

# Annual statement on research integrity 2023/24

## Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
<b>1A. Name of organisation</b>	University of Worcester
<b>1B. Type of organisation:</b>  <b>higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)</b>	Higher Education Institution
<b>1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)</b>	22/11/2024
<b>1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)</b>	<a href="https://www.worcester.ac.uk/research/research-integrity-and-ethics.aspx">https://www.worcester.ac.uk/research/research-integrity-and-ethics.aspx</a>
<b>1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity</b>	Name: Professor John-Paul Wilson
	Email address: <a href="mailto:j.wilson@worc.ac.uk">j.wilson@worc.ac.uk</a>
<b>1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity</b>	Name: Michelle Jellis
	Email address: <a href="mailto:michelle.jellis@worc.ac.uk">michelle.jellis@worc.ac.uk</a>

## 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

##### *Culture, development and leadership*

The University's [Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2020-2025](#) has Research Integrity at its heart. The strategy is underpinned by five core principles that should flow through all research activity of which the first is "ensuring our RKE is delivered with integrity and to the highest ethical standards".

At University-level, research integrity falls under the remit of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. Its Research Integrity and Governance sub-Committee takes operational responsibility for research integrity. This sub-Committee is chaired by the University's Research Integrity Lead, Professor John-Paul Wilson.

It is the role of the Research Integrity and Governance Ethics sub-Committee to ensure that:

- the University has in place effective policies and procedures to govern research conduct (including research misconduct) and that these policies and procedures are up to date and align with external legislation, the Concordat, ethical and professional frameworks, and general and discipline-specific codes of practice;
- the University's policies and procedures are being effectively implemented across the University;
- the University has in place training and guidance, for both staff and students, that ensures they understand what constitutes research integrity and feed this through into the delivery of their research;
- the University has in place a communication strategy around Research Integrity such that staff and students engage effectively with procedures, training and guidance.

At College level, research integrity falls under the remit of two College Research Ethics Panels. These panels have primary responsibility for the implementation of the University's ethical approval processes and for providing day-to-day support for researchers around these processes and wider issues of research integrity. The two panel chairs (and deputy chairs) sit on the Research Integrity and Governance sub-Committee as well as providing periodic and annual reporting on the panels' activities. This link between University and College level assures that the University's systems and processes feed through fully into local practice but also ensures that disciplinary differences are reflected in policy, training and

guidance.

There is dedicated staff member within the University's Research Office focused on research integrity and governance who coordinates ethical approval processes, manages policies, processes and guidance and acts as secretary to relevant committees and panels.

#### *Policies and systems*

The University has a suite of policies designed to ensure research is undertaken to the highest standards of integrity:

- *Research Integrity Policy* (new policy approved in July 2022) - drawing on good practice reflected in the UK RIO Code and UKRI Policy, this policy sets out the standards we expect our researchers to meet. It was decided by the Research Integrity and Governance sub-Committee that this policy would be subject to evaluation after 12 months to test the extent staff and students had effectively engaged with the new policy. This evaluation will take place in Autumn 2023 and be reported on in the next annual statement.
- *Research Ethics Policy* (review and re-approval in April 2022) – this policy sets out the principles of ethical research and the processes for ethical review and approval for staff and student research.
- *Procedures for dealing with allegations of research misconduct* (new policy approved in July 2022) – these procedures closely follow the processes set out in UK RIO's procedures for investigating research misconduct. The proposed procedures were subject to consultation through the University's Committee structure and subject to approval by the University Executive Board in July 2022 for implementation in academic year 22/23. Training needed to be put in place around the new procedures for the various staff potentially involved at various stages of any investigation.
- *Policy for Effective Management of Research Data* (review and re-approval in July 2019) – this policy sets out the expectations of researchers for managing research data throughout the research cycle.
- *Lone Working Procedures for researchers* (review and reapproval in May 2023) – these procedures are designed to support staff and students potentially undertaking research alone in on-site settings (such as laboratories) and off-site (such as interviews in people's homes). They provide guidance on good practice drawing on content from organisations such as the Suzy Lamplugh Trust and set out processes for undertaking research safely in these settings.

