

UWS Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2024

This annual statement detailing the activities that enhance, develop, and strengthen research integrity has been prepared by the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) in accordance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The statement is approved annually by the Court of the University of the West of Scotland and is received through the University's Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee for assurance purposes. It is also shared with the University Senate. This statement along with all previously published Annual Statements can be found [here](#). This annual statement covers the period 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024.

Section 1: Key contact information

1A. Name of organisation	University of the West of Scotland
1B. Type of organisation:	Higher Education Institution
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	25 November 2024
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	Academic Integrity & Ethics (uws.ac.uk)
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Prof Robert MacIntosh, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
	Email robert.macintosh@uws.ac.uk
1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Helen Kennedy, Head of Research
	Email address: integrity@uws.ac.uk

Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken

2A. Description of current systems and culture

Policies and Systems

The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) is committed to maintaining the highest standards of research excellence and integrity.

UWS upholds the principles outlined in the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (Universities UK, October 2019) and this statement outlines our progress towards the principles of honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, care and respect and accountability.

The University's research integrity framework is overseen by the University Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee which reports to the University Senate and oversees all matters of research integrity and ethics on behalf for the University. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) leads the University's endeavours in the continuous improvement of the policy, procedures, guidance, and practice in relation to research integrity. He is Chair of the University Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee, Chair of the University Research and Enterprise Advisory Committee, a member of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive and a standing member of the Senate of the University.

The policy framework to support all research and innovation activities, including support for matters of research integrity is described in the UWS Research, Knowledge Exchange, and Innovation Policy Statement. This policy statement was introduced in 2018 as part of an overall review of all University policies at that time. The Policy Statement sets out the UWS approach to fostering a positive research culture and compliance with legislation in the conduct of our research and research related activities. An annual review of the UWS Academic Freedom Statement was undertaken by the University Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee. Academic integrity means a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values¹: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage. These fundamental values are expected of both staff and students. No changes were made to the existing statement.

The University of the West of Scotland has a comprehensive range of policies and systems to govern matters of research integrity and ensure our commitment to the values of academic integrity.

- [Anti-bribery Protocol](#)
- [Research Policy Statement \(pdf\)](#)
- [Code of Ethics \(pdf\)](#)
- [Conflict of Interest Procedure 2023 \(uws.ac.uk\)](#)
- [Consultancy Procedure \(pdf\)](#)
- [Corporate Governance Policy Statement December 2021 \(uws.ac.uk\)](#)
- [Equality Diversity and Human Rights Code Feb 2023](#)
- [Data Handling and Classification Protocol - 2024](#)
- [Exploitation of IP Property Procedure \(pdf\)](#)
- [Export Control & Sanctions Procedure \(pdf\)](#)
- [Guidelines for Ethical Practice in Research and Scholarship \(pdf\)](#)

- [Public Interest Disclosure \(Whistleblowing\) Procedure](#)
- [Research Data Management Procedure \(pdf\)](#)
- [Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Procedure](#)
- [Student Academic Integrity Procedure](#)

Communications and engagement

To support the development and understanding of research integrity and ethics, the University provides online research integrity training. Each School Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee oversees the provision of bespoke training and guidance to applicants on matters of research integrity and to ensure that staff and students are aware of the importance of considering integrity, ethical and safeguarding issues, and of the appropriate channels for seeking ethical approval and raising integrity and ethics concerns.

Culture, development and leadership

The University's People Culture and Environment Sub-group was established to meet to consider how we can develop our research environment and culture. The initial developments supporting research culture conversations are detailed in section 2B.

Monitoring and Reporting

The University Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee (U-AIEC) is the high-level committee concerned with policy, procedure and guidance in relation to research integrity and ethics. School Academic integrity and ethics committees are delegated the responsibility to oversee ethics review for staff and student projects, reporting annually to the U-AIEC. They also undertake ethics awareness and training sessions and report to the U-AIEC on ethics breaches.

