Annual Research Integrity Statement
2023-2024

<u>Preamble</u>

This statement provides the University of Sussex response to the UK Concordat for Research Integrity ('The Concordat') and is intended to inform UK Research and Innovation, Research England, the academic community, other funders of our research, and the public more broadly, how the University addresses matters of research integrity and seeks to foster a culture of professional integrity.

The Concordat seeks to provide a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance. As signatories to, and supporters of, the Concordat to support Research Integrity, the University is committed to the following principles:

1) Maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.
2) Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.
3) Supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers.
4) Using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.
5) Working together to strengthen the integrity of research.

<u>A message from the Vice Chancellor and President, Professor Sasha Roseneil.</u>

The University of Sussex is committed to all research meeting the highest standards of rigour, integrity, ethics and governance. We recognise that public trust in our research is paramount to our mission, reputation and purpose as a higher education institution committed to conducting world-leading research that makes a positive impact in society. The Annual Research Integrity Statement evidences our full commitment to the Concordat for Research Integrity and sets out the institutional actions we are taking to embed its principles.

Signature

Professor Sasha Roseneil, Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Sussex

Overview of activities 2023-2024

The following activities and initiatives supported the University's commitment to research integrity in 2023-24:

- Appointment of a Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance (REIG) Senior Manager
- Appointment of a REIG Manager
- REIG team training and conference attendance
- The delivery of researcher training and briefings for researchers and ethics committee members
- Establishment of ethics drop-in sessions for staff and students
- Development of a mandatory research integrity training module
- Research Ethics and Governance Framework Review
- Procurement of a new online ethics application management system
- Research Culture funding to run ethics and integrity events as part of the Summer of Research programme
- Research Culture funding to establish a staff and postgraduate researcher (PGR) award recognising good ethical practice
- Research Culture Enabling Plan
- Research Culture funded reproducibility statistician within the School of Psychology
- Trusted Research and Nagoya Protocol awareness raising
- Trusted Research Advisory Group established

Commitment 1: Maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research
Initiatives and actions in the 2023-2024 academic year
The University has established and continues to articulate its key standards for research integrity in three main documents: 1) The Code of Practice for Research 2) The Research Governance Standard Operating Procedure 3) The Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research ('the Procedure') In November 2023 the University welcomed the arrival of a Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance (REIG) Manager, a new role established to enhance operational oversight of high quality and effective ethics and governance review systems as undertaken by the University's Research Ethics Committees (RECs), and to increase stakeholder engagement, enhance training and development provision whilst promoting a positive culture around research ethics. In December the University welcomed the arrival of a REIG Senior Manager (REIG SM), a further new role established to enhance operational activity of the University's sponsorship process and to support the operational and strategic direction of the REIG team. The REIG SM along with the Senior International Governance Officer have undertaken a programme of awareness raising around international research governance, the Trusted Research campaign and the Nagoya Protocol. A Trusted Research Advisory Group has also been established to oversee the University's management of trusted research, providing assurance and recommendations to the Executive in all matters relating to international research partnerships. The group will support and advise on the potential implications of government legislation, the security of international research collaboration, and potential risks and mitigations with a focus on high-risk issues and developments relating to export control.

The REIG SM also led on the development of a research integrity training module which will become mandatory for research staff in the coming year.

The University took part in UK Research Integrity Office Research Integrity training package trial, offering 400 spaces to PGRs.

The Senior Research Ethics and Integrity Officers (SREIOs) have continued to provide training and advice to support researchers and new members of the University's Research Ethics Committees and School Research Ethics Officers. Moreover, this year the SREIOs have established regular drop-in sessions for staff and students to support queries relating to the submission of ethics applications.

Commitment 2: Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards
Initiatives and actions in the 2023-2024 academic year

The University's Research Governance and Quality Assurance Committee, a sub-committee of Senate, meets regularly, to ensure that University research is conducted to appropriate ethical and legal frameworks based on good research governance, best practice and support for the development and training of researchers. The Chair reports Committee activity to the University Senate through the Pro Vice Chancellor for Research & Innovation, and the University Research & Innovation Committee.

The Research Ethics, and Integrity Committee, a sub-committee of Senate, meets regularly, to ensure that the University upholds the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research. The Chair reports Committee activity to the University Senate through the Pro Vice Chancellor for Research & Innovation, and the University Research & Innovation Committee.

The University's sponsorship sub-committee regularly meets to oversee institutional compliance with the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care research and ensures all research sponsored by the University in line with this framework is appropriately conducted. The Chair reports Committee activity to the University's Research Governance and Quality Assurance Sub-Committee.

