

Keele University's Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2022-23

Introduction

Research integrity is one of the strategic pillars of Keele University's overarching [Research Strategy](#). Our commitment is to the highest standards of research integrity through maintaining a research environment that supports and develops our researchers, with clear processes for responding to allegations of research misconduct.

The [Named Person](#) responsible for research integrity and reproducibility at Keele University is the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation who is the first point of contact for further information or support about matters of research integrity and reproducibility. Alternatively, the Academic Lead for Research Integrity and Improvement at Keele University and the Director of Research Strategy Delivery (Research Integrity administrative lead) can be contacted. This Research Integrity Group can be contacted through the dedicated email account: research.integrity@keele.ac.uk.

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. Keele University welcomes the [UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) and supports the five commitments contained within the Concordat.

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 the standards governing our research activity. This Quality Management System comprises three main aspects:

- (1) the University's **policies and procedures** to define the standards and outline processes by which those standards are applied;
- (2) the **training and development** of research staff, to support them in applying and promoting these standards in their research; and
- (3) processes and mechanisms by which the University maintains **oversight** of the ongoing application of these standards and investigates concerns about research integrity.

The five key elements of research integrity (honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, care and respect, and accountability) outlined in the Concordat are reflected in the University's Quality Management System.

Policies and Procedures

The [Keele University Research Integrity Policy](#) is part of the overarching Quality Management System. The University has a [Code of Good Research Practice](#) and a [Code of Practice for Student Academic Misconduct](#) which outline the University's expectations of the behaviour of all staff and students engaged in research. These documents also include the definition of misconduct in research. The code reflects a number of other policies including:

- Data protection
- Management of conflicts of interest
- UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research
- Research data management
- Research ethics

Where an area of work represents a significant risk or there is otherwise a requirement for it, the University will specifically describe processes required to meet standards or legislative requirements through standard operating procedures (SOPs). SOPs are subject to periodic review to reflect changes in legislation, regulatory and funder requirements as well as evolving research practice. Currently, the University has SOPs 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
- Ethics Committee review of research

These policies are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they meet the requirements of our evolving research portfolio and can be found on the [University's Research Integrity webpages](#) and [Policy Zone](#). Communications on research ethics and integrity processes are made to staff and students through the University's internal communications channels. Research integrity is a standing item on the University and Faculty Research Committees.

In addition to this, Faculties are encouraged to develop local processes to promote a culture of research integrity; these may include:

- Peer review processes
- Symposium/Seminar series and academic discussion
- Engagement with research transparency, including (but not limited to):
 - Pre-registration of study protocols
 - Open access to research data
 - Open access to research materials
 - Open access to research software / analysis scripts
- Ethics Committee review of research

Keele is committed to the principle that researchers should publish their results freely, ensuring their work is available to other researchers and the public. The University proactively publishes publicly-funded research outputs through its [research repository](#), and actively manages situations where restrictions exist on publication accessibility. Currently, around **85% of the content on the repository is freely available** to all through open access publication.

The University also has a [repository for research data](#) underpinning published research made available for open access. It builds on and greatly facilitates existing good practice within the University as highlighted by key stakeholders in recent publications.

Keele is committed to supporting transparency in research and to developing approaches to improve the quality of the research we produce. As part of this, Keele has developed a [Statement on Transparency in Research](#) which sets out key expectations of Keele researchers to engage with Open Science and Reproducibility best-practice. Such best practice includes Open Data (public sharing of data underpinning our publications), Open Materials (public sharing of research methods / analysis scripts / software) underpinning our research, as well as engaging in pre-registration of study protocols and analysis plans, where appropriate.

Keele is also committed to recognising and rewarding engagement with Open Science and Reproducibility best practices in its promotion and hiring decisions. Our promotions criteria encourage candidates to comment on their engagement with Open Science and Reproducibility best-practice in their applications. Keele has also developed a [Statement on Responsible Research Assessment](#) to guide hiring and promotion committees in the responsible use of bibliometric data. Keele is also a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) which emphasises the assessment of research on its own merits rather than relying on bibliometric data (such as journal impact factor).

Training and 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 in order to develop more effective and successful researchers with a specific emphasis on research integrity.

The University seeks to ensure that all researchers are aware of and understand the policies and principles relating to ethics and integrity. The University supports researchers through the provision of learning and development opportunities to ensure 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
- Intellectual Property management including conflicts of interest and transparency
- Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act
- Human Tissue Act
- 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 in the staff and student populations, as well as external forces such as changes in legislation or funder requirements.

The University's research integrity training needs are held under review by the Research Committee.

The [Research Governance Toolkit Research Integrity webpage](#) has been updated. We have also created an [internal hub](#) for academic colleagues with pages dedicated to Research Integrity.

Research integrity training is available to postgraduate research students. As part of the PGR Summer School an introductory session on, integrity, research governance and ethics explains the differences between the three and when each is relevant along with real-time examples and support for students to think about their own projects.

