

Statement on Research Integrity 2018/19

1. Background

The University is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethics and integrity in its research, and expects all its researchers to adhere to the highest standards in this regard.

This statement forms part of the University's commitment to ensuring accountability and to provide assurances that measures being taken continue to support consistently high standards of research integrity in accordance with the provisions contained within the UUK Concordat on Research Integrity.

2. Policies and procedures

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, values and behaviours.

The University's Code of Good Practice in Research applies to all researchers (defined as all staff, honorary staff, students and visiting workers undertaking research within or on behalf of the University). Student research misconduct is dealt with via the student disciplinary procedures and staff research misconduct via the Policy and Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct.

The University's Ethics Policy promotes awareness of ethical principles and issues, clarifies the rights and obligations of the staff and student body at Newcastle and outlines the ethical framework for their consideration. Ethical consideration of activities is part of the overall governance framework at the University. As a responsible public body, Newcastle aims to maximise the benefit and minimise the potential harm to all those involved in its activities, whether as project leaders, facilitators, participants, funders or in any other significant capacity.

These policies are made available through the University website. Further to this, communications regarding the ethics process and integrity requirements are made via the University's Committee structures and information relating to University research-related policies and procedures is generally disseminated at induction for both staff and students.

3. Actions and activities during 2018/19

i. UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN)

Newcastle has joined the UK Reproducibility Network alongside other Russell Group universities. The UKRN is a peer led consortium that aims to ensure the UK retains its place as a centre for world-leading research by investigating the factors that contribute to robust research, promoting training activities, and disseminating best practice, and working with stakeholders to ensure coordination of efforts across the sector. UKRN works across disciplines, ranging from the arts and humanities to the physical sciences, with a particular focus on the biomedical sciences.

ii. University Convenor for Research Integrity and Ethics

Alongside membership of the UKRN, the intention is to appoint a University Convenor for Research Integrity and Ethics. The Convenor will provide academic leadership, working in liaison with members of University Research & Innovation Committee, to oversee and enhance a positive culture of research integrity and improvement across the University.

In particular, this will include ensuring the availability of an integrated training and development programme for staff and students at all stages of their research career; supporting policy framework development especially linking to national activity in this area, working closely with the UKRN and liaising with the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) as appropriate; supporting University's reporting in relation to research integrity and ethics.

iii. Updated Policy and Procedure relating to Research Misconduct

The University has recently reviewed its Policy and Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct in liaison with the UKRIO with a view to ensuring that it reflects best practice in this area across the sector. As part of the implementation of the revised policy and procedure, UKRIO representatives will be working with the University in order to provide training and share best practice in the investigation of allegations of research misconduct.

4. Research Misconduct

Staff: Four investigations into research misconduct were carried out during the 2018/19 academic year (one of which was on-going from the previous academic year) under the Policy and Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct. A brief summary of allegations and any further action taken is given in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1

Allegation Category	Number of investigations completed in 2018/19	Number of allegations upheld in 2018/19	Number of allegations which are ongoing from 2018/19
Failure to meet ethical, legal and professional obligations	0	0	0
Fabrication	0	0	0
Falsification	0	0	0
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	0	0	0
Misrepresentation ie authorship dispute	2	0 (In 1 case an erratum was issued)	0
Plagiarism	1	0 (Additional training in academic writing was recommended)	1
Other	0	0	0

PGR Students: There was one formal 'Stage 2' (i.e. non-minor) investigation into research misconduct carried out during the 2018/19 academic year under the University's student disciplinary procedures. The allegation related to a failure to meet ethical obligations. The allegation was upheld.

5. Conclusion

This statement sets out the University's overarching position in relation to compliance with the UUK Concordat. The University is fully committed to the ongoing development and promotion of research integrity across the institution and will be doing so with reference to the revised Concordat which has recently been published.

University Research & Innovation Committee
October 2019