The Head of Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance undertook a review of the University's Ethics and Governance Framework. The review was undertaken in light of the University's introduction of Faculties in 2024, to inform the configuration of a new online ethics application management system and following recommendation of a previously commissioned report into ethics process in the School of Law, Politics and Sociology. The report outlined 19 recommendations for consideration, all of which will have been taken forward in the coming year.

The University has procured a new online ethics application management system which will be configured and implemented over the forthcoming year.

Commitment 3: Supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers
Initiatives and actions in the 2023-2024 academic year

As part of the University of Sussex's Summer of Research calendar, the REIG team were awarded Research England Enhancing Research Culture funds to support the following events:

- Good research practice and a healthy research culture
- Practical considerations when applying for ethical review and utilising AI in research

- An Introduction to the Health Research Authority, for researchers
- Mental Capacity and receiving consent in research
- Combined University of Sussex and University of Brighton Research Ethics Committee Chair Panel discussion

Research Culture funding also enable the introduction of 2 prizes, 1 for staff and 1 for Postgraduate Researchers, to recognise and celebrate good ethical practice in research. Nominations were competitive and outlined some outstanding practice.

This year the University has developed a Research Culture Enabling Plan that highlights transparent, trusted and impactful Open Research. It aspires to 'all those researching and supporting research and research students will experience a fair and ethical Research Culture in which integrity is foremost and effectively supported'.

The Research Culture Steering Group, Open Research Group, and Knowledge Exchange Steering Group are advocating via committee consultation, for the HR review of reward and recognition to be based upon Research Culture principles such as collegiality, support for junior colleagues and open research practices.

The REIG team themselves attended a variety of conferences including the World Conference on Research Integrity, the Association of Research Managers and Administrators conference and Artificial Intelligence Risks and Safety. Upskilling team members with advances across the sector supports good practice and sector alignment.

Commitment 4: Using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise
Initiatives and actions in the 2023-2024 academic year
A summary of investigations into allegations of misconduct in research undertaken over the last 5 years is included at the bottom of this document. During the 2023-2024 academic year there were no formal allegations of Misconduct in Research raised with the Named Person under the Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research.

Commitment 5: Working together to strengthen the integrity of research
Initiatives and actions in the 2023-2024 academic year
The University is leading the openness indicator pilot for UK Reproducibility Network to explore the feasibility and reliability of indicators of open research, namely the Contributor Role Taxonomy, and working with research data platform providers will contribute to building knowledge around what is needed to facilitate greater uptake of open research mechanisms like the taxonomy so that they become meaningful indicators in the future. Outcomes will be recommendations to the sector. Research Culture funds supported the trial of a reproducibility statistician in the School of Psychology and due to the success of the trial the post will continue. The Social Sciences and Arts Research Ethics Committee, the Science and Technology Research Ethics Committee, and Brighton and Sussex Medical School Research Ethics Committee alongside the School Research Ethics Officers (SREOs) received a total of 2742 new and amended ethics applications for ethical review in this reporting year. Two new Chairs and Deputies have been appointed to the University's Research Ethics Committees, along with 8 new members and 7 new SREOs.

The University continues to have membership or representation of the following external organisations and groups:

- UK Research Integrity Office, an advisory body providing confidential and impartial advice on issues of research conduct[1]
- Association of Research Managers and Administrators, the professional association for research management in the UK[2]
- Association of University Research Sponsors (AURS), an association of research-intensive institutions (with medical schools) who operate within the NHS research environment
- Animal Materials Working Group (AMWG), an initiative of the Sanger Institute which seeks to develop a working framework to address ethical issues in the use and sourcing of animal-derived materials for teaching and research

Members of the REIG team continue to provide representation on the following internal committees and groups.

- Pre-Sponsorship Review Panel, a cross-organisational committee that benefits from multidisciplinary experience
- Research Culture Steering Group, to connect the work of the REIG team with Research Culture initiatives and ensure an understanding of ethics and integrity is embedded into the Group's work
- Open Research Group, to promote, support and foster engagement with open research
- Safeguarding Panel

[1] Home - UK Research Integrity Office (ukrio.org)
[2] The Association – ARMA

Allegations of misconduct in research upheld in part or full over the last 5 years.

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Fabrication	0	0	1	0	0
Falsification	0	0	0	1	0
Plagiarism	0	2	2	2	0
Misrepresentation	0	0	0	1	0
Breach of duty of care	0	0	0	0	0
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	0	0	0	0	0
Improprieties in the conduct, recording and storage of personal research data	0	0	0	1	0
Non-compliance with ethics processes	0	0	0	2	0
Total	0	2	3	7[*]	0

[*] 4 are relating to the same case

Approved by Senate 13th November 2024, Approved by Council 29th November 2024.