# University of Birmingham

## Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2022-2023

### Section 1: Key contact information

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| **1A. Name of organisation** | University of Birmingham |
| **1B. Type of organisation:** <br><br> **higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)** | Higher Education Institution |
| **1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)** | 29.11.2023 |
| **1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)** | https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/research-integrity/index.aspx |
| **1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity** | Professor Rachel O'Reilly FRS, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) |
| **1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity** | Name: Dr Birgit Whitman |
| | Email address: b.whitman@bham.ac.uk |

**2A. Description of current systems and culture**

**Policies and Systems**

[University's Code of Practice for Research](#) 'the Code of Practice', outlines our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of scholarly and scientific integrity in our research. It forms part of the terms and conditions of employment of staff and cohort legislation for students and is therefore regularly reviewed to ensure it evolves alongside internal and external requirements. Last updated in 2021, a review of the Code of Practice has been undertaken in the 2022-2023 reporting period with a special focus on the IP clauses which were considered by a working group. The Code of Practice will be formally approved after consultation in 2023-2024. While all staff and students are expected to work in line with the Code of Practice, researchers undertaking clinical research are expected to comply with the University's [Quality Management System](#) (QMS), that includes policies and standard operating procedures to ensure that the rights and wellbeing of the individuals participating in clinical research are protected and the data collected is credible.

**Communications and engagement**

The University has been an engaged member of the Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) since 2019 and an active contributor to meetings of the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum, with the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum being hosted by the University at the beginning of the academic year 23 / 24. This will focus on managing good research conduct expectations, with input from members of the UK Committee on Research Integrity, UKRIO, Cambridge University Press and COPE.

In addition, the University's Head of Research Governance & Integrity supports the Health Research Authority non-commercial Sponsor Reference Group and is a member of the Russell Group Association of University Research Sponsors, the NIHR CRN Programme Board and Birmingham Health Partners Working Groups.

During the reporting period, the University has extended its commitment to communications and engagement in Research Integrity, by initiating membership of the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN).

**Culture, development and leadership**

The University has a well-established research ethics and governance infrastructure that supports a positive culture of research integrity at all levels. This includes two central research ethics committees that are responsible for reviewing PGR and staff research at the University, specifically the Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) ethics committee and the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) ethics committee. In addition, the University operates an Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB). IT systems support the research ethics review process (ERM) and research governance data capture (ReDA).

Dedicated expert support for all matters relating to research ethics, governance & integrity is provided by the Research Ethics, Governance & Integrity Team (REGI), which is part of the newly established Research Strategy and Services Division (RSSD), working in close collaboration with other expert teams from across the research life-cycle, including, for example, the Clinical Research Compliance Team (CRCT), colleagues from Library Services, Legal Services and HR, to provide proactive support, training & development (details and examples provided in section 3a) to the University, its individual researchers, funders and partners. A close liaison with researchers, administrators, collaborators, funders and regulatory bodies fosters a positive culture of research integrity as encouraged by the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. Positive feed-back in relation to compliance with the requirements of the Concordat to support research integrity was received from UKRI as an element of the assurance visit.

During the reporting period the University developed a bid for an institutional Wellcome Trust Research Culture initiative. The Wellcome programme, which was subsequently approved for delivery from 23/24, will explore new approaches to creating a more enabling research environment and culture for under-represented groups.

**Monitoring and Reporting**

There is active engagement at a College and School / Institute level by Directors of Research, Research Ethics Committee Chairs and Reviewers, with institutional oversight being delivered by the Clinical Trials Oversight Committee (CTOC) and the Human Tissue Oversight Committee (HTOC), all of which report into the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Committee (RGEIC), which oversees and coordinates research integrity activities on behalf of the University, reporting to the University Research Committee chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research).

