



Annual statement on research integrity: Academic year 2024/25

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
1C. Date statement approved by governing body	TBC
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	Professor John T Hancock 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	Dr Mateja Celestina mateja.celestina@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

Policies and systems

UWE has a suite of policies and guidance related to research integrity which are available on the UWE website (some require staff login).

These are

- [Code of Good Research Conduct](#)
- [Information Security Toolkit](#)
- [Human tissue research and teaching](#)
- [Lone working](#)
- [Qualtrics; \(guidance on \[Online forms and survey tools\]\(#\)\)](#)
- [Research data management](#)
- [Research data security](#)
- [Research governance](#)
- [Research misconduct](#)
- [Risk assessment](#)
- [Safeguarding - stay safe on- and off-campus](#)
- [Travelling on University business](#)
- [Use of animals in research](#)
- [Data Protection Standard for Research \(PDF\) - incorporating GDPR](#)
- [Academic Conduct Policy and Academic Misconduct](#)
- [Whistleblowing and Public Interest Disclosure Policy](#)
- [Research Misconduct Procedure](#)

In line with current policy developments, UWE has prepared a toolkit on FIRS and detailed guidance on export control. The University also has QMS for work involving human tissue and work involving animals.

UWE has three ethics committees at the College level, which review research involving human participants or their data. UWE also has two subcommittees – the Animal Welfare Ethics Subcommittee (AWESC) which has oversight over research and teaching involving animals and animal by-products, and the Human Tissue Subcommittee (HTSC) which has oversight over any research or teaching that involves human tissue. All Committees meet at least 4 times per year and produce annual reports summarising business and actions of the Committee during the reporting period which are subject to assurance review. The University Ethics and Integrity Committee (UEIC) has overarching oversight for research integrity and reports to the University's Academic Board. UEIC also reviews the Research Governance Risk Register and oversees critical actions to reduce the level of any risks identified. This is reported on to Academic Board and the Board of Governors. There is therefore a clear line of Committee assurance.

UWE holds Research Governance Records, where researchers record any research they are involved in whether it requires ethics approval or not. After the successful implementation of this practice at the College for Health Science and Society it has been rolled out to the other two Colleges. It is mandatory for use by staff across the University, recording critical research integrity related details, and providing managers with information for the purposes of monitoring research activities.

The UWE Student Ethical Review Record, which is a systematised record across the whole University of all UG and Masters taught programme research projects, records whether these are high or low ethical risk, and whether they need a 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.

Communications and Engagement

Communication takes place through different routes. The three College Ethics Committee Chairs meet with the UEIC Chair and the Research Integrity Governance and Ethics (RIGE) Manager 4 times a year. The UEIC Chair and RIGE

Manager also attend all Ethics Committee and Subcommittee meetings. This ensures that any relevant information is discussed and known by all relevant parties. The Committee Chairs and RIGE Manager are in regular email communication. Deans (Research and Enterprise) cascade relevant communications through their Colleges and Schools with communications through the College Research and Knowledge Exchange Committees. Individual Colleges additionally have their own means of communication. The College Ethics Committee Chairs email information to all their members and scrutineers. All Schools are represented in the Committee membership for each College and within the scrutineer poll, ensuring that information reaches individual Schools. Information is further disseminated via College newsletters, and research group communications where available.

The Research Integrity Governance and Ethics Office additionally employs specifically targeted emails, for example asking for updates on the human tissue register, reminders about the need to renew MRC training, and end of project emails for projects using animals or animal by-products.

Culture, Development and Leadership

UWE has a new Research Culture & Development Team which sits within Research and External Engagement (REE) and focuses on researcher development and research culture. The team has been and will continue to work closely with HR, Finance, Deans, and academic colleagues to implement and sustain this work. There are also plans to expand the team's support for research culture. This includes the review of existing initiatives, more structured mentoring and learning opportunities, aligned with UWE's [Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan](#).

UWE's work is guided by sector frameworks such as the Researcher Development Concordat and aligned with UWE's [Research Strategy 2030 - Transforming Futures](#) and the new [RISE](#) agenda. The strategy and RISE set out a vision for delivering impactful, world-leading research, with a focus on four interdisciplinary Beacons: Shaping Integrated Healthcare; Harnessing Creativity and Technology; Enriching Culture, Place and Community; and Securing a Green, Resilient Future. It also highlights the importance of inclusive, ethical research practices and researcher development.

All UWE staff and PGR students that engage in research need to undertake mandatory training on research ethics and data management. The Research

Office checks the completion of mandatory training whenever researchers wish to submit a bid.

All new PhD starters and Prof Docs entering the research phase of their programme of study are invited to attend a *Foundations of Good Research* workshop. These workshops are held in October, January and April, timed to align with the University's standard PGR intake dates. Workshop slides, recordings and other ancillary materials are available to all currently registered PGRs via the PGR Skills Development Blackboard site. These are reviewed and updated after each workshop. Research governance matters are also addressed in workshops pertaining to each PGR checkpoint/milestone (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. All currently registered PGRs also have access to, and are encouraged to use, UWE research governance related resources via our digital Skills Development Resources Library. The Doctoral Academy Handbook includes a [chapter on research governance](#). Feedback on the workshops is generally positive: participants appreciate the range and relevance of the content, knowing where to go for further, more specific advice as their research progresses, and the opportunity to meet others at the same stage of their research degree studies.

Research governance in relation to PGR supervisor's responsibilities is addressed in PGR supervisor training. This takes the form of a section within *Introduction to Doctoral Supervision: Pedagogy & Practice* (for new PGR supervisors) and a 'what would you do' case study as part of the *PGR Supervision Masterclass* (for experienced PGR supervisors).