To meet expected quality thresholds, Research Services manages an internal peer-review college, university-wide. Pre- submission internal peer review is fully embedded into the research grant approval processes across all schools for projects led by University researchers.

The University uses PURE as the central research information management system (CRIS). It is accessible via The UWS Academic Portal and allows the university to manage and oversee all aspects of open access.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

The University is continually reviewing systems, policy, procedures and guidance to support research integrity at individual and organisational level, often as UKRIO¹ acknowledge referred to as research culture.

From March to May 2023, as part of our ongoing work to create and develop a positive and inclusive research culture, a series of 18 café style research culture conversations were held, based on the format developed by the Wellcome Trust.

¹ Research Integrity - UK Research Integrity Office (ukrio.org)

This created a space to discuss challenges and explore empowered creative solutions that we can incorporate in future action plans.

The UWS Research Festival, 20-22 May 2024 with the theme of building a positive research culture was attended by an estimated 165 staff and PGRs across two campuses and ran over 3 days. The varied programme included a share fair for all the UWS Research Institutes, Centres and Groups and a Research Culture Fest, followed by lightning talks presented by leaders, research staff and PGRs to highlight an important aspect of research culture that their group took pride to share.

When asked about their key take-aways from the festival, most responses reinforced the importance of being together, to share ideas, and raise the visibility of the work being done across the university to support research culture (i.e. policies, behaviours and research). Communications and awareness of what's already happening were common themes.

Through facing our challenges as a research community and finding space for reflection on what we do well across the institution this work is exploring 'what would a better culture look like' and will inform our research culture action plan.

In recognition that a strong culture of care is about providing safe spaces to facilitate open conversations and encourage mentoring and peer to peer, conversations about the difficulties of being a researcher or supporting researchers, the University has encouraged successive cohorts of the UWS Crucible future research leaders programme to develop the Staff Forum for Research. The group feedback from their wide membership on training, development and support needs to inform the annual researcher development programme and actively engage with the design and programme of events at the annual research festival. During academic year 2023-24 an academic integrity and ethics forum was piloted to provide a similar space for the staff who support researchers with matters of integrity and ethics.

The following web pages to support research integrity underwent a refresh:

- [Academic Integrity & Ethics \(uws.ac.uk\)](https://uws.ac.uk/academic-integrity-ethics)
- [Trusted Research \(uws.ac.uk\)](https://uws.ac.uk/trusted-research)

The University's electronic ethics review management system continues to be used by all staff and students planning to undertake research activities.

The Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee agreed recommended a Trusted Research Advisory Group be established to meet as required, to help make decisions on research and innovation activities which may be subject to government strategic export control legislation and/or the National Securities and Investment Act (2021), legislation forming part of the government's Trusted Research and Secure Innovation agenda.

Following consultation at academic integrity workshops in April and June 2024, an updated version of the Student Academic Integrity Procedure was approved at Senate.

Following the launch of the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Procedure in June 2023, the focus has been on training and support for the

Lead Safeguarding Officer and the Depute Safeguarding Officers, with bespoke training designed and delivered by the NSPCC.

Research integrity is a key theme embedded within our Researcher Development Concordat Implementation Plan. To add to the existing suite of on-line resources for researchers, UWS signed up to the new pilot UKRIO training module in Research Integrity, to support researchers to reflect on and develop their understanding of research integrity. The course is designed for anyone conducting or managing research in any discipline, including early career researchers (research students, post-doctorates and fellows), technicians, as well as for more experienced staff seeking refresher training. 190 UWS staff are taking part in the pilot and all schools are represented. UWS is also represented on UKRIO's working group to develop this training.

