



Research Integrity Statement

2021-2022

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Research Integrity Statement 2021-2022

1. Introduction

Seeking to ensure the highest standards of good practice and ethical conduct in its research, the University of Strathclyde (hereafter Strathclyde) is committed to safeguarding and enhancing research integrity in accordance with The Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2019). This translates into policy, systems and practice aimed at delivering effective measures and continual improvement in a visible and joined-up manner to support a healthy research culture. Underpinning this is Strathclyde's Research Code of Practice which defines both the standards that researchers are expected to attain and desired good practice.

In fulfilment of the commitment to produce a short annual statement for approval by the University's governing body and publication on the institutional website, this statement:

- outlines the University's approach to research integrity;
- details actions and activities undertaken during 2021-22 and those planned for 2022-23;
- reports on formal investigations of research misconduct and lessons learned.

Strathclyde's research integrity statements for 2016-17, 2017-18, 2019-20 and 2020-2021 are available to view and download at <https://www.strath.ac.uk/research/integrity/>.

2. Approach to research integrity

2.1 Named Person

In recognition of the seriousness of Strathclyde's commitment to research integrity, the Associate Principal with responsibility for Research and Innovation has designated responsibility for ensuring that Strathclyde responds to and upholds the Concordat. This responsibility extends to research and knowledge exchange policies, ethics, postgraduate researcher development and research governance. To ensure confidentiality and encourage disclosure of concerns around misconduct, any queries related to research integrity are directed to a dedicated email address (research-integrity@strath.ac.uk) which is only accessible to the Associate Principal and select members of the Research Policy and Information Team based in Research and Knowledge Exchange Services (RKES).

2.2 Research integrity leadership

The Associate Principal is supported in this work by the Deputy Associate Principals with Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation portfolios in addition to the University Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC). A strategic committee within Strathclyde's governance structure with reporting responsibilities to University Senate, RKEC is responsible for oversight of research and knowledge exchange strategy and policy, and the monitoring of their implementation. Key to this is ensuring that Strathclyde's commitments as signatory to The Concordat to Support Research Integrity are met. Accordingly, the principles of research integrity are supported across all domains by the following bodies with oversight from RKEC:

- University Ethics Committee (UEC);
- Animal Welfare Ethical Review Board (AWERB);
- Research Development and Culture Sub-Committee (RDCSC);
- Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group (RDCSG)
- Knowledge Exchange Sub-Committee (KESC);
- Research Sub-Committee (RSC);
- Open Research Group (ORG).

The Strathclyde Doctoral School (SDS), which is governed by a dedicated management board, also contributes to the promotion of research integrity through its work to enrich the postgraduate researcher (PGR) experience, intensify research outputs and opportunities, and ensure development is designed and delivered at the highest levels.

Strathclyde's committee structure enables cohesion and consistency of communication at a senior level across the academic faculties and professional services directorates.

Within the four Faculties (Engineering; Humanities and Social Sciences; Science; and Strathclyde Business School); information is communicated via staff and student structures as follows:

- Responsibility for Research Integrity is distributed through the Faculties via the Vice Deans with responsibility for Research who represent their faculties on RKEC. Agreement made at committee level is disseminated via Faculty, Departmental and School management structures.
- Research student representatives attend RKEC and the Strathclyde Doctoral School Management Board to ensure involvement in decision-making and communication of information into the wider student community. Expectations, information and guidance are also delivered to research students via their supervisors and postgraduate administrators in order to ensure that they are fully informed of best practice in research.

The Research Policy and Information Team located in RKES and led by the Research Policy Manager is responsible for: maintaining and advising on the Research Code of Practice (which includes the research misconduct process); providing secretariat support for RKEC, UEC and ORG; supporting the Associate Principal to implement the research misconduct process; and preparing the annual Research Integrity Statement in accordance with the Concordat.

