

Research Integrity Report to Governors 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2022

1. Summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and the application of research integrity issues.

Context

- i. Research integrity is supported by a central Research Governance and Ethics Team (3.24 FTE). Research Integrity is further supported and assured by the following Sub-Committees of the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (URKEC):
 - Research Ethics Sub-Committee (RESC), and four Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs) which report to Faculty Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee;
 - UWE Human Tissue Sub-Committee (HTSC), and,
 - UWE Animal Welfare and Ethics Sub-Committee (AWESC).

Key activities during the report period (a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and the application of research integrity issues)

Research ethics: Professor David Evans retired, and Professor John Hancock was appointed Chair of the RESC with effect from 23 June 2022.

During the year the RESC oversaw the work of the four FRECs which together dealt with 274 applications from UWE staff (175) and students (99) over the FREC reporting year, April 2021 to March 2022. The RESC received and reviewed seven applications. (This continued to be significantly fewer than in previous years, in part due to the decision in 2019-20 for applications which survey UWE students across the University to be reviewed within the home faculty of the PI rather than by RESC). Five applications were approved after conditions were addressed, and two applications were ratified by UWE RESC.

Prior to Professor Evans' retirement, the Committee undertook the process of reviewing all research ethics guidance and this activity commenced during this period and will be completed in the next. The RESC audit for 2021/22 was two-fold: first an audit of the change in the ethics application form requiring supervisors of UG and PGT students to justify the application as high risk requiring FREC review and second to audit the impact of the pilot provision of an online application form in FET on processing times.

A working group, comprising colleagues in the Safeguarding, and Research Governance, teams and the LDC, was set up to create training resources for researchers on safeguarding and working with vulnerable participants. This was delayed when the University Safeguarding Manager left, but is now being taken forward with the new postholder.

A series of webinars covering topical ethics themes which was initiated in the last Statement Period to provide research ethics training continued with two further Webinars on the ethics of working with industry, and research ethics and co-production/public involvement. A third Webinar took place specifically to provide training for ethics committee members. Staff and doctoral students continue to complete the online ethics training module. The module will be reviewed and updated during the next reporting period. A new training module to support researchers in producing the required UWE research data management plan has been developed during the reporting period for this Statement, and will be finalised and go live during the next.

As reported last year, at the Academic Board on 7 July, a policy statement on not accepting tobacco industry funding for research was approved. The policy states that the University will not knowingly accept any monies from sources funded by the tobacco industry. Following this, further work has been undertaken within RBI working with other professional services colleagues to develop clearer procedures in relation to other similar aspects of due diligence in relation to research. This has been a detailed activity, and is ongoing.

The new Chair, Professor John Hancock, has also taken steps to ensure that there will be continuity in functioning of the Faculty Research Ethics Committees, as the University moves from Faculties to Colleges in September 2022.

Human Tissue: The Human Tissue Sub-Committee of RKEC continues to operate, and meets four times a year. Following Professor Myra Conway leaving the University, Dr David Qualtrough took over as Chair of the Committee from May 2022 (following Professor John Hancock as Acting Chair during the gap between Professor Conway leaving and Dr Qualtrough being appointed) and has since reviewed the Quality Management Systems for research and teaching (these documents underpin excellent practice in relation to the use of human tissue at the University. These will be considered and approved, and these new versions issued, in the next reporting period).

The Committee's operations include an annual audit of human tissue stored at UWE. The fourth audit which had been due to take place during the last Statement period, but was unable to go ahead as laboratories were closed due to COVID-19, was conducted during the current report period, and practice in the specific area audited this time (materials used for teaching purposes) was found to be good.

Animal Welfare and Ethics: The University strongly supports research that meets the highest ethical standards, including that which involves animals. The University is committed to the three 'R's of reduction, replacement and refinement in relation to animal research, and ethical scrutiny always considers this issue. The University does not hold a Home Office Licence, and has no plans to apply for one. Work involving live animals which would require such a licence does not take place at UWE Bristol, but research involving live animals, such as conservation research, is subject to rigorous scrutiny by the University's Animal Welfare and Ethics Sub-Committee. The Committee continues to hold four meetings a year, and protects the University against breach of

a range of animal related legislation and regulation. A further new Safe System of Work (SSoW – SSoWs streamline approvals where possible) has been developed, relating to Small Mammal Trapping. Plans to develop the AWESC audit activities, paused during lockdown, have been re-commenced, including the production of a first pilot Standard (against which research will be audited).

