

# University of Northampton

## Annual Statement on research integrity 2022-2023

### Introduction

The University of Northampton (UON) Annual Statement on research integrity, as recommended by the Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The Concordat to Support Research Integrity seeks to provide a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance. The Research Integrity annual statement and supporting action plan is reported to the Research Ethics Committee and Research & Enterprise Committee.

This statement has been reviewed and approved by our University Board Governors and the University's Statements are published at:

<https://www.northampton.ac.uk/research/research-support/research-integrity-ethics-and-governance/research-integrity/>

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### Actions and activities

During 2022/23 UON has undertaken the following actions and activities to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues:

- Reapproved our ethical approval policy in order to maintain a culture of research integrity. This involved a major three-year review of the UON Research Ethics Code & Procedures and a strategic review of research integrity training in research methods modules. The brings the policies in line with the current research strategy of UON.
- A major review of the UON research and academic integrity misconduct policy was conducted in 2021 and updated guidance included in the 2022 revision of UON Research Ethics Code & procedures. this underwent annual review in Oct 2023. This ensures a clear, fair and well-articulated mechanism for the reporting and management of research misconduct.
- A major institutional review of whistleblowing and safeguarding policies in 2022-3. This ensures that there are no deterrents to whistleblowers acting in good faith.

- Created a clear link in the UON research pages and research integrity webpage to the research integrity policy and the research ethics policy. This was needed in order to facilitate more ready access to these policies for staff. These also include guidance on legal, professional and ethical responsibilities around issues such as safeguarding.
- Embedded research ethics training into PGR induction and PG supervisor development training. This formalises engagement with the research ethics and integrity policies in the training procedures associate with level 8 study and equips supervisors with the tools to oversee this meaningfully in the supervisor role.
- We have developed a new governance structure focusing on research, enterprise and knowledge exchange under the Research Innovation and Impact committee and the Knowledge Exchange Sub-committee and embedded research ethics and integrity as an ongoing function into that structure. This ensures that integrity and ethics are signifiers of excellence across these different types of research activity.
- We have developed a researcher development programme to provide suitable learning and development for PGRs and ECRs. This aligns researcher development with the Concordat by providing training on research integrity policies. Thus far the PGR programme is in place, the ECR programme of mentoring is in development.
- A two-hour workshop on the responsible use of metrics and altmetrics has been designed. This workshop runs three times a year facilitated by the Head of Research Support.
- We have begun the process of developing mechanisms for providing information on investigations of research misconduct to funders of research and professional and/or statutory bodies as required by our conditions of grant and other legal, professional and statutory obligations. This is an ongoing process.
- We have named the Dean of Research, Innovation and Impact as the point of contact for whistleblowers in cases of research misconduct. We are making this available on the Research Integrity webpage. This ensures that all those wishing to responsibly share information relating to RM have a named person that they can contact in confidential circumstances.
- UON produces an annual high-level report on academic misconduct at levels 4-8 and at staff level (all staff) and an action plan devised to ensure best practice in research integrity in relation to the Concordat. This reports on the actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen best practice in research integrity and the application of best practice and to provide assurances that best practice is followed in relation to academic misconduct. This report is presented annually to the Research Impact and Innovation Committee (RIIC).

## Update on actions from previous year 2021/22

An updated Research Integrity Action Plan was presented that included a mapping exercise of how the University meets the expectations of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, and an action plan as to how this may be enhanced.

### Activities

Key points summarised from the unreserved RIIC minutes.

- The University had appointed a new officer responsible for safeguarding, which now incorporates matters related to research students.
- A new Research Quality Impact Sub-Committee was approved by Research and Innovation Committee in January 2023. The sub-committee oversees and monitors the development of impact and impact case studies for the University within the context of the University's Strategic Plan. The Sub-Committee is a supporting, enhancing body, looking to ensure that impact is appropriately embedded in all the activities of the University and to provide a space for colleagues to talk about impact. It is anticipated that this committee would meet three times a year currently. The membership of this sub-committee consists of academic Impact Champions and professional services staff who support impact.
- With the annual review of RIICs Terms of Reference (TOR) and membership a discussion related to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and how this could be made more explicit in the TOR. Whilst it was felt that the Terms of Reference as presented did already appropriately reflect the University's approach to EDI, a review of them was undertaken and further refined in relation to EDI matters. Another area of the TOR was that RIIC did not have representation from Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and has since been addressed with this reporting period. The TOR was approved at the Senate meeting of 26 October 2022.
- A new Peer Review Policy and process for Research Funding Applications has been developed long with a Peer Review Panel that helps in assisting the integrity, quality, and timely submissions of research funding applications.
- There were some small revisions to the Professorship Criteria, that included expanding the interview panel to include three external professors and any references should be submitted directly to HR. By increasing the number of external professors on the interview panel has enhanced the externality of the appointment process.
- The Research Strategy is underway and the feedback from this is being collated to ensure that the Research Strategy appropriately aligns with the University Strategic Plan. It had been intended that the Research Strategy would be launched in early May 2023, but this has now been postponed due to the internal restructure in the summer of 2023.

