University of Birmingham
Research Integrity Statement 2019 – 2020

Introduction

This is the University of Birmingham's seventh annual summary statement on research integrity, as recommended by the Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The Concordat outlines the responsibilities and commitments of stakeholders in UK research with respect to research integrity. Commitment to the Concordat to support research integrity is a condition of funding and higher education institutions are expected to adhere to the requirements of this Concordat. UKRI and Research England have updated research integrity policies formerly set out by Research Councils UK and HEFCE. This statement has been reviewed and approved by Council, the governing body of the University.

Activities to Support Research Integrity

The University is committed to fostering a positive culture of research integrity, enhancing the current infrastructure by reviewing progress regularly and openly.

Directors of Research from Colleges and Research Ethics Committee Co-Chairs support a positive culture of research integrity at College / School level. Oversight Committees such as the Clinical Trials Oversight Committee (CTOC), the Human Tissue Oversight Committee (HTOC), and the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB), provide oversight for high-risk areas.

The Research Ethics & Governance Teams (REGT) in collaboration with the Clinical Research Compliance Team (CRCT) provide support for the research community and the senior team.

The University Executive Board (UEB) sponsor for research integrity is Professor Tim Softley, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer). Research integrity activities at the University are overseen and coordinated by the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Committee (RGEIC), chaired by Professor Softley. This report updates on the following actions, which have been undertaken throughout the 2019–2020 academic year:

1. Supporting and enhancing the understanding of all aspects of research integrity:

 1.1 Relevant Policies

- Appropriate Codes of Practice such as the CoP for Ethics and Research are in place. The CoP for Research includes a section in relation to allegations of research misconduct: https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/opportunities/integrity.aspx

- In addition, the Policy and Procedure on Public Interest Disclosure and 'Whistleblowing' is designed to allow staff, students and all members of University bodies (eg University Committees) to raise, at high level, concerns or information which they believe in good faith provides evidence of malpractice: https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/whistleblowing.pdf

- Allegations of Harassment and Bullying will be managed in line with this policy: https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/harassment-bullying.pdf

- For data protection & security requirements, the following guidance is available: https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/data-prot-policy.pdf https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/it/documents/public/General-Conditions-of-Use-of-Computing-and-Network-Facilities.pdf https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/it/documents/public/Information-Security-Policy.pdf

- Data management and archiving processes are supported as follows: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/research/rdm/Policies/Research-Data-Management-Policy.aspx https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/research/rdm/Archiving-data/Archiving-and-sharing-data.aspx

- Clinical research compliance is supported by the Clinical Research Compliance Team (CRCT) and a comprehensive Quality Management System has been implemented: https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/mds/mds-rkto/governance/index.aspx

- In relation to Equality and Diversity the University works to the following guidelines: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/collaboration/equality/Policies-procedures-and-guidelines.aspx

- Safeguarding https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/children-policy.pdf

1.2 Review of Policies

The Code of Practice for Research details the University's expectations of researchers with respect to ethics and integrity, forms part of their terms and conditions of employment. The Code was reviewed in consultation with relevant stakeholders during the year 2019-2020.

1.3 Training and Development

- Online
  There are online discipline-specific training courses available in research ethics and integrity that provide an introduction to research ethics and integrity and the responsible conduct of research. All courses are freely available to University researchers or students, and the University's research ethics committee members, Directors of Research, the REGT and Doctoral Training Centres promote this development opportunity to the research community.

- Face-to-Face training
  COVID 19 had an impact on face-to-face training opportunities from March 2020 but where possible a variety of development opportunities related to research integrity were made available, re-scheduled, or re-used from last year where there was a recording or held via an online platform. Development opportunities were offered to undergraduate and postgraduate researchers as well as members of staff e.g. courses on research ethics and integrity, including good practice requirements in line with the CoP for Research, animal research training provisions, research data management courses as well as research methodology and research skills training. Research ethics and integrity information is included in modules for student courses.