School Academic Integrity and Ethics committees offer tailored support alongside the UKRIO training, including:

- The School of Health & Life Sciences committee runs ethics "induction" and reviewer training for the appropriate personnel, as well as offering "refresher" training to existing staff/students. The committee is also seeking to input to the staff induction materials being prepared by the school.
- The School of Business and Creative Industries committee use, a) promotion and development of the SAIEC website, b) Promotion of the Data Management Plan (DMP) for research projects, c) Continued rollout of standardised framework for modular approval and d) Cascading of Research Integrity CPD to the school.
- The School of Education and Social Sciences committee run ERM training sessions for new staff and plan to develop some more detailed staff training in the Autumn 2024.

All postgraduate researchers (PGRs) and their supervisors have access to guidance through the Doctoral College Code of Practice, and PGRs take part in a self-guided online course called 'Ethical Research' as part of the Epigeum Research Skills Toolkit.

Taught undergraduate and Graduate programs along with our PGR students receive ethics training within the curriculum.

Research Data management training and resources where a major focus for academic year 2023-24. In addition to all research grant applications led by UWS requiring a peer-to peer internal review, the additional requirement for applications to contain or have a separate research data management plan launched in January 2024.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

As we continue to develop a comprehensive programme of support for research integrity across the university, including more systematic and visible promotion of integrity in research, the University of the West of Scotland continues to be a member of the UK Research Integrity Office and we have regularly engaged with

their online webinars and signed up to their training and continued engagement with the Association of Research Managers and Administrators Special Interest Group on research ethics and integrity.

Acknowledging the challenges of trying to design bespoke guidance reflecting good practice in research in-house, the University is currently moving through the approval and assurance processes to adopt the version 3.0 of the UK Research Integrity Office's Code of Practice for Research and the UKRIO revised research misconduct procedure.

To progress and evidence-based approach to our research integrity efforts, the University Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee will conduct a self-assessment to evaluate achievement using the list of 16 potential indicators of research integrity recently developed by the UK Committee on Research Integrity.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

There are established policies and procedures in place for the investigation of alleged financial, academic and research misconduct.

The [Policies, Procedures & Guidance | UWS | University of the West of Scotland](#) web page contains approved policies, procedures and guidelines. The University believes that staff, students and members of the public should feel able to raise legitimate concerns.

Formal procedures for investigating allegations of research misconduct or malpractice cover three stages – Stage 1: Preliminary Investigation/Screening; Stage 2: Formal Investigation Stage 3: Appeal process Allegations against students (including postgraduate research students) of plagiarism or other research misconduct will be dealt with according to the Procedure for Student Discipline and the Student Academic Integrity Procedure. Allegations of research misconduct against staff will be dealt with under the Complaints Handling Procedure. Where, during investigation of a complaint, it is determined that a disciplinary investigation is required then this will be undertaken in accordance with the University's Disciplinary Procedure. Individuals are encouraged to try to resolve complaints through the informal procedure where appropriate. Mediation by a trained person, either internally or from an external source, will be considered, where appropriate, as part of the informal procedure. The procedures for dealing with allegations of research misconduct are under review in conjunction with the development of the new UWS Code of Good Research Practice and Ethics.

Key lessons The University will always seek, where possible, to learn lessons from any cases that have arisen to improve or enhance our processes. During the reporting period, most queries relating to research conduct are resolved at a local

level by Deans of School. Research misconduct is reported through the Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee by each School and the Deputy Chair of the Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee for cross-university cases.

UWS procedure includes a screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. A total of 8 allegations relating to student misconduct in research, relating to failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations were reported to UWS during academic year 2023-24. Following the stage1 preliminary investigation process, 4 formal investigations were undertaken because of these allegations. We propose to increase ethical awareness by providing additional online training. Additionally, we propose that this training eventually be required before submission of ethics applications by academic colleagues and supervision of students submitting ethics applications.

3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken.

Type of allegation	Number of allegations			
	Number of allegations reported to the organisation	Number of formal investigations	Number upheld in part after formal investigation	Number upheld in full after formal investigation
Fabrication				
Falsification				
Plagiarism				
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	8	4	1	1
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)				
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)				
<i>Other*</i>				
Total:	8	4	1	1