Template: annual statement on research integrity

If you have any questions about this template, please contact: RIsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk.

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	University of the West of England
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)	19 March 2024
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.uwe.ac.uk/research/policies-and-standards
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Professor John Hancock Email address: John.hancock@uwe.ac.uk
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: Ros Rouse Email address: Ros.Rouse@uwe.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

Please describe how the organisation maintains high standards of research integrity and promotes positive research culture. It should include information on the support provided to researchers to understand standards, values and behaviours, such as training, support and guidance for researchers at different career stages/ disciplines. You may find it helpful to consider the following broad headings:

- Policies and systems
- Communications and engagement
- Culture, development and leadership
- Monitoring and reporting

UWE has a suite of policies related to research integrity. UWE's policies can be found underlined here. The University has a system of ethics committees which covers all research with human participants, their tissue or their data and animals and animal by-products, and a Human Tissue Sub-Committee. All Committees produce annual reports which are subject to assurance review. The University Ethics and Integrity Committee (UEIC) will have overarching oversight for research integrity, and reports to the University's Academic Board. Deans (Research and Enterprise) cascade relevant communications through their Colleges and Schools with formal communications through the College Research and Knowledge Exchange Committees. Research integrity is embedded in our research structures through training and governance processes. Staff undertaking funded and unfunded research are expected to undertake relevant research ethics training and adhere to UWE's policies and codes of practice, as well as best practice in their field of study. The need for specialist research governance advice is flagged through our external application management system, and internally funded schemes application forms include issues such as due diligence and highlights mandatory research ethics and research data management training. The extent to which staff researchers' contribution is aligned with the University's Strategic Priorities and reflects UWE values is reflected in our personal development review process.

UEIC will also oversee the Research Governance Strategic Risk Register, and this is reported on to Academic Board and the Board of Governors. There is therefore a clear line of Committee assurance. A Research Governance Record is also available

for use by staff across the University, providing managers with information relating to research governance elements of research.

Student research is overseen by staff who are responsible for the oversight of research integrity. For postgraduate researchers (PGRs), the Director of Studies is the designated UWE Project Manager and is therefore responsible for their PGR's adherence to research governance policies. Directors of Studies are reminded of this responsibility as part of their supervisor training. As researchers-in-training, PGRs must now complete the University's online research ethics and data management training modules in order to pass the Confirmation of Project milestone point. A dedicated research governance workshop *Foundations of Good Research* is offered termly aligned with PGR cohort start dates, and is actively promoted to new starters at the point of offer. Research governance matters are also addressed in workshops pertaining to each PGR milestone point (Confirmation of Project, Progression, Progress Review and Final Viva) and in relevant topic-based workshops such as *Introduction to Qualitative Research* and *The Art of Research Interviewing*.

UWE's Invest in Yourself programme, offering skills development and training to all staff engaged in research, was launched in September 2022. It aims to foster a positive research culture, bringing together staff from across the University to develop broad research skills, make connections and develop their research careers. Research governance matters are included in workshops including Project Management for Researchers, bidding, commercialisation, and training for doctoral supervisors.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

Please provide an update on any changes made during the period, such as new initiatives, training, developments, also ongoing changes that are still underway. Drawing on Commitment 3 of the Concordat, please note any new or revised policies, practices and procedures to support researchers; training on research ethics and research integrity; training and mentoring opportunities to support the development of researchers' skills throughout their careers.

During this period a number of research integrity related policies and guidance were updated, including the Procedures for the Investigation of Research Misconduct and Code of Good Research Conduct, along with the Quality

Management Systems for human tissue and animals, and the Research Ethics Handbook.

As part of a University-wide re-organisation, the decision was taken to establish a University Ethics and Integrity Committee which reports directly to the University's Academic Board, and now sits alongside rather than underneath the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (as described in more detail at 2d below). Although the first meeting will be in the next reporting period, arrangements to set up the new Committee, and to consider the most appropriate structure of ethics committees reporting to it, and consideration of appropriate IT systems to support ethics processes, has taken place during this reporting period, and has been the most significant area of work. In addition, the following have been implemented:

The UWE Research Data Management training online module was made mandatory for staff, and available to all students. The module is designed around the UWE research Data Management Plan template, and is focussed on providing support to a researcher in completing this for their research.

The UWE Student Research Ethics Record was introduced during this period. This is systematised record, across the whole University, of all taught programme research projects, recording whether these are high or low ethical risk, and whether they need full ethical approval or are suitable for Supervisor sign off. This is essential to be able to assure that the appropriate level of ethical scrutiny is given, in a timely way, and that students are provided with the appropriate level of ethical support.

The Animal Welfare and Ethics Committee Audit took place in this reporting period, and was conducted as a pilot audit against a new 'Standard' for research with bats. As a result of this pilot audit, and feedback elicited, a new model of audit has been agreed, and will be developed in the next reporting period. The outcome of this pilot audit was positive, in terms of the research practice which was considered.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

This should include a reflection on the previous year's activity including a review of progress and impact of initiatives if known relating to activities referenced in the previous year's statement. Note any issues that have hindered progress, e.g. resourcing or other issues.

The most significant development for the University in relation to research integrity is the establishment of the University Ethics and Integrity Committee. This has been established specifically to focus on issues of integrity on a University-wide basis, so that all elements of integrity, whether that be research ethics, due diligence, conflict of interest, will be assured by one Committee, with a clear line of reporting to Academic Board and the Board of Governors. During this reporting period, a great deal of thought went into how this should best be governed and supported within the University, and this thinking has fed into the work plan for the new Committee, which will get underway in earnest in the next reporting period.