2.3 Policies

Strathclyde maintains a range of policies and procedures to promote and monitor good practice and ethical conduct in its research. Central to these is an overarching Research Code of Practice which provides a definition of research and outlines the expectations placed on the University and its staff and students in meeting standards of good research practice. It also signposts researchers to a comprehensive list of academic policies and procedures, including the following research policies and guidelines:

- Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students;
- Code of Practice on Investigations Involving Human Beings;
- Research Data Policy;
- Research Data Deposit Policy;
- Policy on Animal Research (in accordance with the Concordat on Openness).

3. Overview of actions and activities to support and strengthen research integrity

3.1 Researcher Training

Professional and personal development is a core component of research degrees at Strathclyde ensuring that our doctoral graduates have the skills and experience to be successful both in their studies and their future careers. Our PGR Researcher Development Programme (RDP), delivered by Faculties, Professional Services and external partners, is mapped to the UK's Researcher Development Framework and Statement (RDF/S), which articulates the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers. The tailored RDP provides the postgraduate research community a range of opportunities to continue their personal, professional and career management skills development and enhance their transferable skills, attributes and competencies for future employability both inside and outside of academia. Specific Research Integrity training is delivered through PGR induction (delivered twice annually and supplemented by our online PG Essentials module), via face-to-face workshops and as a 20-hour online resource available to all students. A wholesale review of the PGR lifecycle from regulations to administrative processes and systems was conducted in 2019-2020 and an extensive set of documented recommendations designed to enhance the overarching approach to supporting the PGR lifecycle are being implemented. Planned developments include an increased focus on research cultures and activities aligned to the themes highlighted through the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (also termed 'Researcher Development Concordat').

Training for staff, including Technicians, Early Career (including postdoctoral researchers, research fellows and research assistants), Mid-Career & Established Academics, is delivered by our Organisational and Staff Development Unit (OSDU). In particular, the Unit's Strathclyde Programme in Academic practice, Researcher development and Knowledge exchange (SPARK), Strathclyde Programme in Research and Leadership (SPIRAL) and Strathclyde Supervisor Development Programme aim to deliver

relevant content to our academic professional staff community. SPARK's specific Researcher Development provision aims to empower staff by providing them with the skills, experiences and understanding to reach their full potential, whilst at the same time providing the University with a means of assuring and enhancing quality in its research at all levels. Meanwhile SPIRAL focuses on developing and strengthening leadership across research and knowledge exchange while the Supervisor Programme provides comprehensive development opportunities for new and experienced doctoral Supervisors. All three programmes contribute significantly to the culture of research integrity at Strathclyde.

Specific training on research integrity issues including research data management is available to groups of researchers on request. In addition to the 20-hour online resource on research integrity, also available to students, there is a full research data management course available online via the Development & Training Gateway. Online and in-person sessions on open access and research data management are also run regularly, open to staff and research students. One-to-one training sessions on research data management and sharing are provided on request by the cross-directorate Research Data Management and Sharing (RDMS) team.

Research Integrity events are now included as standard within OSDU's Researcher Development provision:

- 'Research Integrity in Practice' (SPIRAL Programme) – a twice-yearly, half-day workshop to support staff to understand and apply the principles of Research Integrity in their everyday work, and to explore how misconduct may arise and ways to alleviate such pressures, as well as drawing attention to Strathclyde's policies and procedures in these areas.
- 'Research Integrity and Ethics' (Strathclyde Supervisor Development Programme) – previously a half-day workshop to support PGR supervisors to consider their own understanding of good research practice, make informed choices based on the principles of Research Integrity and consider how they can embed a culture of integrity within and beyond their supervisory relationships. During the transition to online training in 2020, this training was split into two separate workshops.
- Staff researchers have access to the online suite of 'Research Integrity' workshops which is also available to PGRs.

3.2 Researcher Support Services

Strathclyde provides dedicated support in a number of areas in addition to structured training programmes to assist researchers in the fulfilment of their research responsibilities. Colleagues from across Professional Services provide specialist advice on topics with research integrity implications such as:

- Information Governance including GDPR;
- Ethics in Human and Animal Research;
- Records Management;
- Data Management;
- Open Access and Open Data;
- Cyber security;
- Dignity and Respect.