## Policy development

- The University's [Visiting Professors and Fellows Policy](#) had initially been considered at the REC meeting of 17 June 2022. Since then, it had been passed to the relevant institutional networks to make sure that the removal of remuneration does not discriminate against any groups. The conclusion from this exercise was that no groups are not discriminated against by the remuneration being removed. This also involved HR. The policy was updated, and changes were recommended for approval by the Research and Innovation Committee in October 2022 and approved by Senate October 2022.
- The University's [Research Data Management Policy](#) was extensively revised in line with funder requirements and changes were recommended for approval by the Research and Innovation Committee in October 2022 and approved by Senate October 2022.
- A new [Peer Review Policy for Research Funding Applications](#) was developed to support the quality of funding applications to increase the chance of an application being funded for our researchers. This was recommended for approval by the Research and Innovation Committee in January 2023 and approved by Senate February 2023.
- A new [Publications Policy](#) was developed to set out the requirements to cover all research outputs produced at the University to ensure that they have maximum reach, follow best practice and comply with funder requirements, whilst enabling staff to publish their research outputs with a publisher of their choice. The Policy applies to all published research outputs created by UON employees where publication is an expectation of their employment and applies to postgraduate researchers as part of their studies. This was recommended for approval by the Research and Innovation Committee in April 2023 and approved by Senate May 2023.
- The annual Review of [PGR Student Regulations and Policies](#) was undertaken, and changes were recommended for approval by the Research and Innovation Committee in June 2023 and approved by Senate July 2023.

## Training and awareness raising

The University moved across to a new registration portal for all staff development activity, called LibCal in February 2023. A working group led by the University staff development team that involved colleagues from RIFS and Research Support to bring the research portfolio of training into LibCal. A range of research training and development activities have been delivered during 2022/23, including training on Being prepared, managing risks when working with international organisations. The Graduate School commenced their programme of training and development of our PG Research students. This is also open to ECRs and other members of staff. This consisted of 78 individual skills development workshops and webinars, including 45 online. These

sessions involved 25 different facilitators (academic and prof services staff) from around UON, along with 10 external facilitators who were mixture of practitioners from other universities or self-employed. The optional workshops provided by the Graduate School saw 112 PGRs attended at least 1 workshop/webinar (about a third of all PGRs). Just under half of the 112 attended more than 2 workshops/webinars. 100% PGRs completed Research Integrity and Research Ethics courses online.

This complements the institutional mandatory (all staff) provision which includes Data protection, Health, Safety and Security, Information Security, Equality and Diversity, fire safety, safeguarding, Anti-Bribery and Whistleblowing.

### **Planned future activities**

The university is committed to continuing developing its environment that supports the concordat. The next academic year (2023-24) the University will be aiming to undertake the following activities:

- Review of the ethical codes and procedures to ensure ongoing compliance with the sector and the concordat.
- Review of the Research Misconduct Policy in line with the recommendations from the concordat.
- Review of the Research Integrity Policy in line with the recommendations from the concordat.
- Review of research and enterprise training that is provided, for all staff, including ECRs and PGRs. Both FHES and FAST have implemented mentoring programmes for ECRs and the Graduate School also provide this training for PGRs and ECRs. The research centres also deploy training programmes around ethics and integrity.
- To update the University external website to include new research integrity and research ethics webpages.
- Mapping of UON compliance with the requirements of the revised Concordat against the action plan.
- Update the annual statement on research integrity with the guidance from the concordat.
- Follow up on the institutional review of whistleblowing and safeguarding policies to ensure research environment is acknowledged within these changes.
- To ensure research is part of the generative AI discussions within the University.
- Review and update research website content on the main University research webpages to strengthen staff and the public understanding of the University research integrity processes and procedures.

## Addressing research misconduct

### Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

The University is committed to investigating all allegations of misconduct in a robust, fair, and timely manner. Our Research Misconduct, available on the University webpages, outlines how any investigations are carried out with consideration for the well-being of all parties.

### Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken and lessons learnt

- In this period there 1207 investigations into academic misconduct levels 4-7. There have been inequalities in the high number of overseas students investigated for academic misconduct and in the number found to have committed academic misconduct. This was noted in the academic integrity report and discussed by University's Student Experience Committee. The latter discussion focussed on providing more support for incoming overseas students in adapting to cultures of academic integrity in the UK. The Committee agreed that more training and attention was required. Overall, we are providing more training in academic integrity at all levels to support our researchers in avoiding misconduct. We are also seeking to understand more clearly the issues involved in generative AI.
- There have been a small number of these types of cases of academic misconduct and they have been investigated and dealt with according to institutional policy.
- We have also committed to widening the definition of 'researcher' to include all those undertaking research and to undertaking research ethics approval for all research under this more expansive definition.
- We have noted trends in the use of generative AI. We are committed to engaging all who undertake research, both students and staff, in discussions about the responsible use of this technology within a framework of research integrity that values valid original research.