#### *Communications and engagement*

The University has a dedicated site within its Virtual Learning focused on Research Integrity and Ethics which sets out all internal policies and processes and related documentation, links to relevant external integrity and ethics frameworks, and provides a detailed set of guidance documents on ethics and integrity. The site is open to all researchers (staff and student). Once a researcher enrolls on the site they receive automatic communications about policy, process and guidance updates.

### *Training and development*

The University continues to offer a programme of training around research integrity as part of its Researcher Development Programme for staff and research students. In 2023/24, the programme included workshops as follows:

- Introduction to Research Ethics
- Introduction to Research Integrity
- Research Data Management
- Undertaking Ethical Research
- Demystifying the Ethics Review Process
- What is research misconduct?

These workshops are embedded in modules which are a compulsory element of our doctoral programmes; thus all our research students must engage with these workshops. New staff are introduced to research integrity and to our ethical approval processes through induction and signposted to the relevant workshops; however, these workshops are not compulsory. Specific training is also provided for reviewers of applications for ethical approval.

In 2022/23, the University rolled out a new package of training around Research Integrity, Epigeum's Research Integrity programme (an online course for researchers). The content of this programme has been embedded in induction, in the doctoral researcher development programme, in relevant aspects of the staff researcher development programmes (e.g. Research Leadership and Research Supervisor training), as well as being made available to all staff.

### *Monitoring and reporting*

The University's Research Integrity and Governance Committee receives regular reporting on ethical approvals, on research misconduct investigations and on engagement with our research integrity resources. It also reviews its Research Integrity Concordat Action Plan at each meeting.

**2B. Changes and developments during the period under review**

The University has developed new guidance for researchers as follows:

- Guidance on Research Involving Animals
- Withdrawal of Data Guidance
- Guidance on taking consent in an online environment
- Guidance on Use of Secondary Data
- Research with Social Media and Podcasts

It further reviewed and updated existing guidance documents:

- Ethics Application Template
- Participant Information Sheet

**2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments**

The University has made significant progress in developing its policies, processes and systems in support of research integrity. It also has dedicated staff in place to support research integrity. It provides a strong suite of training and support around ethics and research integrity.

Where we have work to do is in raising the profile of research integrity amongst our researchers. We aim therefore to hold “Research Integrity” week in Spring 2024 which will be a series of lectures, seminars and workshops for researchers on this topic. We will further evaluate staff understanding of research integrity through our review of our new Research Integrity Policy.

## Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

The University has long had in place procedures for investigating allegations of research misconduct aligned with the UK RIO processes. The University approved a new policy for investigating research misconduct allegations for 2023/24 which builds on the former procedures.

The University identifies a named contact (and an alternative contact) on its external and internal research integrity webpages for any individual who has any concerns with the conduct of research undertaken by staff or students at the University. Individuals may raise general concerns or may choose to make a formal allegation which may then be subject to investigation.

There were zero allegations of research misconduct submitted to the contacts or received through other mechanisms in 2023/24 and there were zero investigations of research misconduct undertaken in 2023/24. Whilst the University is pleased in principle that no allegations of research misconduct have been received, it is also conscious that this may potentially be a reflection of individuals not always being aware of mechanisms to report such allegations or of individuals not feeling sufficiently empowered or knowledgeable to make such allegations. As highlighted in last year's report, all paperwork associated with research (e.g. participant information sheets) were updated to ensure that it actively highlights our processes in this area.

<b>3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken</b>				
<b>Type of allegation</b>	<b>Number of allegations</b>			
	<b>Number of allegations reported to the organisation</b>	<b>Number of formal investigations</b>	<b>Number upheld in part after formal investigation</b>	<b>Number upheld in full after formal investigation</b>
Fabrication	0	0	0	0
Falsification	0	0	0	0
Plagiarism	0	0	0	0
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	0	0	0	0
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)	0	0	0	0
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	0	0	0	0
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)	0	0	0	0
<i>Other*</i>	0	0	0	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>