This provision is often delivered via cross-disciplinary/departmental groups involving specialists from Strategy & Planning, Information Services, Human Resources and RKES, working with academics wherever appropriate. This extends to the handling of allegations of misconduct. If an allegation is made that appears to touch on more than one area of compliance, the relevant senior officers (namely the Associate Principal with responsibility for Research, University Secretary, University Compliance Officer, and Chief People Officer) will meet to discuss the appropriate channel(s) for the allegation to be considered.

3.3 Embedding research integrity in wider policy work

Research integrity is viewed as a vital part of producing high-quality research and Strathclyde therefore seeks to embed research integrity considerations into its wider research policy work. In large part, this is achieved through the Research Policy and Information Team whose remit covers research integrity as well as activities relating to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and research governance, e.g. support for the monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). As such, consideration of whether

strategies promote best practice relating to research integrity, or whether a policy may have unintended consequences for research staff, students or their research practice, is integrated into advice and support. In addition, Strathclyde seeks to align activities on research-related concordats, which entails close collaboration between colleagues in Professional Services Directorates. A key example of this is collaboration between the Research Policy and Information Team (with responsibility for the Research Integrity Concordat) and OSDU (with responsibility for the Researcher Development Concordat). Research integrity is seen as an integral part of promoting a positive research culture and the Researcher Development Concordat, which has received internal investment to support its activities, has proven to be an effective vehicle for progressing and monitoring research integrity activities.

3.4 External engagement

Strathclyde is a member of various external organisations of relevance to research integrity issues:

- **Universities Scotland:** Strathclyde contributes to discussions and activities that support and strengthen research integrity at a sector level through engagement with the Universities Scotland Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) and its sub-committees. The Associate Principal for Research and Innovation (Named Person) is an active member of the RKEC and the Researcher Development Manager in OSDU convenes the Universities Scotland Researcher Development and Training Committee, whose remit covers research culture, including promotion of research integrity. This Committee is also attended by representatives of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and discussions have influenced SFC's approach to accountability in research integrity and research culture.
- **UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO):** Strathclyde is a subscribing member of UKRIO, through which the Research Policy and Information Team attend events and accesses guidance and resources.
- **UK Committee on Research Integrity (UK CORI):** Strathclyde is engaged with the newly established UK CORI both as a subscriber to its e-newsletter and through attendance and participation in conference sessions delivered by UK CORI Co-Chairs.
- **Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA):** The Research Policy and Information Team and staff in OSDU are members of ARMA which supports external peer discussion of key issues relating to research management, including ethics, research governance and research integrity, and gives access to events, resources and training.
- **Scottish Research Integrity Network:** Strathclyde is also a member of the Scottish Research Integrity Network (SRIN), a member-led forum aimed at sharing excellence, good practice and expertise in the field of research integrity across all research active institutions in Scotland. The Research Policy Manager attends SRIN meetings and engages with other members via a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel.

Through these memberships, as well as through attendance at other sector events, Strathclyde engages in and influences discussions on research integrity, strengthening understanding and application of research integrity issues within the University as well as contributing to the advancement of sector-wide approaches.

4. Summary of actions and activities undertaken in 2021-22

4.1 Revision of Research Code of Practice

Following consultation with a broad range of researchers in 2019-20 to ascertain how research integrity is understood and practiced within the University, the need for a comprehensive review of the Research Code of Practice was identified to ensure full coverage reflecting recent sector developments and optimise its use. Recognising the time and resources required to do this effectively, a minor update was conducted in 2020-21. In 2021-22, the Code has been significantly redrafted with a new structure and updated content for approval by University Senate and a Guide to Good Research Practice is in development. The revisions provide necessary detail to enable researchers to better understand expectations relating to research integrity, in line with our commitment as a signatory to the Concordat to '*support researchers to understand and act according to expected standards, values and behaviours.*' Activities in 2021-22 have focused on reviewing necessary literature to gather updated content and consulting with Professional Services Directorates to update processes and guidance. In 2022-23 this project will progress towards consulting with wider stakeholders and gaining approval as detailed in 5.1.