The University works in close collaboration with NIHR colleagues from the CRN Networks e.g. the West Midlands Research Training Collaborative https://wmrtc.org.uk/

Some highlighted examples of recent development opportunities include:

- University Induction: Central and College / Divisional level induction is provided:
  https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/mds/welcome-induction/welcome/induction/index.aspx

- Mandatory (all staff) provision: Data protection and GDPR, Information Security, H&S, Equality & Diversity and fire safety. Mandatory (as required by law): GCP, Home Office Modules for animal research where applicable

- The CRCT and POD development opportunities
  https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/mds/mds-rkto/governance/index.aspx
  https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/development/index.aspx

- Research data management training is available via the Research Data Management Team (Library Services)
  https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/research/rdm/index.aspx

- Drop in sessions are offered at School / College level where members of staff and students are able to seek informal guidance from members of the REGT.

- Group specific research ethics and integrity workshops are provided as requested e.g. HEFi.

2. Quality Assurance and risk management

The UoB research governance infrastructure is built on a quality assurance programme that allows the University to manage the quality and risk arising from research.

The REGT manage the ethics review requirements and research governance processes arising from research, especially studies that involve human participants, their data and/or tissue, and ensures that close liaison with researchers, administrators, collaborators and regulatory bodies fosters a positive culture of research integrity as encouraged by the 'Concordat to support research integrity' (Concordat RI).

Applications made to the University Research Ethics Committee (PGT / Staff research)

	2019	2018
Self-Assessment Forms submitted	1948	2124
Full ethics applications / amendments reviewed	756	810
CoSS	195	243
CAL	119	106
EPS	41	37
LES	267	277
MDS	124	147

Projects submitted for Health Research Authority Approval (including NHS Research Ethics Committee) review

	2019	2018
Studies reviewed for Sponsorship and HRA Approval	88 (this includes 5 where UoB is the National Co-ordinating Centre)	67
Amendments processed	244	206

In addition the University managed research that involved animals in line with Home Office Regulations and ARRIVE guidelines.

3. Mapping of UoB compliance with the requirements of the revised Concordat

A mapping exercise was undertaken in Nov 2019 and reviewed in March 2020 to ensure compliance with the requirements of the revised Concordat. This highlighted some actions that would enhance the UoB research integrity culture.

Concordat Requirement	Actions to enhance the UoB research integrity culture
Make sure that all researchers are aware of, and understand policies and processes relating to ethical approval	An e-learning and face-to-face training and development programme is available in addition to website information and CoP for Ethics and Research Plans are underway to enhance the e-learning provisions by procuring an updated research integrity e-learning package. An options paper was submitted to the RGEIC for the March 2020 meeting.
Awareness among researchers of the standards and behaviours that are expected of them	The quality assurance infrastructure is based on up to date website information, a CoP for Ethics and Research and an extensive training and development programme. An e-pathway providing a roadmap for clinical research and a navigation version for the CoP for Research is under development. The leavers checklist process is under review, to include a provision that appropriate members of staff are informed when researchers are about to leave the University, to ensure that a review of research projects can be undertaken prior to the contractual relationship with UoB coming to an end.
Trial transparency	Currently UoB has uploaded the trial results for 84% of trials that are listed on the EU trial tracker. https://eu.trialstracker.net/

4. Open Access Board

The University has established an Open Research Board with responsibility for developing the University's vision for Open Research, providing leadership for and to have oversight of the Open Data Programme, including requirements for the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA).

5. Networking with other stakeholders

The University of Birmingham is a member of UK RIO and an active contributor to meetings of Russell Group Universities aiming to develop common approaches to research integrity. The Head of Research Governance & Integrity supports the Health Research Authority non-commercial Sponsor Group, the NHS R+D Forum and works as an advisor for the UK Research Integrity Office.

6. Managing Conduct queries

    In the period October 2019 to September 2020, there has been one ongoing case of alleged research misconduct that was reported in the last reporting period. In the same period, 2 allegations of potential research misconduct were received. These were addressed in accordance with the Code of Practice for Research.

7. Research Integrity Statement
    The next annual statement will be published in November 2021.

Further Information

Further information on research integrity at the University is available from Dr Birgit Whitman