

COUNCIL

21 November 2018

Research Concordat

Executive Summary:

The University of Bradford is a signatory to the Universities UK (UUK) concordat to support research integrity, a national framework for good research conduct and its governance. It sets out five commitments to support and promote research integrity.

All signatories to this concordat are committed to:

1. maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research;
2. ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards;
3. supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers;
4. using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise;
5. working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.

Commitment 5 includes the recommendation that employers of researchers should provide an annual statement to their governing body to include, *inter alia*, a high-level statement regarding any formal investigations undertaken into research misconduct within their organisation.

Under the Terms and Conditions of UK Research and Innovation funding, HEIs in receipt of funding administered through Research England are obliged to comply with this concordat.

This report details the University of Bradford's current and future activities to demonstrate compliance with the concordat. The report confirms one case of potential research misconduct was reported and investigated in the year 2017/18 and that there was no substance to the allegation of research misconduct made.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Members of the Council are invited to receive and consider this report.

Report author: Professor John Bridgeman, Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & Knowledge Transfer)
Date: 8 November 2018

Research Concordat

Introduction

- 1 The University of Bradford is a signatory to Universities UK (UUK) concordat to support research integrity. This provides a national framework for good research conduct and its governance; it gives researchers and their employers responsibilities within existing regulatory mechanisms, and aims to strengthen research integrity, whilst recognising that mistakes and honest errors can be made.
- 2 All signatories to the concordat are committed to the continuous development of a culture that supports and nurtures research integrity, and mechanisms that provide assurances and ensures appropriate investigation and actions are undertaken when things go wrong. The concordat also asserts that signatories must be able to account for their efforts openly and transparently.
- 3 The concordat is currently under review. A consultation exercise is anticipated to start by the end of the calendar year, and a new version issued in 2019.

University's commitments as a signatory to the Concordat

- 4 The concordat contains five commitments to support and promote research integrity. These are quoted below and further details can be found at <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2012/the-concordat-to-support-research-integrity.pdf>:

Commitment 1: We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research;

Commitment 2: We are committed to ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards;

Commitment 3: We are committed to supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers;

Commitment 4: We are committed to using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise;

Commitment 5: We are committed to working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.

- 5 Within commitment 5, the concordat recommends that employers of researchers should present a short annual statement to their own governing body that:
 - summarises actions and activities undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues, e.g. training or process reviews;

- gives assurances that their processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the organisation's needs;
 - provides a high-level statement of any formal investigations undertaken into research misconduct.
- 6 Whilst the concordat recommends the publication of this report, The House of Commons Science & Technology Committee 2018 report on Research Integrity¹ was clear in its expectation of this as a feature of compliance.
- 7 Under the Terms and Conditions of UK Research and Innovation funding, HEIs in receipt of funding administered through Research England are obliged to comply with this concordat, particularly its recommendations for internal processes and guidance, and for staff training. Each HEI must confirm that it complies with the concordat in its annual assurance to the Office for Students (OfS).

University of Bradford's current activities to demonstrate compliance with the Concordat

- 8 The University of Bradford commits to its responsibilities outlined in the concordat in the following ways:
- The University supports and strengthens researchers' understanding and application of research integrity issues addressing commitments 1, 2 & 3 through the following training programme:
 - i. Staff and student training:
 1. Training for Ethics Panel and Committee Members (annually; available to staff);
 2. Research Ethics Approval Process (twice-yearly, available to staff and students);
 3. NHS Integrated Research Approval System (IRAS) e-learning module (duration is approximately 1 hour; available to staff and students);
 4. Health Research Authority (HRA) Learning Management System eLearning modules (free for everyone to access);
 5. Ethical Approval Processes for Research (annually, available to FHS and FLS (Pharmacy research group) staff, and all students);

¹ <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/research-integrity-17-19/>

6. HRA, IRAS and Q&A session (annually, in partnership with colleagues at West Yorkshire Research & Development; available to staff and students);
 7. Regular HRA update meetings between RaIS staff and colleagues at West Yorkshire Research & Development, disseminated to all panel members via circulation of HRA update sheets from these meetings.
 8. Plagiarism awareness and understanding.
- ii. Research student ethics training within the PGR Framework:
1. Ethical Approval Forms – Peer-to-peer Review and Support;
 2. Ethical Research for Doctoral Students;
 3. Ethics in Digital Research;
 4. Ethics, Professionalism and Reflective Practice.
- iii. Guidance and documentation in the following areas:
1. HRA Decision Tool for staff and students to ascertain whether their research needs IRAS approval;
 2. Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) in Research (for staff)
- The University's processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair, and they are reviewed at least every two years to ensure that they continue to be appropriate to the organisation's needs. Following the University's transition from Blackboard to Canvas, the research misconduct procedure will be made available via the Research and Innovation Services (RaIS) website. The policy's operation and application are also reviewed throughout the academic year.
 - One case of potential research misconduct was reported and investigated in the academic year (2017/8). The investigation concluded that a genuine mistake had been made by the academic under investigation and that there was no substance to the allegation of research misconduct made. However, the investigation did identify an area of concern with regard to the academic staff member's actions and, as a result, recommended that the academic undergo a mentorship programme within their faculty.

University of Bradford's future activities in compliance with the Concordat

- 9 The University will further support and strengthen researchers' understanding and application of research integrity issues through new, online ethics training, delivered via PebblePad. This training is currently in test mode and a link will be added to the RaIS ethics training web pages once it is available for staff and students to access.

- 10 The University Secretary will provide a high-level statement annually to the final Committee for Ethics in Research of the academic year summarising any disclosures raised and any subsequent actions taken. This report will be published on line.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 11 Members of the Council are invited to receive and consider this report.

Report author: Professor John Bridgeman, Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & Knowledge Transfer)

Date: 5 November 2018