4.2 Revisions to the Procedures for Academic Misconduct

Allegations of research misconduct concerning registered University students are considered under the terms of the University's Student Discipline Procedure. This Procedure has been revised, with approval granted by University Senate in June 2022. The revised Procedure will be introduced for the new Academic Year 2022-23. The [Senate Office](#) within the Directorate of Education Enhancement is responsible for the implementation of the Procedures.

The previous Student Discipline Procedure will be replaced with two procedures: Student Discipline Procedure: Academic Misconduct, focused on academic integrity (including research misconduct) and Student Discipline Procedure: Non-Academic Misconduct, focused on behaviours. Both Procedures are similar, but not identical, for example the definitions of misconduct differ, as do the penalties that can be applied at each stage of the process. The new Procedures introduce an 'Early Intervention/ Caution' Stage, in advance of Stage 1 investigations, as a preventative and supportive measure. Supporting guidance has also been developed to accompany the new Procedures, with more being developed at the start of the new Academic Year.

4.3 Researcher training

In addition to existing training related to research integrity outlined in 3.1, Strathclyde has introduced training on Responsible Research & Innovation, funded through the EPSRC Impact Accelerator Account. The course introduces staff and students to the principles, concepts, tools and techniques of innovation management and responsible research and innovation. In 2021-22, this course was run once, with 31 attendees from across all Faculties. Most attendees were PhD students or post-doctoral research assistants, but academic staff, research fellows and professional services staff also attended. Feedback from attendees demonstrated that this course had a positive influence on attendees' own research integrity, e.g. *'going forward I will be keeping better metadata files alongside the raw data itself, including necessary data annotation and links to relevant protocols, so that anyone accessing my data could better understand and re-use that data.'* The course will run again in late 2022.

4.4 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Actions related to research integrity in Strathclyde's Researcher Development Concordat Implementation Plan are taken forwards by the Research Culture Working Group of the Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group. Working Group activities over 2021-22 have included input into institutional responses to research-culture related consultations (e.g. the UKRI draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy) and advising on content of Strathclyde's 'Research Integrity and Culture Week' 2023 (as detailed in 5.3). In addition, as part of the Implementation Plan, Strathclyde's Dignity and Respect Policy has been reviewed, with the revised policy expected to be published in 2022-23, and the remit of the Researcher Development Sub-Committee (now the Research Development and Culture Sub-Committee) of RKEC has been expanded to include reporting and monitoring of Research Culture matters.

4.5 Review of ethical procedures and committees

Activities in 2021-22 have focused on developing plans for an online ethics application management system to improve efficiency and to allow for guidance to be embedded throughout the application process to support identification of key considerations relating to ethics and research integrity. The online system will also allow for greater and more efficient monitoring of existing studies, including those awarded a favourable opinion by NHS Research Ethics Committees. This is an important requirement of the University's role as study sponsor. It has been agreed that the system should be a bespoke build to fully meet the requirements identified through the Convener's review and in consultation with UEC members. Development of this system is planned for 2022-23 as detailed in 5.4.

Work is almost complete on the latest update to the Code of Practice on Investigations involving Human Beings which will align with the revised Research Code of Practice.

4.6 Nagoya Protocol procedures

In response to the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) recommendation pursuant to the Nagoya Protocol (Compliance) Regulations 2015, procedures have been implemented to seek, keep and transfer all relevant documentation to prove that projects are either compliant or out of scope. These are outlined in the updated [University Occupational Health and Safety Standard on Genetic Modification](#), the revised Research Code of Practice, and on the [Research Integrity pages](#) of the University website.

4.7 Research Data Management and Sharing Service Continuous Improvement Project

Recognising that excellence in research and research integrity is facilitated by the application of good practice in research data management, Strathclyde has committed to *'progressing towards fully open access publishing and fair open data policies'* (Vision 2025, strategic aim 2.2). Between August and October 2021 the Research Data Management and Sharing team undertook a continuous improvement project to review current processes and develop an action plan. This resulted in the approval of an Open Research Data ambition statement, which outlines the University's commitment to the FAIR data principles, to encourage all appropriate data and metadata produced by Strathclyde to be findable (easy to find for both humans and computers), accessible (accompanied by clear instructions for access and authorisation), interoperable (compatible with other data and/or tools); and reusable (suitably described to allow further use). The associated FAIRification action plan is summarised in 5.5 and will be taken forwards in 2022-23.