It is planned that the UEIC Work Plan should include: the new College based Research Ethics Committee and Scrutineer Pool Structure to be developed, and a new Worktribe based application system; consider future provision for the recording of project level research governance information; further development of research ethics guidance in areas such as power dynamics in research, and autoethnography, and, consideration of the integrity elements of Artificial Intelligence, in the context of the wider sector, National and International debate. In this context, the University, in consultation with students, staff and professional services, are developing an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy. This will cover all aspects of University business, including teaching and research.

In line with the University's ongoing development of its risk framework, 2023/24 will see an emphasis on risk assurance and in particular strengthening the role and functioning of 'second line of defence' committees, such as the University Ethics and Integrity Committee, and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee.

Recognising the existence of varying approaches to due diligence across the institution, the University is in the process of developing an overarching framework for third-party risk management, including due diligence. The framework will establish minimum requirements to ensure robust third-party risk management where it is required and covering the whole lifecycle of arrangements.

During this period the University looked to establish a Doctoral Academy, this enables more 'ownership' of PGR students and activity within the academic Schools. This will ensure increased attention, expertise and scrutiny on ethics related issues for our PGR students and supervisors.

As a note on University research leadership, a change in research senior level responsibility occurred after the PVC Research and Enterprise left the University in February 2023. The University DVC has taken over the institutional responsibility

for research and has delegated authority for integrity and ethics to Professor John Hancock.

2D. Case study on good practice (optional)

Please describe an anonymised brief, exemplar case study that can be shared as good practice with other organisations. A wide range of case studies are valuable, including small, local implementations. Case studies may also include the impact of implementations or lessons learned.

During this year, the University took the decision that as integrity and ethics needs to be mainstreamed in all aspects of the University's operation in a seamless way, it should be more holistically reflected in the Committee Structures of the University. It was therefore decided that the Research Ethics Sub-Committee should be replaced by a new University Ethics and Integrity Committee. It was also decided, that to reflect the importance of integrity and ethics, this should be a high-level committee reporting directly to the University's Academic Board. The new Committee will have a remit for ethics and integrity across the whole of the University. It will not only be the high-level University committee responsible for research ethics but will also develop and oversee policy and provide assurance in relation to, for example, research governance risk, establishing an overarching framework for due diligence in all areas of the University's operations, overseeing University Policy and Procedures in relation to conflicts of interest, and developing a position in relation to the research integrity elements of Artificial Intelligence in research and education. This Committee will be established and meet for the first time in the next reporting year.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

Please provide:

- a brief summary of relevant organisation policies/ processes (e.g. research misconduct procedure, whistle-blowing policy, bullying/harassment policy; appointment of a third party to act as confidential liaison for persons wishing to raise concerns) and brief information on the periodic review of research misconduct processes (e.g. date of last review; any major changes during the period under review; date when processes will next be reviewed).

- information on how the organisation creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct (e.g. code of practice for research, whistle-blowing, research misconduct procedure, informal liaison process, website signposting for reporting systems, training, mentoring, reflection and evaluation of policies, practices and procedures).

- anonymised key lessons learned from any investigations into allegations of misconduct which either identified opportunities for improvements in the organisation's investigation procedure and/or related policies / processes/ culture or which showed that they were working well.

Research Misconduct at UWE is considered under the auspices of the Procedure for Investigating Research Misconduct (last reviewed December 2022, next review date December 2024). Where misconduct is proven under the procedure, this may then be referred to the University's Procedure for dealing with matters of Conduct, should disciplinary action need to be considered. The University also has a Policy and Procedure for Whistleblowing and Public Interest Disclosure (last reviewed in June 2022, next review date June 2025). The University also has a Dignity at Work Policy (last reviewed November 2022, next review be November 2025).

UWE has a Code of Good Research Conduct, which sets out the University's expectations of researchers and research supervisors. This is supported by mandatory research ethics and research data management training modules, and a suite of guidance including the Ethics Handbook, Quality Management Systems for work with human tissue and with animals, as well as research specific data protection guidance, which set out clearly what is expected practice. Chairs and

Members of research ethics committees provide support and guidance to individuals. The Research Governance and Ethics Team is a central point of contact for queries and support, and there are named points of contact for the raising of research misconduct issues.

New Director of Research roles have been established in all of the new University Schools. These provide support in addition to the support available from the Research Governance and Ethics team and Chairs and Members of the ethics committees. Additionally, we have a Women in Research mentoring scheme.

One case was considered during this period under the Staff Procedure for the Investigation of Research Misconduct but did not proceed to formal investigation.

The particular nature of this referral demonstrated to us that our staff have considerable trust in our procedures. The primary outcome was that we were assured our conduct requirements had been adhered to by the member of staff, so this case provided us with reassurance rather than specific lessons learnt.

One case of plagiarism was investigated during the period under the University's procedures for investigating assessment offences allegations for postgraduate researchers. Once again, in this case, there were no specific lessons learnt, we were reassured that our processes were robust, and that necessary follow up actions in terms of training and support were available and appropriate.

3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken

Please complete the table on the number of **formal investigations completed during the period under review** (including investigations which completed during this period but started in a previous academic year). Information from ongoing investigations should not be submitted.

An organisation's procedure may include an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. These allegations should be included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column.

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	1	1		1
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	1	0		
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:	**2**	**1**		**1**

*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]