

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONCORDAT FOR RESEARCH INTEGRITY 2016/17

Background

The Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity was developed to provide a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance. As part of the HEFCE Annual Assurance Statement, UK Higher Education Institutions are required to confirm compliance with the Concordat as a condition of the HEFCE Grant for 2016-2017. Compliance with the Concordat requires that organisations present to their governing body a short annual report that provides:

- a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues;
- assurances of processes in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct, processes which are transparent, robust, fair, and of continued appropriateness for the needs of the organisation;
- a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken.

This report was approved by the Board of Governors on the 24 November 2017 and will be publicly available on the University's Research Governance web page to provide assurance that measures are being taken to support consistently high standards of research integrity. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange is responsible for research governance within the University.

Statement for 2016/2017

During 2016/2017, the University has undertaken the following actions and activities to support and strengthen the understanding and application of research integrity:

Internal Audit

In November 2016, an independent research integrity audit took place at the University. The auditors reported that the University's current systems were effective in upholding compliance with the Concordat for Research Integrity. A small number of recommendations were made by the auditors and they have formed a basis for an action plan that has been taken forward by the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Directorate.

Online Ethics Application System - EthOS

During 2015/16, the RKE Directorate invested in software to support online ethical approvals across the University. Following contractual sign off in May 2017, the RKE Directorate has been working in collaboration with colleagues across the University to

develop the questions and system processes. This consultation has enabled us to streamline the ethics approval process, by:

- developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) detailing the processes to be adopted by the Faculty Research Ethics and Governance Committees [FREGC(s)] in the exercise of its duties and responsibilities;
- developing an efficient process for the management of course ethical approvals;
- developing an ethics application form specifically for dissertation research conducted by UG and PGT students;
- working in consultation with key areas across the University which are core to the research process, for example, Insurance and Health and Safety, and have implemented workflows via the system for applications that require their involvement.

Research Integrity Training

In 2015/2016, a standalone online research integrity-training module was purchased to drive forward the University's commitment to Research Integrity. All research staff, including those who support students undertaking research, are now expected to complete the research integrity training.

Human Tissue Regulations

The RKE Directorate, in collaboration with the Human Tissue Authority (HTA) Designated Individual (DI), have undertaken a full review of the systems, processes, and policies linked to human tissue in the University. As a result:

- all of the human tissue Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been reviewed and updated;
- the RKE Directorate, in collaboration with the HTA DI, is currently in the process of updating the Human Tissue Policy to reflect changes HTA guidance and accompanying SOPs;
- the RKE Directorate, in collaboration with the HTA DI and Legal Team, have revised Manchester Metropolitan University's Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) to reflect changes in the contractual sign off process. The agreement has also been amended to consolidate content in a way that is consistent with other institutions;
- the University is in the final contractual stages of a new a new Laboratory Management system which will ensure the effective management of all biological (HTA and non HTA) and chemical agents across the University;
- the RKE Directorate, in collaboration with the HTA DI, have conducted some specific human tissue usage training for staff and students using these materials, and are planning future training to reflect changes in the SOPs.

Processes for Handling Research Misconduct

The University's current procedure for handling research misconduct has been operational since February 2016. As part of its annual review, it is currently in the process of being amended in light of experiences in the previous 12 months. These changes will further enhance our already existing rigorous processes for handling research misconduct, and thus, our commitment to research integrity.

Academic Training

The RKE Directorate has appointed an external consultant to provide bespoke training across the University. The training will take place between September and December 2017, and will focus on the following areas:

- Research integrity.
- Human tissue handling.
- The effective peer review of ethics applications.
- The use of the University's new online ethics application system.

Security Sensitive Information

The RKE Directorate has worked in collaboration with associated colleagues across the University to amend the processes for managing Security Sensitive Information (SSI). The revised guidance complements the University's processes around PREVENT (which aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism), but also captures research which may fall outside this legislation.

The RKE Directorate also has a designated person within the Research Ethics and Governance team who oversees this, and can provide specialist advice and management of SSI for research.

Faculty Head of Research Ethics and Governance Committee Role

Each Faculty across the University has a Faculty Research Ethics and Governance Committee (FREGC), which is chaired by their respective Faculty Head of Research Ethics and Governance (FHREG). A standard job description for this role did not previously exist in the University. In line with changes to the wider RKE Committee structure, and to reinforce the important position that this role plays to ensure research integrity, this omission has been addressed with the provision of a standard job description. A comprehensive role description has been approved providing clarity around the FHREG's duties, responsibilities and accountabilities.

The RKE Directorate is currently in the process of negotiating an appropriate time allocation and workload recognition for this role; alongside any additional administrative support required for effective committee management.

Formal Investigations of Research Misconduct

High-level Statement on Research Misconduct

Following the Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research:

- 3 cases of potential student research misconduct were informally considered during the academic year 2016/17. These did not proceed to formal investigations.
- 2 formal investigations of Postgraduate Research Student misconduct were carried out during 2016/17.

Research Integrity Statement 2017-18

The next Annual Statement will be published in November 2018.

Conclusion

Based on the evidence presented above, we believe that Manchester Metropolitan University complies with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.