

# Annual Research Integrity Statement

2018-19



## INTRODUCTION

*This is the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Statement of Research Integrity of the University, covering the academic period of 2018/19*

### Progress report 2018-19:

#### **1. University Research Ethics and Governance sub-committee**

The University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee (UREGSC) continued to meet during the year providing strategic oversight to a number of University policies and processes, and providing support/advice/guidance to Colleges/Schools. Progress reports from College Research Ethics & Governance committees and other sub committees like AWERB, Swansea Trials Unit, Human Tissue governance, Research Institute of Ethics & Law were received. Updates from Professional services departments particularly in relation to 'Prevent' Compliance, security sensitive research, GDPR and Research, Research Data Management, Open access, Safeguarding & working with Children & Vulnerable Adults & Business Continuity and Resilience were also provided to the committee.

#### **2. College Research Ethics and Governance Committees**

All Colleges/Schools continued to have functioning Research Ethics & Governance committees which met regularly. The Chairs of College/School committees attended and provided regular reports to the University Committee. Wherever required additional sub-committees continued to support the College/School Research Ethics committees.

#### **3. Appointments**

In August 2018, an Academic Dean for Research Integrity was appointed. The Dean provides Academic leadership and Strategic direction to developing a research culture of transparency and best practice and supporting the University's commitment to the 'Concordat to Support Research Integrity'. She provides vision and guidance and acts as a champion of research integrity to ensure that the policies and procedures of the University relating to research ethics and governance are upheld, and implemented by staff, students and visiting researchers.

The Research Integrity Manager, previously based at the Vice Chancellor's Office, was transferred to REIS to be part of a proposed Research Integrity Unit. This role is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The role holder develops policies on research integrity and supports the Colleges with upholding and ensuring implementation of them thus fulfilling the audit requirements. Along with servicing the University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee, the role holder coordinates receipt of regular reports and updates from College Research Ethics Committees and acts as the Institutional Contact for receiving and co-ordinating Research Misconduct cases.

Also appointed in August 2018, the Research Governance Officer, is responsible for creating, managing and updating the Research Governance processes of the University in accordance with the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research (2017). Working alongside the Academic Dean for Research Integrity, the Research Governance Officer reviews and approves sponsorship applications and is a member of various NHS and University committees that review and approve sponsorship applications. The Research Governance Officer

role has a particular focus in ensuring that safety of research participants is given the maximum priority in any research application.

#### 4. Other Updates

- The Academic Dean and members of the research integrity unit attended various College Ethics and Governance committee meetings to discuss the approaches to reviewing ethical applications. The idea of undertaking a 'risk based' assessment approach to monitor projects was also floated.
- The Associate Director of REIS, and the Academic Dean, along with members of the Research Integrity team visited the Universities of Bristol and Cardiff to explore best practice methods in relation to research integrity management and governance.
- The Colleges encouraged staff to undertake the **mandatory** online research integrity training ('Epigeum') by sending out regular reminder emails to all research active staff and ensuring that information on the training was made available at induction for new staff.
- The Academic Dean and the Research Integrity Manager continued to work with the Post-graduate Research office to explore options of the rolling out a research integrity training for PGR students. Access to the one hour online research integrity Epigeum training was provided to Postgraduate Research students through the PGR office.
- The University Data Protection Officer produced guidance for researchers, and a mandatory training on General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Anti Bribery and Money Laundering supported researchers meet their obligations.
- Policies within the Research Integrity policy framework were reviewed to reflect changes in legislation, regulatory requirements and research practices  
<http://www.swansea.ac.uk/research/researchintegrity/research-integrity-policies/>

The University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee, approved the following new policies:

- P1617-635: Policy research with Children and young people
- P1819-134: Code of Practice on Authorship.
- P1819-Policy on research with Vulnerable Adults
- P1819-136: Research Integrity Data Protection Policy
- Guidance on DBS checks and Storage
- The online system for ethical approval (Infonetica), which had been purchased by the Department of Psychology, in 2017-18 was extended to all the subject areas in the College of Human & Health Sciences. This system is providing greater efficiency, security and standardisation to the hundreds of student applications received by the College and is helping ease the administrative burden of the ethical review process.
- The College of Science, which has developed an in-house ethical review system to assist the departments with ethical review of research applications, rolled the system out further to other subject areas within the College. Members of the College programming team presented a snapshot of the online system to members of the University Research Ethics & Governance committee.
- Other Colleges showed an interest in piloting the system including the College of Arts and Humanities who eventually agreed to pilot it from 2019-20. Data from such a piloting scheme would be beneficial in assessing the usefulness of implementing a University wide online systems of ethical review.
- In addition to the online training, a separate **in-house training** package on research integrity continues to be offered to research active staff through the staff development and training services. This 'lunch and learn' programme introduces researchers to the University research integrity polices, provides information and guidance on ethical review of research, sponsorship of research, working with human tissue and safeguarding in higher education.