Colleges offer some bespoke ethics training and seminars, both for PGRs and staff. A practice of inviting PGR students who conduct some ethically sensitive research to share their experiences has been particularly welcome among new PhD students.

Training is available for researchers at different stages of their careers. UWE spent 2024/2025 developing the action plan having signed up to the Researcher Concordat. In September 2022, UWE launched the annual Invest in Yourself programme; this is REE's core researcher skills development offer, designed to support all career stages, from postgraduate researchers to professors, in identifying and pursuing professional growth. It includes workshops (online, in-person and hybrid), resources, and tailored training aligned with the Concordat principles. 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. This includes the two research career stage programmes: The Vice Chancellor's Early Career Researchers' Scheme and the Mid-Career Accelerator Programme. Research governance matters are included in workshops including Project Management for Researchers, bidding, commercialisation, and training for doctoral supervisors.

As well as this, the Research Culture and Development Team designed and delivered targeted initiatives in collaboration with other College teams, including Internal Research Funding Schemes, network opportunities, and knowledge-sharing events.

UWE appointed a new Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange who will be a member of the VC Executive.

UWE also appointed a new Research Integrity Governance and Ethics Manager to replace the Research Governance Manager who retired.

Monitoring and reporting

College Research Ethics Committees and both subcommittees send quarterly reports to UEIC and these include a summary of the applications received/processed along with any issues that may have arisen, how they were resolved and lessons learnt.

UWE monitors compliance through annual audits – for instance the management of human tissue samples, work with animals and animal by-products. Research Governance Records are audited quarterly.

UWE monitors scrutineers' engagement with the on-line training for scrutineers and the Research Office checks compliance with mandatory courses at the bid preparation stage.

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

A number of policies and guidance related to research integrity were updated in the academic year 2024/2025.

Policies that were updated:

- UWE Supplier Code of Conduct, the Freedom of Speech Policy and Code of Practice, the Donations Policy, the Whistleblower Policy and the Ethical Careers Policy (now Ethical Careers Guidance/Framework).
- The Research Misconduct Procedure: an interim version was implemented.
- Policy statement on the use of animals in research accompanied by a considerable amount of work on assurance in animal welfare compliance.
- Renewal of the University Policy on not accepting tobacco industry funding for research.
- External legal environment: discussion was held on the implications for UWE of the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 and the partial implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

An anti-racism strategy was established as UWE's priority, with mandatory training on anti-racism for all staff. All staff are also required to undertake the sexual harassment prevention training to ensure we are compliant with the Office for Students requirements. This training is particularly relevant for the Degree Apprenticeship and Doctoral Academy which, due to the nature of their work, have had enhanced training.

Recognising that the appetite for research on potentially sensitive topics has been growing and that researchers would benefit from support throughout the life cycle of sensitive research, the College for Business and Law proposed and started creating the Sensitive Research Network. The idea is to offer a safe space for UWE researchers, both staff and PGRs, to learn from others and offer space to debrief. The hope is that the Network would move from the College focus to encompass all sensitive research that takes place at UWE.

In the sphere of training, UWE, due to University Transformation Programme, focused on consistency in training provision rather than developing new training.

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.

UWE recognises the opportunities and challenges that AI offers. UWE's main focus in 2024/2025 was on the use of AI in teaching and learning. The need to focus on the use of GenAI and LLM in the research sphere was highlighted and new guidance on the responsible use of AI is to be released in the first half of 2025/2026. The Research Office also plans to develop some training on the ethical use of AI in bid writing. There are also plans to create a task group for AI at the university level, composed of experts from different fields – legal, data protection, ethics, and academia.

Since the introduction of new training was paused (due to University Transformation Programme) the plan for 2025/2026 is to review and update training on ethics – both the current mandatory training with the potential of adding bespoke training per College. More structured and regular training for scrutineers is also planned to be delivered in person or in hybrid mode to allow for live discussion.

UWE moved onto using Worktribe for ethics processing in August 2024. The feedback has generally been good, and the new system is considered an improvement on the previous ethics processing system. With the aim of improving the efficiency of the current ethics review system, UWE plans to trial a triage system in 2025/2026 which would see a different review path for applications that are high risk and for applications that are moderate risk.

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.

The University has policies and procedures in place to ensure that research is conducted to the highest levels of ethics and integrity, and these are available on the [Research Integrity webpage](#). UWE also has a Code of Good Research Conduct, which sets out the University's expectations of researchers and research supervisors.

Research Misconduct at UWE is considered under the auspices of the Procedure for Investigating Research Misconduct (last reviewed December 2022. In light of previous use of the Procedure, a new version is being prepared and will be approved and implemented by Spring 2026). The University also has a Whistleblowing and Public Interest Disclosure Policy and Procedure, and a Dignity at Work Policy. The University's Procedure for Investigating Research Misconduct outlines the procedure to be followed when there is an allegation of misconduct in research. The Procedure ensures that any investigation is fair, timely, and carried out in a transparent manner.

Any person wishing to raise concerns about the integrity of research being conducted under the auspices of the University can do so in confidence through the Responsible Officer by emailing researchgovernance@uwe.ac.uk.

As seen below there were three cases considered in 2024/2025. One was a member of staff and two PGR students (one on a joint PhD programme). All three allegations were related to plagiarism. The two PGR cases were

considered under the [Academic Conduct Policy and Academic Misconduct](#) and were upheld in full.

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	3	2		2
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations				
Misrepresentation (e.g. data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)				
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when				

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received in a single allegation)				
Other				
Total:	3	2		2