

2017 Annual statement regarding compliance with Universities UK Concordat to support research integrity

Background

The Universities UK Concordat to support research integrity requires universities provide a short annual statement to their governing bodies regarding support for research integrity and compliance with the Concordat.

Compliance with the Concordat has been introduced as a condition of Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) grant for institutions to be eligible to receive HEFCE funding for research.

This is Keele University's annual statement for 2016/17 which will be provided to Research Governance Committee, Research Committee and Council. This statement will also be made publically available on the University's website.

The University senior sponsor for research integrity is Professor David Amigoni, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), the University's administrative lead is Dr Clark Crawford, Head of Research Integrity.

Annual Statement

Keele University is committed to ensuring the highest standards of research integrity in all aspects of its research activities and expects its researchers to maintain a similar commitment. Therefore, Keele University welcomes the UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity and supports the five commitments contained within the Concordat both from the institution and individual researchers.

The four key elements of research integrity (honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, and care and respect) outlined in the Concordat are reflected in the University's Quality Management System. The University recognises the need to ensure standards and legislative requirements are met in a consistent and robust manner.

The University has a Quality Management System in place to manage compliance with standards governing our research activity. This Quality Management System comprises three main aspects, the University's policies and procedures which define the standards and outline processes by which those standards are applied; the ongoing training development of research staff to support researchers in applying and reflecting those standards in their research; and processes and mechanisms by which the University maintains oversight of the ongoing application of those standards and investigates concerns about research at the University. The key elements of research integrity (honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, and care and respect) outlined in the Concordat are reflected in the University's Quality Management System.

Policies and procedures:

The University has a Code of Good Research Practice which outlines the expectations of all staff engaged in research. This document also includes the University's definition of misconduct in research. The Code was last reviewed in April 2017. The code reflects a number of other policies including:

- Data Protection
- Management of Conflicts of Interest
- Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care

Where an area of work represents significant risk or there is otherwise a requirement for it, the University will specifically describe processes to meet standards or legislative requirements within standard operating procedures which are subject to periodic review to reflect changes in legislation, regulatory and funder requirements as well as evolving research practice. Currently the University has standardised processes in the following areas:

- Clinical research, particularly Clinical Trials of Investigational Medicinal Products
- Scientific research involving the use of animals
- Research involving human participants, their data or bodily material
- Open Access to research publications

In addition to this, Faculties are encouraged to develop local processes to promote research integrity and these may include:

- Peer review processes
- Symposium/Seminar series and academic discussion
- Open access to research data

Keele is committed to the principle that researchers should be able to publish their results freely, ensuring its research is accessible to other researchers and the public. The University proactively publishes publicly funded research outputs through the research repository and actively manages where restrictions on publications exist; currently around 75% of the content on the repository is now open access.

Training and Professional Development:

The University recognises that the ultimate responsibility for personal and professional development of researchers lies with the individual and provides a supportive environment with open access to opportunities for training or personal reflection. The University benefits from membership of Vitae and the UK Council for Graduate Education (UKGCE) and benchmarks development opportunities against the Researcher Development Framework to develop more effective and successful researchers with a specific emphasis on Research Integrity.

In terms of professional development the University is piloting a Recognition and Induction Framework for newly promoted research staff which encourages researchers to develop their careers in line with individual aspirations and university expectations. This has received a 100 per cent uptake of the offer for career coaching. To meet demand the University has invested in increasing the number of professionally qualified coaches in the University who could be drawn on to offer coaching for staff. The University supports researchers through the provision of learning and development opportunities co-ordinated by the University's Learning and Professional Development Centre or provided by partner institutions which ensures compliance with policy in mandating training in certain key areas.

The training programme provides opportunities for recommended training in areas supporting research integrity such as:

- Good Clinical Practice as legislated by the Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations
- Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Requests
- Discipline specific research methodology and ethical considerations
- Publications and presentations
- IP management including conflicts of interest and transparency
- ASPA modular training courses
- Human Tissue Act Training
- Plagiarism and Research Misconduct
- Information Security

The University recognises the need for a flexible and dynamic training package to respond to changes in research focus and staff and student population as well as external forces such as changes in legislation or funder requirements. The University's training needs are held under review by the Research Governance and Integrity Committee.

Ongoing Review and Oversight:

The University will maintain awareness of the conduct of researchers to identify and promote best practice. Giving researchers the opportunity to demonstrate good scholarship is a key aspect of this. In addition Researchers are frequently put into contact with external agencies and bodies to present their research activities, examples include:

- Statutory MHRA/HTA Inspections
- Funder visits
- Audits of clinical trials
- Audits of human materials

Misconduct:

The University can be assured that a procedure is in place for the investigation of allegations of research misconduct. There were no formal investigations of research misconduct undertaken during the period 30 September 2016 to 29 September 2017.

Future plans:

Keele University now wishes to further strengthen its existing culture for the promotion and nurture of the commitment to research integrity. This statement summarises future strategy to maintain and continuously raise standards in research.

Policies:

Further policy development is scheduled in the following areas:

Research Area	Due Date
Use of Relevant Human Material In Research	Spring 2018
University Research Ethics Review	Winter 2017
Research Data Management Policy	Winter 2017

Of note the University has undertaken a review of its Research Ethics service and is implementing the recommendations made during that review to further embed ethical review and considerations at faculty

level through risk proportionate management of review within faculties. The launch of the new system is scheduled for Spring 2018.

The University's research quality management systems will be developed (including the above policies) in response to research needs, identified best practice and evidences of shortfall in research standards.

The University recognises the key role in University review processes in supporting and enhancing research in a proportionate and pragmatic manner. The University will undertake development of services to build in key performance metrics by which to assess the needs of the research community to inform processes and provision of support.

The University is also developing a repository for research data underpinning published research made available for open access. It will build on and greatly facilitate existing good practice within the University as highlighted by key stakeholders in recent publications¹. The University is working with external stakeholders to build a suitable system to act as the repository.

Training and Professional Development:

The University is developing a coaching and mentoring offer to further support the development of researchers across the University. A detailed document providing guidance for mentors, mentees and sponsors is being finalised for distribution and launch in December 2017. Online mentoring development support will be developed through a package to supplement the existing paper-based resources and termly face-to-face sessions on "meaningful mentoring".

Information about accessing coaching will be made available through the Learning and Professional Development Centre website and the provision of this support will continue to be expanded and monitored to support and promote excellence in research and research leadership.

The University continues development of a central Research Integrity website, providing researchers with access to resources covering the use of:

- Human participants, their data or bodily material
- Research with identified ethical issues, e.g. Security, culturally valuable artefacts

This website will provide:

- Access to standard operating procedures
- Templates of essential documents
- Examples of good practice
- Guidance and reference materials including links to external sources of information
- The option to request specific support and guidance for a research activity

This centralised provision will be expanded to other areas of research, acknowledging the fact that one size does not fit all and information should be provided in a modular fashion to facilitate cross-disciplinary research involving a number of areas and methodologies. In the short term an assessment of existing training provision will be undertaken to identify areas of strength and best practice while highlighting areas of growth and unmet training needs at the University.

¹ <http://www.methodologyhubs.mrc.ac.uk/files/7114/3682/3831/Datasharingguidance2015.pdf>

Ongoing Review and Oversight:

The University will develop and identify mechanisms to allow oversight and inspection of key activities supporting research integrity to support researchers and identify good practice. This will key into existing processes and may involve:

- Funding application procedures through the University's RalSE project.
- SPRE assessments
- Auditing of specific studies and/or processes
- Self-assessment by researchers
- Peer group consideration of challenging or novel research areas
- Mentorship programmes