5. Action and activities planned for 2022-23

5.1 Launch of revised Research Code of Practice

To ensure that the Code suits the multiple purposes for which stakeholders use it and to maximise engagement with the Guide to Good Research Practice, further consultation will be undertaken with Faculties and Senior Officers. A Research Integrity Working Group will be established under the Research Sub-Committee for this purpose. Once finalised, the Code will be approved via RKEC by University Senate. An inaugural Research Integrity and Culture Week is being planned by the Research Policy and Information Team and the Organisational Staff Development Unit (OSDU). This will involve awareness raising activities such as external speakers and internal advocacy talks. The advocacy talks will provide an opportunity for staff and students to give feedback on the Code to inform future edits if necessary. It is hoped that Research Integrity and Culture Week will become an annual event, complementing and enhancing the existing training and development provision. Consideration will also be given to mandating core research integrity training (including ethics refresher courses as noted in 5.4).

5.2 Periodic review of research misconduct investigation procedure

Utilising UKRIO materials (Self-Assessment Tool and new research misconduct investigation procedure) Strathclyde's Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research will be reviewed and, if necessary, revised to adhere to best practice in line with the requirements and recommendations of The Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2019). As the existing procedure was established in 2017, this constitutes a five-year review and aligns with UKRIO's procedure update. Through discussions with researchers about research integrity, it is clear that there are significant barriers to engaging with this process, including fear of appearing un-collegial and potential consequences for researchers' later careers. Consideration will be given to how these barriers can be reduced, both through the design of the process and through wider related support services, for example establishing informal routes to advice that would allow researchers to discuss their concerns confidentially before making a formal allegation.

5.3 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Research Integrity is a key component of the Research Culture theme within Strathclyde's approach to delivering the Researcher Development Concordat. Activity will focus around contributing to the delivery of Research Integrity and Culture Week as well as developing materials and resources to support staff to embed positive practices within their roles as Researchers and Managers of Researchers.

5.4 Review of ethical procedures and committees

Taking forward actions from the UEC Convener's review, the Research Policy and Information Team will complete the revision of the Code of Practice on Investigations Involving Human Beings ensuring that it is aligned with the revised Research Code of Practice and the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

Increased sectoral focus on research governance necessitates a more comprehensive approach to ethics management which facilitates monitoring of the Department/School Ethics Committee (DEC/SEC) procedures and compliance checks of approved protocols. An enhanced application form, pointing researchers to all relevant guidance and requirements will strengthen and align Strathclyde's ethical review systems thus mitigating the risk of ethical breaches and non-compliance with funder/legislative requirements. An online system for managing ethics applications is expected to be in place over 2022-23.

Implementation of the online system for ethics applications will necessitate the development of new training for applicants. Such training will incorporate aspects of existing research integrity training. In addition, updated guidance and application forms will be developed and made available on an update UEC webpage. This will be better integrated with the Information Governance Unit and Research Data Management and Sharing sites.

Breaches in research ethics, data security and research integrity represent a major risk to the University; as such there is significant justification to make training on these topics mandatory for staff in relevant roles. This could include mandatory refresher training and ties in with our need to increase monitoring. Plans are in place to develop such training in 2022-23.

5.5 Research Data FAIRification action plan

Actions to be taken forward in 2022-23 include: to update relevant policies including the Research Data Policy (current version effective from 19 Nov 2013) and Research Data Deposit Policy (25 Nov 2014); to update and develop guidance, training and resources to support good practice in Research Data Management and Sharing (RDMS); and, to incorporate RDMS more explicitly into ethical review processes through the inclusion of/signposting to key considerations and mandated actions. Progress against these actions will be monitored by the Open Research Group and driven by the Open Research Action Group.

