

Research Integrity Annual Narrative Statement, 2019/20

Policies and Procedures including processes for dealing with allegations of research misconduct

The University has policies and procedures in place relating to Research Integrity and Research Ethics.

The key documents for use are the University's *Code of Research Good Practice* (updated, August 2017, to undergo revision in early 2020) and the *Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research* (updated, August 2017, currently undergoing revision for implementation of updated version in 2020). The *Code of Research Good Practice* underwent a significant revision in 2014 (approved Academic Council, October 2014) and the *Ethics Code* was revised and edited significantly for content in 2015 (approved Academic Council, June 2015) with significant review and revision ongoing currently to reflect internal and external developments in 2020. It is recommended that significant review of all research policies and codes occur every three years, or earlier if there is a need to reflect internal or external changes. The procedure for managing requests for Research Ethics review is dealt with under an established University Research Ethics Committee and devolved to College Research Ethics Committees. The University has invested in an online Research Ethics Review system, the '*Virtual Research Environment*'. The University has an externally published Procedure for Managing Allegations of Research Misconduct, (approved Academic Council, October 2017). The Misconduct Procedure was significantly revised to provide different procedures for staff and students

University Research Governance Framework public website and named contact details for receiving allegations of suspected research misconduct

The above mentioned research codes, and other related documents are available at:

<https://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/research-governance>

The Procedure for Managing Allegations of Research Misconduct is available at:

<https://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/research-governance>

The operation of the *Misconduct Procedure* is overseen by the Pro Vice Chancellor Research (Professor Andrew Linn) or the Pro Vice Chancellor Knowledge Exchange (Professor Malcolm Kirkup) who will act as the "Named Person" under the Procedure. In the absence of the Named Person an Alternate will be nominated.

The University's *Research Data Management Policy* is also available at:

<https://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/researcher-support/research-data/research-data-management-policy>

Dissemination of policies to staff, including new employees

The policies are disseminated to staff via email-lists, news items and through formal Committee channels from *University* through to *College Research Committees*. The College Research Committees' terms of reference specifically include reference to dissemination of good practice and are required to: "*uphold good research practice and governance, and identify and disseminate good practice and innovation in research activity*" as

well as “*foster internally, and represent externally, a vibrant research culture*”.

A new Research Office was established in August 2018 to bring together support for research across the institution. The Office provides support for Research Ethics and Integrity and support for the *Virtual Research Environment* system. Since the Research Office was established it has developed new mechanisms to communicate with Researchers including establishing a mailing list that now has 195 subscribers, a blog and twitter feed (over 400 followers) which are used to support the dissemination of a range of information regarding opportunities to undertake research, career development and research funding and policy updates. A dedicated Researcher Developer has been appointed and work to consolidate researcher development materials into a new online presence is underway. Work is also being planned to revise induction information and material for staff that undertake research which will support ensuring that new colleagues understand the University’s policies and processes with respect to Research. The researcher induction materials are expected to sit alongside the existing *Welcome to Westminster* (induction) event that all new staff members attend which introduces all new colleagues to University policies and expectations. A series of Research Development workshops including sessions on *disseminating research and publications*, *Research Excellence Framework (REF) Impact*, *research ethics*, *connecting with policy-makers*, and *research funding* have taken place and a new Researcher Development Programme is being created for staff and is expected to launch at the start of the 2020/21 academic year. The Programme will be aligned to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework.

The University holds the HR Excellence in Research Award (HRERA) and following the revision of the underlying Concordat in September 2019 the University is working to revise and update via the Researcher Concordat Working Group its commitments to the Concordat and HRERA. The University is expected to become a signatory of the new Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers in Spring 2020.

In September 2019 The University launched four overarching Research Communities: Arts, Communication and Culture; Diversity and Inclusion; Health Innovation and Wellbeing; and Sustainable Cities and the Urban Environment to support the development of the institution’s research in these key areas as well as support building connections and supporting the development of the research environment and culture at Westminster.

The University through the establishment of the Human Tissue Steering Group (reporting to University Research Ethics Committee) has provided a central point of online information and guidance for all staff and students working under the Human Tissue Authority Licence and regularly provides updates in person to these staff and student researchers around the quality and standards required to carry out the work in line with legal, regulatory and best practice requirements.

Work undertaken by the University to support and strengthen Research Integrity issues

The University established a Research Governance Framework Group (reporting to Research Committee) to undertake a review and revision of key research codes and policies in 2019/20. The Group is set to undertake a further research integrity self-assessment using UK Research Integrity Office’s updated self-assessment tool-kit with regard to implementation of the newly updated Concordat to Support Research Integrity (UUK, 2019).

The University has provided a *Research Ethics Staff Development Programme* open to all staff facilitated by the *Association for Research Ethics (now under ARMA)* and a newly developed internally facilitated Programme around research ethics, including internal and external processes and expectations. These and related Research Ethics sessions are part of the University’s *HR Excellence in Research Award Action Plan* (Award received January 2015). The University is a member of UK Research Integrity Office and uses its services and events to build expertise and spread good practice in research.

The University also has a *Research Data Management Policy* in relation to the *RCUK Common Principles on Data* and the *Concordat on Open Research Data*. The University is strengthening its support for staff working under the Human Tissue Authority licence via dedicated consent training in line with the Human

Tissue Authority's Code of Practice for Research, including training from external experts from Kings College London.

Formal Investigations relating to researchers funded by or responsible for funding (including supervisors of Postgraduate awards)

There have not been any formal investigations which relate to researchers funded or responsible for funding, including supervisors of postgraduate awards.

University arrangements for Ethical Review

Research projects should be considered for ethical review before commencement of research work. Where there are requirements of ethical assessment, these are carried out by the *University Research Ethics Committee* (senior internal ethical review body). For externally funded projects the Principal Investigator (PI) is supported prior to application for funding via the *Research Development Team* who work closely with the *University Research Ethics Officer* to support the PI in addressing ethical issues which may arise. Following award, the *University Research Ethics Committee* work together with the PI and *Post Awards team* in ensuring the terms and conditions of the grant awarding body are met, including research ethics, training, health and safety etc. The proposal must be provided to the *University Research Ethics Committee* for consideration and approval if appropriate and in line with the University's *Ethics Code*. Similarly work submitted for ethical consideration by an external body is noted by the *University Research Ethics Committee* and further conditions are set, if appropriate, with regards to compliance issues. PIs are required to report any changes to protocol for consideration and review and await approval prior to undertaking any further work. The University will use its own Codes, policies and guidance in research ethics as well as those of the relevant external bodies to support the research and PI.