

Annual Report on Research Integrity

Author: Oliver Pybus, VPRI

Purpose of Report: To confirm to the RVC Council that the College complies with the Concordat to support Research Integrity.

Recommendation: Council notes the Report

Background

The Concordat to support Research Integrity was introduced in December 2012. All UUK members are signatories of the Concordat and as part of our annual monitoring statement to UKRI/Office of Students we are required to confirm that we comply with the principles of the Concordat.

Note on administrative changes: since last year's report, the Research Strategy Committee has been replaced by the Research & Innovation Committee (RIC) with updated terms of reference. RIC is supported by two working groups, the Research Working Group and the Innovation Working group, chaired by the Associate Deans for Research and Innovation, respectively.

The RVC has a number of policies and codes of practice to guide its staff and students in research integrity namely: Policy on Good Research Practice; Guidance on Research with Integrity; Policy and Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct. These documents are owned and regularly reviewed and updated by the Research Working Group and the Research & Innovation Committee which reports to Academic Board.

A review of RVC's "Policy and procedure for dealing with allegations of research misconduct" is undertaken every three years. The policy was last approved by Academic Board in December 2020. A review of the policy has been undertaken by the Research Working Group, with guidance from the VPRI. The revised and updated policy will be presented to RIC on 27th November 2023 and, if approved by RIC, will be submitted for approval at Academic Board on 6th December 2023. The VPRI can give a verbal update of the status of this review at Council Meeting on 29th November 2023.

All new staff and PhD students are expected to undertake "Research with Integrity" training (and the associated quiz) within 3 months of joining. This is supported by materials detailing current best practice that are tailored to the types of research our staff and students undertake and have been reviewed by the UK Research Integrity Office. Established staff are expected to refresh their training every 4 years. Staff and students' refresher training status is monitored and they are not eligible to apply for internal travel grants to present their research at meetings, or submit applications for ethical approval, if they are not up to date. All PhD students are asked at their annual appraisal in

the absence of their supervisors whether they have any concerns about research integrity relating to their work and their response is noted on the appraisal document. Any issues are referred to the Head of Academic Department and appropriate action taken.

Policies and guidance documents outlining our approach to compliance with the Concordat on Research Integrity are publicly available (<https://www.rvc.ac.uk/research/about/research-integrity>). The VPRI is the senior member of the RVC responsible for this area and the contact for anyone wishing to raise concerns about the integrity of research being conducted at RVC. We provide an anonymous comments box for feedback to the VPRI's office on issues affecting research integrity.

On 30th November 2023 Professor Patrick Lewis will take over from Professor Nic Wells as the RVC's senior academic with responsibility for research improvement and research integrity and, in this role, reports to the VPRI and acts as our UKRN Institutional Lead. In addition, Prof Dirk Werling chairs the Research Concordat Working Group that reports to Research & Innovation Committee. Prof Werling will step down from this role at the end of the 2023/24 academic year, and we are in the process of identifying his replacement in this role. In April 2023, we were pleased to announce that the Research Concordat Working Group's application to retain RVC's HR Excellence in Research Award was successful (<https://www.rvc.ac.uk/research/news/general/10-years-running-the-rvc-retain-its-hr-excellence-in-research-award>).

As part of our strategy to improve transparency of the reporting of the research we undertake, the RVC is a member of the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN), 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 across the sector. UKRN submitted a grant application to Research England to provide support for UKRN activities. This was successful in late 2021 and provides support for a 0.6FTE (TBA) at the RVC to support enhanced training activities relating to Open Research, research reproducibility and integrity. This year Dr Andrew Crump has been appointed the RVC's new "Local Reproducibility Network Lead", and has continued to organise ReproducibiliTea meetings and events.

In terms of our commitment to openness and transparency in ethical use of animals in research and investigating their replacement, RVC applied for and was granted a Leadership in Openness Award (2019-2022) and were also successful in its renomination for 2022-2025. These awards are granted to organisations in recognition of their commitment of resource and energy to following best practice, embedding openness within their organisations, and making the aims of the Concordat on Openness in Research a reality. Oversight and governance of the College's Ethical Review process for Research continues to be provided by the College's Ethics and Welfare Committee which reports to Council and since July 2020 has been chaired by independent Council Member Suzy Lishman.

Lastly, scientists around the world have this year been discussing the possible use (or misuse) for research of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT. As yet there is no consensus on how to detect or respond to potential research misconduct that involves generative AI. We would expect to rapidly adopt any guidance or policies provided by UKRI or UK Research Integrity Office in the future.

Investigations into allegations of Research Misconduct

Since the previous report in November 2022 there have been no Research Misconduct allegations or investigations.

Professor Oliver Pybus

Vice Principal for Research and Innovation

November 2023