- The site license for the online training package on ‘Safeguarding in Higher Education’ was renewed for a further year (2018/19). This training tool provides researchers working with children and vulnerable adults a useful information and guidance on regulatory requirements
- During 2017/18 a review of the current research integrity web pages was conducted, and content developed for a new University Website. The aim of the review was to make information more readily accessible, and to tailor the content for internal and external audiences. The new webpages went live in AY 2018/19.
- The University continued to subscribe to the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO). The Academic Dean of Research Integrity and the Research Integrity Manager attended the annual UKRIO 2019 conference in London and gathered useful information. The attendance offered the opportunity to network with colleagues from other institutions and learn about best practice.

## RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

- The University has well established confidential reporting mechanisms for reporting allegations of research misconduct via a dedicated and restricted access research misconduct email address.
- The University has sought expert guidance from UKRIO in the development of policy and processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct, to ensure that processes for investigation are robust, transparent and fair.
- The misconduct investigation processes are broadly divided into three stages: a preliminary stage; screening stage and if necessary, formal investigation. The allegation may be dismissed at any of these stages if it is considered that there is insufficient information; or that it does not fall within the definition of research misconduct or the allegation was not upheld due to being mistaken, frivolous, vexatious or malicious. If the allegation is minor in nature it may be addressed at the screening stage through competency, training, education or other non-disciplinary processes rather than formal investigation.
- The Registrar & Chief Operating Officer is the named person in the University with responsibility for receiving and responding to allegations of research misconduct.
- Details of the misconduct reporting process are publicly available on the website at <http://www.swansea.ac.uk/research/researchintegrity/researchmisconduct/>
- During the 2018/19 academic year, staff were reminded of the procedures for reporting research misconduct through an all staff email from the Senior Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & Innovation). The email provided staff with a copy of the Policy for reporting and investigating allegations of Research Misconduct and the Code of Practice on Authorship.
- In 2018/19, the University received the following allegations under the University’s Research Misconduct procedures:

Allegation	Nature of alleged misconduct	Outcome
1	Authorship dispute	Resolution through Mediation
2	Authorship dispute & Plagiarism	College investigation conducted. Matter referred to the Registrar. Screening panel established. Referred for investigation.

		Investigation panel convened and investigation ongoing.
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### Challenges for 2019/20:

- **Training**

The contract for the online training on research integrity (Epigeum), purchased in September 2016, came to an end in August 2019. The University considers that research integrity for staff & students is an absolute necessity in ensuring that research is conducted in an environment of openness and transparency. The University Committee for Research and Innovation therefore approved the purchase of the Epigeum Research Integrity training for a further period of 3 years (till August 2022).

- **Online system of Ethical review**

Having an effective online system for ethical review of all research applications will help reduce the administrative workload on staff. An online system will provide transparency and easier reporting to assure compliance and monitoring. The Academic Dean met the University Chief Digital Officer to explore options for resourcing an online ethical approval system. It was agreed that data from the Infonetica system (College of Human & Health Sciences) and the College of Science system (CoS and College of Arts and Humanities) would be compared prior to deciding on a University wide system.

- **Engagement and raising awareness of research integrity**

The past few years has seen a massive drive in relation to implementing and supporting the University's commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. As a result, the University is better placed, than it has ever been, in relation to policies, processes, protocols, training, and information for staff and students. There is however still, a lot to be done to ensure a 'cultural shift' to 'raise awareness' amongst researchers, of the benefits of undertaking research with integrity.

The focus of research integrity activities in the forthcoming year would therefore be to conduct such activities that raise awareness of research integrity issues amongst staff and students. Working together with the Academic Services, REIS, ISS and the wider University, such proposals could include conducting frequent 'lunch & learn' or 'breakfast' sessions in both campuses, conducting half day workshops on research integrity and possibly an annual conference on research integrity with invited external guest speakers from the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and other UK Russell Group Universities who are at the forefront of implementation of the Concordat within their institutions. These activities will have resource implications in relation to budget and staffing and would therefore need to be built into the business planning process.

- **Raising awareness about reporting cases of Research Misconduct**

The past year has seen a couple of instances where staff within the Institution, and external individuals/bodies were unsure of the process of reporting a suspected allegation of research misconduct. Some staff sought guidance in order to understand whether a particular case would fit within the definition of research misconduct. The research integrity webpage now has a dedicated email address and a contact for reporting such allegations. It would be advisable however to ensure that this information is distributed as widely as possible within the University, and an option of setting up a dedicated group of 'research integrity' champions to provide confidential advice/direction to those wishing to report an allegation. A policy on 'Whistleblowing' for research could also be developed to provide protection and anonymity to complainants from reprisals for raising a concern.

- **Research Governance & Sponsorship of research:**

Further establishment of appropriate research governance sponsorship processes and protocols, Clinical research webpage with policies, processes, flowchart and information for staff, appropriate training on procedures.

Assisting Swansea University as an organisations to deliver non-commercial research in a healthcare setting and explore the resources needed for the application of monitoring as a quality assurance tool. Focus on skills for monitoring and provide PI's with an understanding of risk-based monitoring in order to ensure high quality research.

**Further information:**

This statement was prepared by the Research Integrity Manager and approved in June 2019 by the University Committee for Research & Innovation Strategy (CRIS). For any queries and information on research integrity matters, please contact [researchintegrity@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:researchintegrity@swansea.ac.uk)

*End of Report*