academy

- Embraced Open Science and Scholarship across the University to ensure our foundation data and evidence is available for scrutiny, enhancing reproducibility of research and benefiting our reputation and the communities we serve.
- Provided a University-wide approach to funding, enabling, developing and rewarding Open Access, Research Data Management, Citizen Science.
- Fully integrated our approach to Research Assessment, based on San Francisco Declaration Assessment of Research (DORA) principles.
- Embedded responsible innovation principles, promoting socially desirable innovation in the public interest and creating ways to explore motivations and unpredictable impacts, beneficial or otherwise.

By 2025: we will have

- Encouraged transparency and open communication in publishing negative or null results to recognise their value as part of the research process.
- Engaged with research integrity through recognition in performance review. Considered workload model planning and other relevant staff management processes.
- Continued our focus on our responsible use of research metrics particularly for decision making and with respect to staff reward and recognition.
- Demonstrated our commitment to countering environmental change. Sustainability will be a priority when considering our actions as well as our research activity and impact.

➤ Governance & Leadership:

- **Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor (Research Culture):** The University has recently advertised, a new role of Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor (DPVC) (Research Culture). Working together with researchers, the postholder will champion a positive culture of research integrity, open collaboration and scholarship. The DPVC will lead the Swansea Academy of Open Scholarship and prepare the way for success at the next Research Excellence Framework exercise.
- **University Research Integrity Ethics & Governance committee:** In 2021-22, a University Research Integrity; Ethics & Governance committee (URIEGC) has been established replacing University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee. URIEGC will report directly to University Senate and Council as opposed to UREGSC which reported to the University Committee for Research & Innovation Strategy (CRIS). The revised reporting will influence strategic decisions along with increasing transparency, accountability and raising awareness of research integrity matters.
- **University Whistleblowing Policy:** The University's Whistleblowing Policy has recently been revised and adopted by University Senate & Council.
- **Process for reporting data to Research Funders on Bullying & Harassment:** The University Senior Leadership Team, Senate, University Research Innovation & Impact Committee and University Research Integrity Ethics & Governance committees approved a process for reporting data on bullying & harassment to research funders. In light of this guidance the University's Dignity at Work and Study Policy will be revised with the inclusion of 'research' as one of the reporting criteria. A wider consultation of this process with Campus Trade Unions have also been undertaken.
- **Oversight of Sponsored Research & Institutional license for working with Human Tissue:** An oversight committee to review and monitor all sponsored research is being set up. The role of a Quality Assurance Officer to monitor NHS projects has been advertised. The University has reassessed its requirements for Human Tissue licensing and is working closely with the local Health Board to ensure that licensing agreements in place are appropriate to the research requirements and levels of monitoring is commensurate with the license. The review has highlighted the requirement of a separate site license for

the University, independent of the Health Board. Staffing requirements to deliver the assurances around compliance with the licence standards are being reviewed.

➤ **Policies, Processes & Guidance:**

The Research Integrity Policy Framework was reviewed in 2020-21 to reflect changes in legislation, regulatory requirements and research practices. The University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee, approved the following new guidances which have been incorporated into the Policy Framework.

- Guidance on assessing reputational risk
- Guidance on Welsh language standards for research activities.
- Audit tool for Faculty/School Ethics committees (adapted from ARMA/UKRIO)
- Guidance on ethical approval of Pedagogic Research.
- Guidance on Serendipitous research.
- Process for reporting to research funders data on Harassment & Bullying.

➤ **Online Ethical Review System:**

Secondary to an internal Audit on research integrity and through consultation with Chairs of Ethics committees, it was confirmed that the University would benefit from an online system for the ethical approval of research applications. Such a system would bring transparency and uniformity in assessing research applications and would assist in categorising and monitoring research in line with research funder due diligence requirements. Funding for the purchase of such a system has been secured. It is anticipated that a Project Task & Finish Group would be set up in 2021-22 to complete the implementation.

➤ **Research Integrity webpages:**

The University research integrity & researcher health and safety webpages were updated regularly with COVID -19 research related information and risk assessment protocols. New guidance and information on training were uploaded as approved.

2. Supporting the development of Researchers.

➤ **Training & Development:**

Research Integrity Online Training: In 2020, the University renewed its license for the Oxford University Press (Epigeum) Research Integrity online training. Successful completion of Research Integrity training had been added as a core competency requirement for the Career progression of staff within the Academic Career Pathway. The completion of the **mandatory** training is monitored by line managers of academic staff through the Annual Professional Development process. Staff training is regularly discussed at the University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee meetings and regular reports circulated to Heads of Faculties/Schools for information.

Postgraduate Research students have been undertaking the research integrity training and are expected to complete all of the 12 mandatory modules during their first year of studies and prior to ethical review being granted and candidature confirmed.

Safeguarding Online Training: The license for the online training package on 'Safeguarding in Higher Education' was renewed for a further period of three years. This **mandatory** training, has to be completed by researchers working with children and vulnerable adults before research can commence. The training provides researchers with useful information and guidance on regulatory requirements.

In person training: Due to the Covid -19 pandemic, delivery of in-person training on research integrity, research governance and human tissue were suspended.

Seminars series on Research Integrity: Due to Covid -19, the seminar series delivered through the Research Institute of Ethics & Law (RIEL) could not be hosted.