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**2B. Changes and developments during the period under review**

There have been some significant developments during 2022-23, including:

- The establishment of a named academic lead for research integrity, providing senior academic leadership for policy framework development, especially linking to national activity such as the UKRN. Once formally appointed, this colleague will champion measures to continually improve research rigour and transparency across the institution;

- The establishment of a new dedicated Research Environment and Culture Manager role, to lead and co-ordinate activities across the University that will support the development of a positive research culture across all disciplines;

- The development of a new 'Trusted Research' environment at the University, including the embedding of new processes and procedures

relating to Export Control and the Due Diligence of external partners, led by our Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International) and supported by a newly established International Risks Oversight Group and a new 'Trusted Research' lead within the Research Strategy & Services Division;

- The development and launch of a comprehensive new internal training package, led by Birmingham Global, to support Academics and Professional Services staff when engaging with international collaborators;

- The development and launch of a multi-professional interactive clinical e-pathway to support researchers undertaking clinical research via an easy to navigate online tool. This is now live and has been received well with roll out to Birmingham Health Partner organisations.

## 2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

The 2022-23 year has been one in which a number of positive new initiatives have been progressed, as outlined above, and this principle, of continually updating our approach to Research Integrity, will continue in 2023-24.

Significant developments that are planned for next year will include the:

- Extension of the University's new online research ethics review system to provide a single portal for the ethics workflow, for non-funded staff and PGR projects, and funded projects;

- Release of the updated University Code of Practice for Research;

- Membership of UKRN, and related internal activities to ensure a strong and consistent approach to the reproducibility agenda;

- Delivery of the institutional Wellcome Trust programme 'Aspire'.

## 2D. Case study on good practice (optional)

The Clinical e-pathway

In response to feedback that the pathway for clinical research projects was complex and challenging to navigate, a collaborative team of Academic and Professional Services staff have developed a new interactive tool, the Clinical e-pathway.

This provides a roadmap that guides researchers through each stage of their clinical research projects, from early idea through to completion, and with guidance documentation and key contacts provided at each 'stop' along the pathway.

It has been launched this year, through the Birmingham Health Partners, and has been very positively received by a range of stakeholders.

## Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

**3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct**

In addition to the Code of Practice for Research which includes a section on managing potential allegations of research misconduct (reviewed 22/23) the Policy and Procedure on Public Interest Disclosure and 'Whistleblowing' is designed to allow staff, students and all members of University bodies (e.g. University Committees) to raise, at high level, concerns or information which they believe in good faith provides evidence of malpractice. The policy sets out how such disclosures should be made, and how cases will be handled by the University. Allegations of Harassment and Bullying will be managed in line with the Harassment and Bullying policy. Website information signposts appropriate ways on raising concerns and this information is included in development sessions for the research community.

The University's institutional mandatory training includes Data protection and GDPR, Information Security, Health & Safety, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and fire safety. Study specific mandatory training includes good clinical practice training for clinical studies and mandatory training for research that involves animals.

A variety of research ethics, governance & integrity training / development activities are available to the research community. This includes online training courses that are free at the point of use for all University staff and students, providing an introduction into research ethics, governance and integrity focusing on good research conduct such as research data management courses, research methodology and research skills training. There are specific courses for researchers conducting clinical trials in line with the University's QMS and for research that involves animals to support researchers with compliance with legislation and principles of the Reduction, Replacement and Refinement. There is a provision for more informal 1-1 and small group sessions for research staff and students seeking guidance and support on issues pertinent to their research. This includes development and support sessions for PGR students in all Colleges and sessions for colleagues in the University's new Dubai campus.,

**3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken**

| Type of allegation | Number of allegations | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number of allegations reported to the organisation | Number of formal investigations | Number upheld in part after formal investigation | Number upheld in full after formal investigation |
| Fabrication | | | | |
| Falsification | | | | |
| Plagiarism | *5* | *0* | *N/A* | *N/A* |
| Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations | | | | |
| Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history) | | | | |
| Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct | | | | |
| Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation) | | | | |
| *Other** | | | | |
| **Total:** | | | | |

**\*If you listed any allegations under the 'Other' category, please give a brief, high-level summary of their type here. Do not give any identifying or confidential information when responding.**

*[Please insert response if applicable]*