University of Birmingham
Research Integrity Statement 2020 –2021

Introduction

This is the University of Birmingham's eighth 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 other Professional Services Teams such as the Clinical Research Compliance Team (CRCT), colleagues from Library Services and Legal Services provide support for the research community and the senior team.

The University Executive Board (UEB) sponsor for research integrity is Professor Heather Widdows, 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 Widdows. This report updates on the following actions, which have been undertaken throughout the 2020–2021 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://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/collaboration/equality/documents/policies/Policy-Harassment-and-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/index.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 2020-2021.

1.3 Training and Development

Provision of a wide range of training and development activities to different groups of staff and students is delivered in each year, including during 2020-2021. This enables an understanding of the importance of all those involved in research following the Code of Practice and adhering to policy in their activities.

- 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 promote this as both induction and development opportunity to the research community in collaboration with colleagues from Colleges. During the last academic year 266 unique users accessed the ethics CANVAS course.

- Face-to-Face training

COVID 19 had an impact on face-to-face training opportunities but a variety of development opportunities related to research integrity were made available 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 and researchers are able to utilise training opportunities. https://wmrtc.org.uk/

Some highlighted examples of 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/training-and-workshops.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. A range of training sessions, in different formats and for audiences across campus were made available in 2020/21. Examples of these include:
  - Drop in Q&A session for PGR students from CoSS
  - One to one sessions for PGR students in LES
  - A training event was held for members of the University's two central ethics review committees and this also included invitees from various School level ethics committees.

- Group specific research ethics and integrity workshops are provided as requested. During the last year this was provided for staff, undergraduate students, master's students and PGRs from all Colleges. Examples include:
  - Yr 1 undergraduate students 'Becoming a Researcher' module
  - One to one session for MRes students in the School of Psychology. These sessions adviced on the appropriate research ethics and governance pathway for their particular projects (e.g. NHS versus UoB ethics review) and gave guidance on producing participant documentation and best practice (e.g. confidentiality/anonymity, participant recruitment, data security and collection, and COVID-related research issues including the need to move research online).

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)

	2020	2019	2018
Self-Assessment Forms submitted	1851	1948	2124

Full ethics applications / amendments	613	756	810
CoSS	193	195	243
CAL	96	119	106
EPS	22	41	37
LES	195	267	277
MDS	102	124	147

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

	2020	2019	2018
Studies reviewed for Sponsorship and HRA Approval	85 (this includes 4 where UoB is the National Coordinating Centre)	88 (this includes 5 where UoB is the National Co-ordinating Centre)	67
Amendments processed	228	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 2019/20	Update 2020/21
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	E-Learning and face to face development opportunities are available.

	CoP for Ethics and Research The University is a member of UKRIO and plans are underway to enhance the e-learning provisions when the anticipated UKRIO e-learning package is available.	Website information is kept under review. The University is a member of UKRIO. Training and development opportunities were made available to the research community and it has been agreed to assess utilisation of the UKRIO e-learning opportunity that is currently in development. https://ukrio.org/events/
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.	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 The e-pathway and work on the leavers checklist development were postponed due to COVID related re-prioritisation.
Trial transparency	Currently UoB has uploaded the trial results for 84% of trials that are	UoB reached 100% trial reporting for trials that are listed on the EU trial

	listed on the EU trial tracker. https://eu.trialstracker.net/	tracker and this is kept under review.

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).

Members of the Board organised an Open Research Forum Event series highlighting opportunities of cross discipline engagement with open science through practical examples, presented by UoB staff / students and external colleagues. The sessions were chaired by members of the Open Research Board and 130 UoB staff & students registered for the 4-day event series. https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/research/open-research.aspx

5. Safeguarding in International Development Research

A Task and Finish Group has been set up to share awareness and if necessary act as an advocate to enhance the existing institutional policy and reporting framework with regard to risks to vulnerable research participants overseas. The work of the group focuses on ensuring integration of guidance developed by the UK Collaborative on Development Research with institutional policies and procedures.

6. New research ethics tool development

The University has procured a new research ethics system to enhance the ethics review process for staff and PGR students. The new systems has been developed and tested during this period and is expected to go live the academic year 21/22.

7. 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 Reference Group, the NHS R+D Forum and is a member of the NIHR CRN Programme Board.

8. Managing Conduct queries

In the period October 2020 to September 2021, the ongoing case of alleged research   misconduct that was reported in the last reporting periods closed and the allegation was upheld.
In the same period, 3 allegations of potential research misconduct were received. Two were addressed in accordance with the Code of Practice for Research and one remains under review.

At the conclusion of misconduct cases, consideration is given with regard to any lessons learned which can inform changes in the process and procedures in relation to   the Code of Practice for Research. The reviews concluded in 2020-2021 did not result in any such changes being required.

9. Research Integrity Statement
    The next annual statement will be published in November 2022.

Further Information

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