

# University of St Andrews

## Research Integrity statement for academic year 2015-16

### The importance of the Concordat

The UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity provides a comprehensive framework to assist institutions in ensuring the identified principles are embedded into how research is conducted. The University of St Andrews fully supports the principles laid out in the Concordat and this report summarises steps being taken to ensure that the institution is fully engaged in understanding and supporting research integrity issues.

### Summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues

#### Formation of a co-ordinating group

The Vice Principal (Research) provided strategic support for the formation of a research integrity working group (RIWG) to focus on ensuring institutional compliance with the Concordat, comprising staff-level representatives of the Research Policy Office (RPO), Centre for Academic, Professional and Organisational Development (CAPOD), University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC) and Animal Welfare and Ethics Committee (AWEC). The group has been meeting at least every two months since late August 2015.

The RIWG is represented on, and works closely with, the HR Excellence in Research Award working group which focuses on implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The University has successfully retained this award after a recent review.

The University is also a subscriber to the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), which has resulted in access to expert information and advice from the UKRIO team and attendance at UKRIO events (workshop in September 2015, annual conference in Spring 2016), which allow valuable learning and networking for members of the RIWG.

#### Policy and governance: reviews and changes

In October 2015, the University's Ethics Assurance Group (EAG) agreed to:

- Act as the body providing institution-wide oversight on integrity and ethics, including but beyond its existing remit of overseeing the human and animal ethics committees
- The VP (Research) and Chair of the EAG being, *ex officio*, the internally and externally facing senior staff member that oversees and provides information on integrity activities at the University
- Hold formal meetings twice a year that will receive updates from, and provide oversight of, the RIWG

In May 2016, the EAG agreed that a network of integrity 'advisers', one in each School, should be developed, with Directors of Research taking on the role. The intention is that 'advisers' be responsible for: raising awareness of integrity issues within their School on an ongoing basis; keeping themselves knowledgeable of – and signposting their colleagues towards - integrity policies, materials and contacts; and keeping a brief log of contacts with colleagues, to report to RPO as an indication of informal integrity-related activity in Schools.

St Andrews already has in place fair and transparent Good Research Practice policies and procedures (the document containing these is referred to henceforth as 'the GRP'), which defines good practice and research

misconduct, and describes the process for making and handling allegations of research misconduct.<sup>1</sup> The RIWG has been co-ordinating a review and refresh of the GRP to better align with the Concordat, involving advice from UKRIO and other universities, and the input of Human Resources and the EAG. The new policies, which will be more robust and appropriate to the needs of the organisation going forward, will be finalised and implemented following consultation with the University's Heads of Schools and Directors of Research.

Ongoing monitoring and annual review of integrity-relevant policies will be undertaken by the RIWG, working with and reporting to the EAG.

## **Developing the integrity culture**

### *Raising awareness*

The University consistently raises researchers' awareness of the regulatory requirements surrounding approval for research projects involving animals and humans, for example through induction and School Ethics Committees. The University has recently been working towards compliance with the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research, including the development of a public facing webpage.<sup>2</sup>

In order to raise awareness of 'integrity', i.e. the wider issues of good conduct relating to all parts and stages of the research endeavour, as captured in the GRP, the RIWG (or members thereof) have been involved in organising the following:

- A November 2015 workshop that brought together over 40 representatives from almost all of the University's Schools for discussion and practice-sharing around research integrity and ethical issues (e.g. data management, online surveys, research with vulnerable populations, research in sensitive political situations). The workshop revealed that whilst different topics are more prominent for different Schools/groups of Schools, issues around authorship (attribution of scholarly credit) and data sharing/ownership are significant and widely-shared.
- Development of a flyer explaining the requirements of the Concordat (and other research-related Concordats) and indicating the activity of the RIWG
- Wide distribution of the flyer and discussion of integrity at the following:
  - Induction for new staff and postgraduate research students
  - Meetings of the Vice-Principal (Research) with Heads of School and Directors of Research
  - 'Lunchtime Legends' events. These events are two hour lunchtime panel sessions for postdocs, research staff and early career academics, featuring a panel of more experienced researchers sharing their experiences. The discussions have been used to communicate the concept of integrity to a broad audience, and understand what areas (e.g. authorship, collaboration, openness) are of most concern in the day-to-day operation of the University's Schools.

In May 2016, the EAG agreed that awareness should be embedded in PGR and staff induction, and that attendance at these events should be reported annually to the EAG (aggregated at School level).

Going forward, the RIWG may focus awareness-raising more in those Departments and Schools in which issues relating to integrity and ethics are typically considered less frequently and formally.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/research/policies/researchintegrity/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/about/animal-research/>

### *Providing guidance*

The RIWG is developing the research integrity webpage<sup>3</sup>, aiming for it to bring together existing information on research integrity, including:

- information on integrity, the Concordat, the RIWG and the EAG;
- policies, processes and contacts;
- guidelines, listing relevant links by discipline (for professional guidance) and by topic (e.g. for issues around authorship, conflicts of interest etc.);
- links to relevant training opportunities;
- directions to pages on ethical approval; and
- annual integrity reports.

This will aim to act as a simple central information resource. Its development has been used as an awareness-raising activity: Directors of Research were engaged to help advise which professional guidelines should be presented for their Schools/Departments on the guidelines page.

### *Training*

The RIWG mapped out the existing training provision relating to research integrity for students and staff, and identified future plans. The main action was the licensing of dedicated training materials, developed by the University of Dundee in conjunction with independent editorial and publishing consultant Dr Irene Hames. These materials comprise 6 videos (plus audio version), each accompanied by a quiz, and a booklet containing the video transcript, cases studies and further resources.

Ongoing monitoring and review of integrity-relevant awareness raising and training provision will be undertaken by the RIWG, working with and reporting to the EAG.

## **High-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken**

During the 2016/16 academic year there were no formal allegations received or investigations undertaken with regards to research misconduct. There was a single inquiry.

<b>Academic year 2015/16</b>	
Inquiries made	1
Allegations received and investigations undertaken	0

Definitions:

- 'Inquiries made' refers to clarifications sought by an individual as to whether a particular activity and/or example scenario may constitute/include an act of research misconduct
- 'Allegations received and investigations undertaken' refers to the receipt of a formal allegation in writing followed by an investigation
- Please refer to the GRP for a description of the current process for making and handling research misconduct allegations

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/research/policies/researchintegrity/>