UKRIO Webinar Series: Members of the University Research Integrity: Ethics & Governance Committee were regularly circulated information on the UK Research Integrity Office monthly webinars and many staff who attended found the sessions useful and informative.

3. Dealing with allegations of research misconduct transparently, fairly & robustly

➤ **Research Misconduct:**

In 2020, the 'Named Contact' for receiving allegations of Research Misconduct was changed from the Chief Operating Officer/Registrar to the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & Innovation). Contact details with a dedicated email address is published on the University webpages. The Policy on Allegation of Research Misconduct and details of how to raise a concern can be accessed by any individual through the research webpages [Research Misconduct - Swansea University](#).

The Research Integrity Manager is the designated third party who coordinates this confidential process. All research misconduct screening and investigations are undertaken in accordance with the University Policy and the investigation panels consist of an external member from another UK Higher Education Institution.

In 2020/21, the University received and processed the following allegations in accordance with its Policy on Research Misconduct:

Year	Allegation	Nature of alleged misconduct	Outcome
2020	1	Fabrication and Falsification of Data	Investigation panel established. Prima facie evidence of falsification and fabrication of data. Fixed term contract terminated.
2020	2	Authorship dispute (Cross Institutional)	Resolved through Mediation
2020	3	Plagiarism (Cross Institutional)	Screening Panel. No prima facie evidence could be established.
2021	1	Plagiarism, Misrepresentation of interests, Breach of duty of care by gross negligence.	Screening Panel. No prima facie evidence could be established.

2021	2	Data manipulation	Journal paper peer reviewed externally and a corrigendum was issued. Case resolved through Mediation as case not identifiable.
2021	3	Plagiarism (appropriation of another person's idea and processes without giving appropriate credit)	Resolved through Mediation as a case was not identifiable.

4. Reviewing processes regularly and openly

➤ **Establishment of a Sponsorship oversight committee**

Review of current processes highlighted the requirement for establishing a Sponsorship oversight committee to ensure that staff and student studies sponsored by Swansea University comply with the requirements of the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research (2017) and/or the Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations 2004 and subsequent amendments, and adhere to standards of Good Clinical Practice (GCP).

➤ **Policy on Trusted Research:**

University researchers work closely with partners from across the world. Developing and maintaining these international relationships is key to the University's success in research and innovation. As joint research is vulnerable to misuse by organisations and institutions who operate in nations whose ethical values could be different to ours, it is essential for the University to develop a policy on Trusted Research which is currently being undertaken.

➤ **Memorandum of Understanding with local NHS Health Authority**

A revised co-sponsorship Memorandum of Understanding between University and Swansea Bay University Health Board is being drafted. It is the expectation that this would incorporate delegation of responsibilities for Clinical Trials of Investigational Medicinal Products (CTIMPs) to the Swansea Trials Unit.

➤ **Framework on Due diligence of Collaborative Partnerships**

Secondary to the internal audit report, the University Senior Leadership Team approved the setting up of a Task & Finish Group to review existing policies, protocols and processes and create an overarching Due Diligence Framework for the University for all levels of collaborative activities.

Challenges for 2021/22:

• **Implementing an online system of ethical review**

Catering to the needs of Students, Researchers and Academics, establishing a 'fit-for-purpose' online system of ethical approval of research applications will be the imminent challenge for 2021-2022. It is anticipated that such a system can be implemented within the year with assistance from members of a task & finish group comprising of staff from Faculties and with special assistance from members of the Infrastructure systems.

- **Engagement and raising awareness of research integrity**

The past few years has seen a massive drive in relation to implementing and supporting the University's commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. As a result, the University is better placed, than it has ever been, in relation to policies, processes, protocols, training, and information for staff and students. There is however still, a lot to be done to ensure a 'culture shift' and to 'raise awareness' amongst researchers, of the benefits of undertaking research with integrity. With the appointment of a new Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor for Research Culture & Open Research, it is anticipated that there will be a culture shift with staff feeling more able to conduct research with integrity and to raise any concerns on the integrity of research with confidence.

- **Raising awareness about reporting cases of Research Misconduct, Bullying & Harassment**

The research funder requirements of reporting instances of breach in relation to Safeguarding, data on Bullying & Harassment, Research Misconduct & Conflict of Interest means that some of the University's Human Resources Policies may have to be revised. Raising awareness of such issues and supporting staff through the processes requires training and guidance. A few allegations of research misconduct received by the University identified the requirement for more support for researchers to understand research integrity. The need for Research Integrity Champions, who could operate in a 'joined up' manner with sections of the University like Research Engagement & Innovation Services, Legal & Compliance and Human Resources will enable transparent reporting and handling of issues to create a better research environment for future researchers.

- **Sponsorship of research and Human Tissue license**

With the appointment to the new position of a Quality Assurance Officer and through the reviewing of resource and other licensing requirements with the Local NHS Health Board for research with human tissue it is anticipated that compliance of Health Care Research can be adequately monitored.

Further information:

This statement has been prepared by the Research Integrity Manager and approved by the University Research Integrity: Ethics & Governance Committee (URIEGC) on 19 October 2021. The report will be submitted to University Senate and Council with a copy provided to the Higher Education Funding Council of Wales (HEFCW) and published on the University Research pages as per UK Research & Innovation requirement.

For any queries and information on research integrity matters, please contact researchintegrity@swansea.ac.uk

End of Report