Annual statement on Research Integrity

2016 - 2017

Background

The University is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethics and integrity in its research, and places ethics and integrity at the heart of its decision making.

This statement forms part of the University’s commitment to outline the work undertaken to further strengthen the integrity of the University’s research.

Statement

Policies and procedures

The University has policies and procedure in place to ensure that research is conducted to the highest levels of ethics and integrity. The University recognises the importance of clear policies and guidelines in embedding a culture of integrity and ethics within research practices. Such documents support researchers in understanding and acting according to expected standards, values and behaviours.

The University’s Policy for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct in Research outlines the procedure to be followed when there is an allegation of misconduct in research. This procedure has appropriate principles and mechanisms to ensure that investigations are thorough and fair, carried out in a transparent and timely manner, and protected by appropriate confidentiality. Details of recent research misconduct investigations is provided in the Appendix.

Additionally, the University Policy on Research Ethics provides a framework to ensure that all research is conducted in accordance with fundamental ethical principles.

These policies are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they meet the requirements of an evolving global research portfolio, and can be found on the University’s Research Integrity webpages (https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/research-integrity/policies-guidance/).

The policies are made available to staff through the University website, which is referenced in staff and student handbooks. Further to this, communications on the ethics process and integrity
requirements are made through the University's announcements system. Ethics and integrity is also a standing item on the University's Faculty Research Committees.

Information about University research-related policies and procedures is generally disseminated at induction via departmental and course programme handbooks. Induction for research students will generally include guidance about avoiding plagiarism and a requirement to undertake the University’s related online training in ethics and integrity.

During the last year, the University has undertaken a review of internal policies relating to research integrity, and is in the stage of finalising a new Policy on misconduct in research as well as a Policy on research integrity. It is hoped that these new policies provide further guidance to the University’s academic community and play an important role in supporting researchers in understanding the University’s expected values and behaviours.

**Research integrity activities**

The University seeks to ensure that all researchers are aware of and understand the policies and principles relating to ethics and integrity. It is recognised that traditional methods alone cannot achieve this objective, and instead, multiple initiatives must be adopted to strengthen the understanding and engagement with ethics and integrity issues.

The University has purchased training packages on research integrity and ethics, which form a mandatory part of the University's induction training for all research and teaching related staff. Appropriate training is essential to embedding integrity and ethics within the research environment. To achieve a more coordinated approach to the provision of training, the Committee on Research Ethics are developing a process by which expertise in ethics and integrity is codified and shared among all academic staff. This process will build on the current provision of training which includes ad-hoc presentations, regular workshops, and occasional guest speakers.

The University is also a member of the Russell Group Research Integrity forum, which meets to discuss methods to embed a culture of integrity within higher education institutions. This forum provides important learning experiences and examples of activities which can support and strengthen the understanding of research integrity issues across institutions.
Research Ethics

The University's research ethics process provides rigorous safeguards and reduces harm wherever possible for all those involved in the research process by ensuring the research is subject to active consideration of the ethical issues that may arise. The ethics framework provides a mechanism for researchers to demonstrate engagement with ethical issues, and the process support researchers to design research to a high ethical standard.

The University's Research Ethics Committees are constituted and operate in accordance with the ESRC framework standards and include lay representation, as well as a broad range of discipline expertise.

The University regularly reviews its research ethics framework against the standards set out in Economic and Social Research Council Framework for Research Ethics, Association for Research Ethics Framework for Research Ethics Committees and the Department of Health Governance Arrangements for Research Ethics Committees.

The University’s Committee on Research Ethics is currently undertaking a program of process improvement, aimed at a further optimisation of the ethics approval process. This includes the development of the online system for research ethics applications, the formation of an additional research ethics committee to manage the increasing volume of applications, and the implementation of initiatives aimed at embedding awareness and expertise in research ethics across the institution.

Conclusion

During the last year, the University has undertaken various activities to embed a culture of research integrity. A review of the policy framework has been conducted, an online system to optimise the research ethics process has been introduced, along with mandatory training in research ethics.

The University looks forward to building on these efforts through the introduction of new policies and guidance, the development of further training in research integrity, and the initiatives to raise aware of research integrity. It is hoped that these steps provide an important contribution in promoting a positive culture of research integrity across the institution.
Appendix 1

Details of research misconduct investigations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of formal investigations completed</th>
<th>Number of allegations upheld (in whole or in part)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fabrication</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falsification</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misrepresentation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of duty of care</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (authorship dispute)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details of any allegations upheld in part</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>*Please see below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*The University launched an investigation into possible research misconduct concerning a potential failure to follow protocols contained in ethical consent that had been given for the research. The findings of a preliminary investigation supported further investigation. Working from the preliminary report, the scope of the full investigation addressed the possible breach of a duty of care. This investigation concluded that the complaint of research misconduct was upheld in part due to the failure to duly inform research participants and the failure to notify the University of a Serious Adverse Event.

** The University launched an investigation into possible research misconduct following concerns raised over the accuracy and authorship practices of a research paper related to health. The investigation addressed the possible failure to give appropriate recognition to others involved in research activity. This investigation concluded that research misconduct had occurred as the authorship practices deviated unacceptably from current accepted practice in carrying out research.