The Committee considered and agreed guidance for researchers in relation to amended import/ export provisions post BREXIT, assuring legal compliance. The Committee also agreed its expectations in relation to overseas projects where the core aims do not include a welfare or conservation aim, enhancing the ethical position of the University in this regard. This will be included in the next revision of the Quality Management System which will be approved in the coming Statement period. Scrutineer guidance was reviewed and scrutineer training for new Members took place in two sessions as Members joined the Committee (Members do not scrutinise applications until training has been received).

3 new Members were recruited during this period (one of which has filled a 1 year Secondment role; another Member has filled a fixed 1 year Membership role). The third is an External Member, a Veterinary Surgeon (whose formal appointment will fall in the next reporting period).

During the reporting period 26 applications were processed, of which 8 were SSoW applications (not needing full processing and formal approval). Out of the 18 applications that went through the full scrutiny process, 10 applications were approved outright, 7 were approved with conditions, 1 was Revise and Resubmit. Out of the 18 applications that went out for full scrutiny, 100% received a decision within the 6 weeks target time, of which 11% received a decision within four weeks, 11% took 3 weeks, 56% took two weeks and 22% received a decision within just one week.

Graduate School Research Governance Highlights

Working with relevant RBI, Library and Faculty colleagues, the Graduate School continues to provide its well-established PGR skills development workshops for students as they adapted to post-pandemic research conditions. Specific workshop titles directly addressing Research Governance were Research Integrity and Data Management; Guide to Searching and Organising the Literatures; and IP & Copyright. All these workshops ran three times each during the 2021-22 academic year, with delivery dates aligned to PGR start dates. In order to maximise accessibility, all workshops were delivered in hybrid (in-person + online) format, and recordings of the workshops were made and provided to all PGRs. Research governance was also the subject of a half-day workshop at the PGR Residential course, which is particularly accessed by the University's part time PGRs.

Research governance awareness is also embedded into other relevant skills development workshops such as 'Welcome' (for new PGRs) and other PGR milestones, and research methods training. Research governance information is also made

available to all PGRs via the Blackboard PGR Skills Development Resource Library, and periodic reminders are given via the PGR Newsletter which goes to all PGRs and supervisors.

For PGR supervisors, meanwhile, research governance responsibilities in relation to their PGR students are covered within the University's one-day training course for new supervisors, and through the Masterclass for experienced supervisors.

All new PGRs registering from 1 October 2021 have been required to complete and maintain a Research Data Management Plan, with support available from Library and RBI colleagues. During 2022-23 the PGR skills development workshop offer will be reviewed, with the aim of improving student engagement.

Two Faculties manage their research Governance through research governance management groups, two Faculties have other mechanisms for doing this

2. Statement to provide assurance that the processes the institution has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, timely, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation

The University's Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct was in place and was fully compliant with the current UKRIO Model for such procedures and guidance set out in the then current Concordat to support Research Integrity. It is anticipated that the revised UKRIO Model (which is currently out for consultation), and anticipated guidance from UKRI following the new Concordat to support Research Integrity will be issued later in the academic year 2022/23. Both the UWE Code and Procedure will be fully updated in line with these when available. In the meantime, and following feedback from PWC internal audit and UKRI periodic audit, work has been undertaken to revise the Code and Procedure ahead of this formal updating of recommended procedures and guidelines.

3. Formal Investigations of research misconduct (a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, which will include data on the number of investigations. If no formal investigation has been undertaken, this should also be noted)

There have been no formal investigations of research misconduct during the period. The University would normally be concerned that this could indicate there was under-reporting of research misconduct, in the context of the significant impacts of COVID-19 on the volume of research activity, which has continued especially during the early part of this reporting period, and the increased controls we set in place over the period as a result of COVID-19, it is in some ways to be expected, and therefore not a matter of significant concern.

4 Statement on how the institution creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct

The University has strong policies and procedures in place to support research integrity, including a detailed Research Misconduct Procedure, with a clear route for referral. All formal allegations made via the Procedure are taken forward appropriately. It is therefore clear to staff that allegations will be taken seriously. There is also a very high level of confidentiality built in to the procedure, to encourage staff to engage with process.