University of Birmingham

Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2023-2024

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	University of Birmingham
1B. Type of organisation: **higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)**	Higher Education Institution
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	30.11.2024
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

Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken

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. This Code was updated over the last year with a special focus on the IP clauses, our approach to export control and safeguarding in international research. While all staff and students are expected to work in line with the Code of Practice, researchers undertaking clinical research are also 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 and managed in line with relevant legislation.

Communications and engagement

The University has been an engaged member of the Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) since 2019 and this year we have piloted the new UKRIO training option where 21 participants have registered will be able to access the course for a year.

In addition, the University is an active contributor to meetings of the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum, with this hosted by the University at the beginning of the academic year 23 / 24. The work of the Forum during this meeting focused on managing good research conduct expectations, with input from members of the UK Committee on Research Integrity, UKRIO, Cambridge University Press and COPE. In particular, members of the Forum discussed guidance and frameworks for the use of AI in research. In response, the University has planned a workshop for September 2024 to start the collaborative process of co-creating an institutional framework for AI in research. The framework will address the application of AI in research activities, while ensuring responsible research practices.

The University's Head of Research Governance & Integrity is a member of the Russell Group Association of University Research Sponsors, the NIHR CRN Programme Board and Birmingham Health Partners Working Groups.

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 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's research community. A close liaison between 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 was received from the Royal Society during their recent audit of the University in July 24.

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). These committees 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).

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

There have been some significant developments during 2023-24, including:

- 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 as well as funded projects.

- Commitment and action at an institutional level to ensure our research culture is enabling and inclusive for all our researchers. A key flagship programme is our Wellcome Trust funded 'ASPIRE', an innovative pilot to enhance how academics and professional services staff understand, enact and embed inclusive research practice and excellence at the University with respect to race.

- A regulatory inspection by Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, in which the University's processes for clinical research were reviewed.

- Close working with UKRN colleagues ensure appropriate approaches to the reproducibility agenda and contributing to the international debate on sanctions for failing to register and/or report clinical trials.

- A contribution to the consultation of the 'Concordat to Support Research Integrity' and the ICH[1] Good Clinical Practice consultation, and to the UKCORI[2] research integrity indicators session.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments
The 2023-24 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: • Development of an AI guidance framework for research • Piloting e-lab books • Showcase event for the Enhancing Research Culture QR Funded projects supported since 2022 to share outcomes and examples of good practice.

2D. Case study on good practice (optional)

[1] ICH: International Council for Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Registrations of Pharmaceuticals for Human Use

[2] UK Committee on Research Integrity

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	*2*	*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]