

# Research Integrity Annual Statement 2020-2021

## 1.0 Background

The University of Central Lancashire is strongly committed to fulfilling the principles of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity which was first published in July 2012 and revised and strengthened in October 2019.

The Concordat lists the core elements of research integrity as: honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, care and respect and accountability. There are five commitments for researchers, employers and funders to uphold. Part of the 5<sup>th</sup> commitment in the Concordat requires the employers of researchers to provide a short annual (publicly available) statement that must include:

- A summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and the application of research integrity issues;
- A statement to provide assurance that the processes the institution has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, timely, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation;
- A high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, which will include data on the number of investigations. If no formal investigation has been undertaken, this should also be noted;
- A statement on what the institution has learned from any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, including what lessons have been learned to prevent the same type of incident re-occurring and
- A statement on how the institution creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct.

This statement has therefore been prepared for the University's Committee for Ethics and Integrity (CEI) to summarise how the University of Central Lancashire ensures compliance with the terms of the Concordat and meets the expectations outlined within this for both research institutions and individual researchers.

## 2.0 Supporting and Strengthening Understanding of Research Integrity

### 2.1 Training and development

A programme of training in relation to research integrity and ethics is managed through the Ethics, Integrity and Governance Unit in the Research and Enterprise Service which is further supported by the University mandatory training programme. Ethics Committees at Faculty and University level also reflect on case studies to identify and disseminate good practice at all levels.

The following training is available in research integrity and ethics:

### 2.1.1 Face to Face Training

- An Introduction to Research Ethics – staff and students
- Research Integrity and Ethics at UCLan – academics and research students
- Lay Reviewer Training – Ethics committee members
- Chair and reviewer training – Ethics committee members
- Procedures for ethics applications – staff and students
- Research Supervisor Workshop: Ethics and Integrity – staff

### 2.1.2 Online Training

Online training in Research Ethics was provided through Epigeum, this will be replaced by a new e-learning package developed by members of the Centre for Professional Ethics at the University. This training will cover the fundamental principles of research ethics and integrity.

### 2.1.3 University Training

The specific training in research integrity is underpinned by a mandatory training programme for staff members which is managed by HR. The following modules are mandatory; any anomalies in completion of the mandatory training programme is managed through Heads of Schools and Director of Services and the appraisal process.

- Data Protection (GDPR)
- Intellectual Property Essentials
- Information Security essentials
- Safeguarding Essentials
- Bribery Act Training
- Anti-Fraud Training
- Unconscious Bias
- Prevent Training

## 2.2 External Memberships

To ensure that the University keeps abreast of best practice in matters related to the Concordat and research integrity, it is a member of a number of external bodies including:

- UK Research Integrity Office
- Association for Research Managers and Administrators
- UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE)
- Laboratory Animal Science Association

## 2.3 External Website

During the 2020-21 academic year, the University continued to publish the contact details of named officers for overseeing research integrity and whistleblowing, the annual statement on research integrity, its [Code of Conduct for Research](#), the procedures for dealing with allegations of research misconduct.

The Research Integrity webpages on the UCLan website were restructured to provide enhanced clarity and guidance for internal and external stakeholders.

## 2.4 Research Integrity Culture

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic the Ethics, Integrity and Governance Unit developed and kept under review ethics guidance including guidance for research involving human participants and guidance on remote data collection. This offered ideas for researchers as to how integrity and ethical standards can be maintained whilst working online.

The Head of the Ethics, Integrity and Governance Unit met with Faculty Executive Deans and Faculty Research Directors to discuss research integrity priorities and how to improve the research culture.

## 3.0 Policies and Procedures

### 3.1 Research Integrity

The University sets out its commitment to research integrity in the [Code of Conduct for Research](#), further Strengthened by the [Ethical Principles](#) document which are reviewed annually by the Ethics, Approval or any amendments are made by the Academic Board via the Committee for Ethics and Integrity.

The University [Policy for Misconduct in Research](#) outlines the process to be followed for investigation of allegations of research misconduct. Details of these policies are disseminated through the academic staff induction and the research student induction, as well as the training programme run throughout the year.

In addition to these policies, other documents are available below:

- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Information Security Policy](#)
- [Anti-Corruption and Bribery Policy](#) - available via Staff Intranet
- [Public Interest Disclosure Procedure](#) (Whistleblowing)

### 3.2 Research Ethics

The University Committee for Ethics and Integrity (CEI) is responsible for developing and overseeing policy and procedure relating to both research ethics and integrity which is then administered by the Research Governance Unit. Ethics reviews for staff and research students are processed digitally through one of three Ethics Review Panels, each of which is constituted from academics of the relevant subject groups, in addition to independent lay members. Reports on

each Ethics Review Panel outcomes, total number of applications, and matters of national or local significance are provided to the CEI.

Undergraduate and post graduate taught students receive ethical approval from school ethics committees with oversight provided by the CEI and the Faculty Research, Innovation and Ethics Committees (FRIECs). The CEI meets three times annually and the five FRIECs meet twice annually. The three Ethics Review Panels meet two times per annum.

A new Chair was appointed to the University's Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) in September 2020. The existing Terms of Reference has been revised and the group are currently developing new processes for reviewing applications. These changes in processes reflect a more effective, transparent and fair approach to ethical governance in relation to animal research.

#### **4.0 Research Misconduct**

The University requires that all research projects undertaken under the auspices of the University observe a commitment to good research conduct. The Chair of the University's Committee for Ethics and Integrity is the Named Person responsible for receiving allegations of research misconduct.

To assist with fostering a culture where students and staff feel comfortable raising concerns, the policy puts provisions in place for concerns to be raised via, or with the assistance of, an intermediary. In addition, the Named Person will act as a confidential liaison for whistle-blowers or any other person wishing to raise concerns about the integrity of research being conducted under the auspices of the University. Mechanisms to implement and communicate lessons learned from investigations of research misconduct have been incorporated into the updated University [Policy for Misconduct in Research](#)

#### **4.1 Number of Reported Allegations of Research Misconduct 2020-21**

In the academic year 2020/21, no new allegations of research misconduct were formally notified, however an investigation into an allegation first raised in 2019/20 was concluded. The investigation was partially upheld and actions to correct this have been completed.

#### **5.0 Ongoing Review and Oversight**

The University will maintain oversight of the conduct of researchers through its Governance Framework THIs will be supported by ongoing provision of a comprehensive and current professional development programme. The Governance Framework (Figure 1) is based upon a committee structure which reports to the Academic Board.

Figure 1. Diagrammatic representation of the Governance Framework at UCLan.