5.6 Continuous Improvement

In order to support and promote continuous improvement in safeguarding and enhancing research integrity, the Research Policy and Information Team will:

- Utilise the UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool for The Concordat to Support Research Integrity (Version 2.0, 2021) to identify areas of Strathclyde's research practices, systems and policies, researcher development and monitoring that may need to be revised in order to adhere to the requirements and recommendations of The Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2019).
- Monitor sector and government guidance for recommendations or guidance that provide an opportunity for improvement.
- Ensure action on lessons learned from the handling of misconduct allegations, the Nagoya Protocol audit process, and reports prepared by UEC & AWERB.
- Seek out examples of best practice from other HEIs and research organisations. We expect our membership of UKRIO to greatly assist in this aspect of our learning.

6. Research Misconduct

6.1 Processes for reporting and investigating allegations of research misconduct

As outlined in the Research Code of Practice, Strathclyde adopts the Research Integrity Concordat definition of research misconduct and has processes in place for the reporting and investigation of research misconduct. Any allegation of research misconduct involving a researcher at the University is treated as a serious matter and is investigated according to the following procedures:

- Allegations of research misconduct concerning registered University students will be considered under the terms of the [University's Student Discipline Procedure: Academic Misconduct](#).
- Allegations of research misconduct concerning University staff will be investigated in accordance with the [Process for Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct](#).
- Allegations of research misconduct concerning any individual with visiting, honorary or emeritus status at the University should be addressed in writing to the relevant Dean who will undertake an initial assessment of the allegations, confidentially undertaking informal enquiries as necessary to clarify the nature of the allegations. The Dean may delegate the undertaking of informal enquiries, ensuring that such input avoids conflicts of interest and provides an appropriate level of expertise in the scientific area. As those with visiting, honorary or emeritus status are not University employees, workers or registered students, the process for any further investigation required and for determining subsequent actions will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the relevant Dean.
- The University also has a [Public Interest Disclosure Policy](#) which can be invoked in certain circumstances and under which an investigation may be carried out to determine if any impropriety or breach of University regulations has occurred.

6.2 Formal investigations of research misconduct

During the reporting period (2021-22), one allegation of research misconduct and two expressions of concern were received. No formal investigations were undertaken during the period. However, as one of the expressions of concern was still being considered under the Preliminary Stage (Receipt of Allegations) at year end, it has been carried forward to 2022-23.

In relation to a completed investigation through which an allegation of self-plagiarism was upheld, best practice advice is being sought from other universities and UKRIO to address the continued use of Strathclyde affiliation by a former member of staff.

As reported in previous statements, four formal investigations had been conducted prior to this year. These related to authorship and IP (2020-21 investigation complete – allegations not upheld); plagiarism, including self-plagiarism (2021-21 investigation complete – allegation upheld); failure to recognise/report student falsification (2019-20 investigation complete – allegation not upheld); and failure to follow ethical guidelines (2016-17 investigation complete - allegation upheld).

6.3 Lessons learned

Consideration has been given to issues highlighted in dealing with allegations/expressions of concern that progressed no further than the Preliminary Stage (Receipt of Allegations) or simply required clarification to address concerns. Having sought advice on publication ethics from UKRIO, this year's key learning point is the need for greater awareness and joint action to address self-plagiarising practices, including so-called paper-mill activity which is difficult to detect. Sector guidance which identifies best practice in preventing and addressing such practices for use by researchers, research institutions and publishers would be beneficial.

In relation to the learning points identified last year, the following actions have been taken:

- Researcher guidance and training on IP has been enhanced through the implementation of the University's [Intellectual Property & Commercialisation Policy](#). The aim is to ensure a good understanding of background and foreground IP, including the implications of bringing in co-authors from outside a project.
- Guidance on authorship was expanded to promote best practice in line with discipline-specific norms and enable a robust and fair approach to allegations around author inclusion or exclusion. This has been made available via a new '[Authorship](#)' page on the Research Integrity section of the University website.
- Work to strengthen the alignment of the Universities various ethics bodies has been progressed and will be taken forward in 2022-23. The aim is to increase transparency and enhance record-keeping to enable early identification of potential issues as well as a timely and robust response to allegations of misconduct.
- Guidance on data storage and sharing has been reviewed and a revised Research Data Policy with associated guidance is in development.