Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2020

Background

Following its initial publication in 2012, a revised version of **The Concordat to Support Research Integrity** was published in October 2019 by Universities UK. The revised Concordat responds to recommendations set out in the Science and Technology Committee's report on research integrity, published in July 2018. Research England and UKRI require compliance with the Concordat as a condition for receiving research funding.

The Concordat requires institutions to make an annual statement on research integrity which is made publicly available and submitted to Universities UK. In accordance with this requirement this annual statement provides details of activities undertaken to enhance research integrity and demonstrate compliance within Loughborough University.

Summary of actions and activities undertaken to support research integrity

Universities UK Revision of Concordat

The University participated in the sector-wide consultation, held by Universities UK during 2019, regarding updating the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and was represented at the Research Integrity Forum they held in April 2019. Following the publication of the updated Concordat to Support Research Integrity in October 2019 the Research Governance Officer has undertaken a review to identify actions required in order to comply with the revised requirements. These recommendations are due to be discussed by the University's Research Committee to ensure that appropriate actions are undertaken before the compliance deadline of October 2020. This will include necessary revisions to the Research Misconduct Policy.

UK Research Integrity Office

The University is a subscriber to UKRIO (UK Research Integrity Office) and was represented at their annual conference in May 2019.

Loughborough University Policy

The University is committed to the principles outlined in the Concordat and to embedding research integrity within its research culture. The University has published a Code of Practice for Research which reiterates this commitment and provides additional guidance to staff. This Code of Practice is now available on the University's website and the Research section within the University's Ethical Policy Framework has been updated to reflect this guidance.

Ethical Approval Processes

On the recommendation of the Ethics Committee an Ethical Awareness Form for Taught Student Projects has been introduced which gives guidance on processes for ethical approval. Feasibility investigations are being undertaken in collaboration between the Research & Enterprise Office and Academic Registry to move this form to an online platform that will integrate with the newly introduced online ethics system.

An online version of the University's Ethical Quick Test for staff and doctoral student research was introduced in August 2018, replacing the previous paper version, and is available through the Research Support website. Initial results indicated that engagement with this process was minimal. However, completion is now a requirement for research funding applications (since March 2020) which has improved engagement. Demonstrations of the online ethics system have also included a reminder of the Quick Test process.

A process review of ethical approval procedures for investigations involving human participants, undertaken by the Research Office in consultation with the University's Change Team, resulted in the agreement to purchase an online ethics system. The scope of the online system was expanded to cover submissions for studies involving Animals or Animal Cells/Tissues and Security Sensitive Material as well as research involving Human Participants. A phased implementation of this system, Loughborough Ethics Online (LEON), began in January 2020, following initial testing in selected Schools. This implementation is progressing as planned with the aim for staff and doctoral research student submissions to be processed online by the end of May 2020. Although the demonstrations were halted due to COVID-19, Schools have been keen to move to the online system during the lockdown as it enables and facilities online working. One School has also implemented the system for taught postgraduate students ahead of schedule due to the need for remote working. Therefore, demonstration materials have been made available online along with guidance documentation. All taught students will be expected to use the online system for submissions from October 2020.

Health Research Authority/NHS Research

Loughborough University continues to develop its processes for sponsoring projects involving the NHS, which are expected to increase following the opening of the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine. Robust Standard Operating Procedures have been developed to meet the sponsor responsibilities, as defined in the NHS Research Governance Framework.

Creating and embedding a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct

Research Integrity Training

Research integrity continues to feature within training sessions for academic staff on the research environment, e.g. Working in the Current Research Environment, and research ethics for doctoral research students, e.g. Ethical Thinking in Research. The Doctoral College have continued their subscription to Epigeum's Research Integrity on-line training programme following a one-year trial. This offers an enhanced training programme for research students and early career research staff/academics and a concise version appropriate for experienced staff.

Contact Details

Contact details are available on the University's website giving details of the process for reporting misconduct. Staff and students are encouraged to report concerns to the appropriate contacts within their Schools initially. The Research Governance Officer can also provide advice. These details are reiterated during training sessions.

As subscribers to UKRIO staff and students also have access to their advice service.

Process for dealing with allegations of research misconduct

The Research Misconduct Policy is available on the University's website and through the Policy Gateway. This Policy ensures that dealing with allegations of misconduct is transparent, timely, robust and fair. Informal advice on research integrity is available through the Research Governance Officer in the Research Office and formal reporting of allegations of misconduct is made directly to the PVC(R) or Chief Operating Officer following discussions with the School's AD(R) and Dean as appropriate.

Statement on formal research misconduct investigations

There had been one formal investigation of alleged research misconduct by a research student or a member of staff during 2019. This allegation was not upheld.

Statement on what was learned from formal investigations

A thorough review of the misconduct policy would be conducted once UKRIO release their updated guidance in response to the revised Concordat.