An Academic Lead for Research Integrity and Improvement at Keele along with Faculty Research Integrity Champions for each Faculty have been appointed. These individuals continue to work with the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation and the Director for Research Strategy Delivery to foster a stronger culture of research integrity and reproducibility at Keele. The Academic Lead sits on University Research Committee, and the Academic Lead and Faculty Research Integrity Champions are members of the Research Leaders Network at Keele and their respective Faculty Research Committees.

In the 2022-23 academic year, the team have provided various advances. The focus has primarily been on enhancing engagement with open research practices informed by a 3-year Open Research Action Plan, developed in 2021. Main activities included:

- Successful launch of Keele's inaugural "Open Research Week" in May 2023. This week comprised a series of webinars with internal and external speakers discussing a variety of topics pertaining to open research across all disciplines at Keele. The flagship event of the week was the in-person mini-conference at Keele Hall which had excellent attendance. Keynote speakers at this event included Professor Rachel Gooberman-Hill (co-chair of the UK Committee on Research Integrity), Professor Andrew Stewart (Manchester University) and Professor Tom Stafford (Sheffield University).
- We were delighted to announce the winners of the PGR Open Research Award and Staff Open Research Award. These awards are designed to recognise and reward colleagues who have made strong contributions to the principles of Open Research in their work. The winners were:
 - PGR Award: Balamrit Sokhal (School of Medicine)

- Staff Award: Professor Melanie Holden (School of Medicine).
- Open Research Week will return in 2024!
- The Academic Lead for Research Integrity & Improvement and the Faculty Integrity Champions have completed a tour of all Schools in the University to set out our ambitions around Open Research and to explore current challenges to engaging in Open Research. These meetings have proved fruitful and the committee are collating input from Schools to develop training to meet the identified needs.
- The Academic Lead for Research Integrity has also sat on all of the School Annual Research Audits to discuss progress on Open Research engagement.
- Keele continues to make significant contributions to the [£5million grant from Research England's Development Fund](#). The five-year project will develop and evaluate high-quality training in open research, and to develop and evaluate institutional best-practice around supporting engagement with open research and reproducibility issues. Keele led on the Year 1 activity of Work Package 1, which in 2023 led to the publication of UKRN's first white paper on training needs (which can be read here: <https://osf.io/s2f6k>).

Governance and Oversight

Keele University's [Research Committee](#) oversees the integrity of the University's research on behalf of the University Executive Committee, [Senate](#), and [Council](#), and will review and approve this statement.

Research Misconduct

The University provides assurance that the processes in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair and that they are appropriate to the needs of the organisation. The University has a policy for the investigation of allegations of research misconduct which has been approved by the Universities Senate committee following the release of the revised concordat to support research integrity. The policy can be accessed in Keele's [policy zone](#).

Research Misconduct Investigations

	Number of informal investigations completed			Number of formal investigations completed			Number of allegations upheld (in whole or part)		
	2015-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2015-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2015-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Fabrication	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Falsification	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Plagiarism	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Mis-representation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Breach of duty of care	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

Table 1 - Summary of investigations into allegations of research misconduct. Informal investigations are those that were received and upon review of the details and evidence it was decided that a formal review was not appropriate and that the Faculty Dean for Research would meet with the individual(s) involved and provide support and mentorship. Formal investigations involve a panel to review the allegation and decide on appropriate outcomes.

Future Developments

During the 2023-24 academic year, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation, the Academic Lead for Research Integrity and Improvement, the Faculty Research Integrity Champions and the Director of Research Strategy Delivery will work together to deliver the following:

Open Research

Open research will continue to be a priority for the team. Maximising the transparency and openness of the research pipeline is essential to maximise the integrity and impact of the work conducted at Keele University and its partners. Engagement with Open Research practices aligns closely with UK research funders—[including UKRI](#)—who are increasingly expecting full compliance and engagement with development of Open Research practices. We will continue to develop and enhance our robust governance structures, professional support and academic leadership for research ethics, governance and integrity and essential backbones of our research mission.

Key priorities for 2023/24 academic year consist of the following:

- Development and implementation of Keele’s Rights Retention Policy. Keele were heavily involved in discussions with Midlands Innovation to develop a MI statement of intent for all member institutions developing a rights retention policy to ensure Keele (rather than for-profit publishers) retain the copyright on all scholarly articles published by our researchers. The policy is currently being drafted, but upon launch a series of sessions will be delivered to communicate the policy and assist colleagues to engage with it.
- Development and implementation of Keele’s Open Research Policy which will set out ambitions and expectations around engagement with Open Research practices across many aspects of the research pipeline, including open access publishing, open data, open materials, open authorship, etc.
- 2023/24 will see the roll out of a variety of training packages as part of the UKRN Research England project. This will be implemented by a “train the trainer” model, where Keele will identify training leads to send on UKRN-sponsored training. These leads will then return to Keele and host local training.
- Following the success of Open Research Week’s webinars, we will be hosting monthly webinars on Open Research featuring internal and external speakers.