

## University of Warwick Research Integrity Eighth Annual Statement (2021-22)

The University remains strongly committed to ensuring the highest standards in the conduct of all research undertaken in our name, on our premises and in our facilities. This includes research undertaken by staff, students, visiting or emeritus staff, associates, honorary or clinical contract holders, contractors, and consultants. In this, the University recognises its obligations to the wider research community, to the funders of research and to society as a whole to uphold the integrity of academic research, and to comply with the Universities UK (UUK) [‘Concordat to Support Research Integrity’](#) (2019) (the ‘Concordat’).

A strong commitment to research integrity is embedded within our institutional systems and culture. This includes a well-established committee structure that provides transparency and accountability for all matters of research integrity and governance, reporting to Senate, the academic authority of the University, and Council, the University’s executive governing body, via the central Research Governance & Ethics Committee (RGAEC).

Chaired by the Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), RGAEC provides oversight and leadership to research integrity across the University. It meets on a termly basis with a membership comprising lay representatives and senior members of the academy and professional services. Each of the University’s research ethics committees<sup>1</sup> report directly to RGAEC, as does the University’s Sponsorship & Oversight Committee (SOC). The Secretariat function for these Committees is delivered by a dedicated Research Governance team situated within Research & Impact Services (R&IS), which also provides support to research staff and students with regards to all matters of research integrity.

Work is on-going to ensure that the University’s research integrity, governance, and ethics processes are effective and developed in response to changing requirements. During the past year, the University’s Research Ethics Committees have undertaken a review and approved an update of the University’s ethical review processes to allow a more proportionate, risk-based level of review, with low-risk ethics applications following a light-touch review process, enabling higher-risk applications greater scrutiny at full Committee review. Furthermore, the SOC is currently commencing a review of live sponsored studies to ensure adequate oversight is provided and any issues are being dealt with effectively. Previous annual statements have referenced the implementation of an online research ethics system; this project has been delayed due to system supplier issues but is planned to recommence during the next period. Current processes have been streamlined and consolidated in preparation for the new system.

The University continues to take a proactive approach to research governance and in particular Trusted Research, with oversight being provided by the RGAEC and overall responsibility with the University’s Council. Professional Services support for research governance at Warwick has been further strengthened during the past year with the creation of a new Research Compliance Team within Research & Impact Services. This team has responsibility for the operationalisation of Trusted Research and the implementation of institutional policies and processes to support compliance with external regulations, including those relating to dual-use, export control, the National Security Investment Act and sensitive research. Activities have included the launch of a new institutional [Export Control Policy](#), and the creation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on Export Control and Due Diligence; work has also commenced on the review and revision of a series of SOPs relating to research using human tissue. These SOPs are managed through a recently adopted electronic Quality Management System. Training has been delivered across the academy and Professional Services in compliance areas such as Export Control, the Nagoya Protocol and Human Tissue Research.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC); Biomedical & Scientific Research Ethics Committee (BSREC); Animal Welfare & Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

The University is committed to the principles of research integrity, including honesty, rigour and transparency and supports this through its work on Open Research, led by the Open Research Group (ORG), which is formally constituted as a sub-committee of the University Research Committee. ORG's Terms of Reference have been updated to reflect its emphasis on open research good practice and the impact on processes and infrastructure. The ORG has also been involved in discussions on open research strategies and communications, ensuring that strategies work for all researchers and are communicated effectively, including Early Career Researchers.

The University expects all researchers to conduct their research to high standards of rigour and integrity across all subject disciplines and fields of study at the University. To raise and maintain awareness among researchers of the standards and behaviours that are expected of them, the University has mandated Research Integrity training, with implementation ratified through an institutional [Research Integrity Training Policy](#). The policy was approved by the University Executive Board in January 2022 and communicated to Heads of Department, research administrators, and researchers. Completion of the training is monitored by the Research Governance Team and reported to the RGAEC, with all ethics applications now requiring evidence of completion of the training. The University has recently introduced a researcher specific induction which includes sections on research governance and ethics. Additionally, a new Research Active Staff Leadership Essentials training programme has been established, which reminds research leaders of their responsibilities with respect to research integrity and culture. The University also requires staff to undertake training on GDPR and export control.

The University has been very proactive during the last year embracing Research Culture, with this being a key priority and incorporated into the University's Research Strategy. The University is committed to a diverse and inclusive research environment in which everyone can thrive and produce high quality research. This work is being driven forward by the [Research Culture Forum](#), chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), and with a Deputy Chair of the Academic Director for Research Culture, a new role created to strengthen progress in this area, and including diverse representation from HR, Equality Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I), Research Support, researchers at all levels, Postgraduate researchers (PGRs) and technicians. The Forum has put in place a comprehensive action plan for driving forward improvements in researcher working conditions and career development opportunities and hopes to make significant progress during the next 12 months. This will include a research culture strategy and an institutional statement on expected and unacceptable research practices and behaviours.

The University believes that its research environment should be safe and inclusive and has policies in place to ensure this, including on bullying and harassment, whistleblowing, safeguarding and a procedure for reporting and dealing with allegations of research misconduct. The University has no cases of research misconduct investigated within the framework of the University's Code of Practice for the Investigation of Research Misconduct, to report during the period. There have been another nine instances of issues raised regarding researcher practices or behaviour, which were not deemed to be research misconduct and therefore not investigated under the University's framework, and which were all resolved at a local level. During the past year, the Research Governance Team have logged these issues, following up by raising awareness of institutional policies and processes with individual researchers and research teams.