

Newcastle University Annual Statement of Research Integrity 2020/21

Newcastle University is a signatory of [the UUK concordat to support research integrity \(universitiesuk.ac.uk\)](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk), which provides an agreed mechanism through which researchers, employers of researchers and research funders can work together to promote and support research integrity. The Concordat requires employers of researchers to provide a short annual statement, which should be made publicly available, that should include:

- A summary of action and activities 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 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;
- 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.

1. Supporting and strengthening research integrity

1.1 Research Culture Roadmap

The University's research culture roadmap, developed during 2020/21 includes four key themes, one of which is openness and integrity. This involves promoting and adopting open research principles and practices that increase transparency and rigour, and accelerate the reach of our research; ensuring research adheres to the highest standards for ethics and integrity; having open and honest dialogue about research strategy and culture, and how research contributions are evaluated to build trust across the research community. Further information regarding the roadmap can be found at:

https://newcastle.sharepoint.com/hub/rsd/Documents/Research_Culture_Roadmap.pdf

1.2 Training provision

An audit of training activities relating to research ethics and integrity being offered at all levels of the University has been carried out and a detailed plan has been presented to the University Research and Innovation Committee outlining how the current provision will be expanded to meet the needs of all researchers across the organisation. This work is being taken forward as part of the University's Skills Academy initiative during 2021/22 with input from key stakeholders across Faculties and Professional Services and forms part of the 'Improving Training and Career Support' work stream within the Research Culture Roadmap.

1.3 UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN)

The University together with our UKRN consortium partners (see: <https://www.ukrn.org>) has been awarded a Research England Development Fund award (c.£4m) over five years to undertake activities to deliver three key aims: 1) to develop and implement

coordinated training in key transferable skills (including research integrity, core data skills, transparent and reproducible workflow), 2) sharing of successful and effective practice (e.g., open research policies, hiring and promotion policies, etc.), and 3) ongoing evaluation of the impact of these initiatives, and the resulting changes to training and practice, in order to foster a culture of continuous research improvement across the sector. The project lead at Newcastle is Prof Candy Rowe, Dean of Research Culture & Strategy. This project dovetails with the wider work being taken forward in relation to the research culture agenda and the implementation of the Skills Academy.

1.4 Responsible Metrics Statement

A University statement on the responsible use of metrics was approved during 2020/21. See [Responsible Research Metrics - Research - Newcastle University \(ncl.ac.uk\)](https://www.ncl.ac.uk/research/research-integrity/responsible-research-metrics) The statement sets out principles on the use of quantitative indicators in research management and assessment, where metrics should be considered in terms of robustness (using the best available data); humility (recognising that quantitative evaluation can complement, but does not replace, expert assessment); transparency (keeping the collection of data and its analysis open to scrutiny); diversity (reflecting a multitude of research and researcher career paths); and reflexivity (updating our use of metrics to take account of the effects that such measures have had). Implementation of this statement supports our strategic ambitions, and our institutional commitment to the Concordat for Research Integrity. This statement is integral to the University's commitment to developing the whole research community across career stages and job families. It will support our aim to cultivate a research culture that recognises diverse contributions to research, and to build a research culture that values inclusive collaboration, integrity, transparency, and global visibility.

2. Processes for dealing with allegations of research misconduct

The University has policies and procedures in place to ensure that research is conducted to the highest levels of ethics and integrity. The University recognises the importance of clear policies and guidelines in embedding a culture of integrity and ethics within research practices. Such documents support researchers in understanding and acting according to expected standards, behaviours and values.

Following an initial review of the University's Policy and Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct during the 2020/21 academic year, further work has recently been undertaken in order to streamline the policy and procedure taking lessons learned from recent research misconduct investigations in order to improve the process for all parties involved and to improve co-ordination and reduce duplication with relevant People Services processes. The revised policy and procedure will be considered for approval via the relevant University approval processes during the 2021/22 academic year.

The current policy and procedure are freely available on the [University website](#).

Student research misconduct is dealt with via the [Assessment Irregularities Procedure](#).

[Appendix A lists other relevant policies and processes which support and promote research integrity]

3. Formal investigations of research misconduct undertaken

During the 2020/21 academic year there were two complaints of research misconduct made against University staff, which have been investigated under the Policy and Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct. The nature of these allegations is outlined in Table 1 below.

During the same period there were two allegations of research misconduct made against postgraduate research students, which were investigated under the University's Assessment Irregularities Procedure. The nature of these allegations is outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 1: Staff Research Misconduct Cases

No.	Nature of alleged misconduct	Outcome
1.	Allegation of falsification of research data	<p>Allegation upheld.</p> <p>Actions: As the respondent had previously completed a PhD at Newcastle, it was recommended that the supporting data relating to the PhD thesis be reviewed in detail in order to ascertain whether the award should be withdrawn. (see Table 2).</p> <p>That the University should consider making research integrity training mandatory for all PGR students and colleagues participating in research activity.</p> <p>That the University explores the broader use of electronic lab books with a view to ensuring improved data security.</p>
2.	Allegation of failure to obtain appropriate consent from research participants	<p>Allegation upheld.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>An independent audit of all the respondent's current research projects where acting as Principal Investigator be carried out in order to ensure that relevant governance processes have been adhered to.</p> <p>A wider University review by internal audit be carried out in relation to the informed consent process.</p>

Table 2: Student Research Misconduct Cases

No.	Nature of alleged misconduct	Outcome
1.	Allegation of falsification of research data	Allegation upheld Following investigation, a recommendation was made to Senate that revocation of the Doctor of Philosophy award was appropriate. Senate subsequently approved the revocation of the Doctor of Philosophy award.
2.	Allegation of plagiarism	Allegation dismissed No prima facie case was established.

4. Lessons learnt from formal investigations of research misconduct

The University is committed to continually reviewing and revising its processes to ensure they are fit for purpose. Recent research misconduct investigations have further informed revisions to the University's Policy and Procedures in this regard as well as wider processes as outlined in Table 1 above.

5. Creating and embedding a research environment whereby everyone is comfortable reporting instances of misconduct

The University's Code of Good Practice in Research sets out the institution's position on investigating all allegations relating to research misconduct. The University takes seriously any allegation of research misconduct and has a written procedure for investigating and resolving such allegations. Researchers are encouraged to report cases of research misconduct and to do so in a responsible and appropriate manner.

The University's Research Culture Roadmap includes a work stream to 'build inclusive and safe research environments'. This involves offering everyone in the research community the freedom and opportunity to succeed including tackling bullying and harassment in research, ensuring processes are robust and preventative actions are being taken and developing new initiatives to promote inclusion and psychological safety in the research environment.

The University's named contact for matters relating to Research Integrity and Misconduct is Professor Brian Walker, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research Strategy and Resources. Concerns relating to the integrity of research conducted under the auspices of the University may also be addressed in confidence to the Research Strategy and Development team (res.policy@newcastle.ac.uk).

Appendix A: University Policies and Procedures which support and promote research integrity

[Animal Research Policy](#)

[Assessment Irregularities Procedure](#)

[Code of Good Practice in Research](#)

[Commercial Costing and Pricing Policy](#)

[Confidentiality and Intellectual Property \(including Inventions\) and Results for Research Students
Policy Statement](#)

[Declarations of External Interest Policy](#)

[Ethics in Research Policy](#)

[Ethics Toolkit](#)

[Open Access to Research Outputs](#)

University Research & Innovation Committee
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