Research Ethics and Integrity Report
for the academic year 2017-18

Description of paper
1. The attached annual report is intended to address the five commitments of the Universities UK Concordat to support Research Integrity. It was approved by the University’s Risk management group on Monday 21 October 2019.

Background and context
3. The University of Edinburgh is a signatory to the Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The University expects all its staff – both academic and support - as well as students and academic visitors using University research facilities to carry out high quality research that is in line with the Concordat.

4. One of the Concordat’s recommendations is that all UK Institutions that are employers of researchers produce a short annual statement that is presented to University’s governing body and made publicly available thereafter. This report is intended to serve that purpose and covers the 2017-18 session. The report highlights examples of the practical measures undertaken across University to foster a research environment that promotes good practice as well as having clear processes in place for investigating allegations of research misconduct.

5. The process that underpins the generation of this report is intended to drive internal review and promote good practice. The scope of the report covers all research irrespective of funding source. Members of the Research Ethics and Integrity Review Group (REIRG) considered the report at its meeting on 13 June 2019. Feedback from REIRG was incorporated before the report was submitted to members of the Research Policy Group (RPG) at its meeting on 26 June. The report that was presented to the University Risk Management Committee revised to address feedback from RPG.

Discussion
6. During the process of approving the University’s third annual report, the House of Commons (HoC) Science and Technology committee produced the report of its enquiry into Research Integrity in the UK (July 2018). HoC Research Integrity report recommended changes to the UK’s research governance and that there should be more support to embed best practice in the UK’s communities of researchers. As a part of acknowledging the points raised in that report and anticipating that the HoC report would result in changes to the operation of research governance and promotion of research best practice across the UK, the University chose to carried out an internal audit of its research ethics approval procedures and their operation. No issues of any significance were identified.

7. UUK carried out a consultation on how to revise its Concordat on Research Integrity in February. The University made a submission. The revised UUK concordat is expected to be published in mid-October. These external developments have delayed REIRG’s plans outlined in the previous report to Risk Management Committee to overhaul the University’s internal research integrity monitoring arrangements. It is vital that internal changes are aligned with any changes to how University is expected to monitor compliance under the new UUK concordat. REIRG will also ensure that the overhaul will take full advantage of the Research Ethics Monitoring tool that the University has purchased from Infonetica.

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1 Links to all relevant internal and external Research Ethics and Integrity websites are given in the report
8. REIRG and University Human Resource Services has set up a subgroup to review the University policy on Research Misconduct in the light of increased reporting requirements from research funders. The review is also contingent on any changes that the University will have to adopt in order to comply with the new UUK concordat. It is intended that the review will also deliver additional guidance to those charged with carrying out investigations in to allegations of misconduct, which has been requested by the Colleges.

9. Anticipating that the new UUK concordat will place more emphasis on training and development of staff involved with research, a subgroup of REIRG is considering how to enhance the provision of training on research integrity. The focus will be on promoting best practice. It is acknowledged that training and development material has to be capable of being tailored to the needs of different academic disciplines.

Resource implications
10. There are no direct resource implications associated with this paper.

Risk Management
11. The University has a low risk appetite for reputation and compliance risks.

Equality & Diversity
12. There are no equality or diversity issues associated with this paper.

Next steps/implications
13. This report formed a part of the information provided to the Audit and Risk Committee within the Annual Report of the Risk Management Committee 2017/18.

Consultation
14. The Research Policy Group has considered and approved the attached report.

Further information
15. Authors
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Freedom of Information
The University's report will be published on the University's website assuming it is approved by Risk Management Group
University of Edinburgh
Annual Research Ethics and Integrity Report (2017-18)

Actions and activities undertaken to support and strengthen the understanding of research integrity issues
The examples given below illustrate the types of activities undertaken to support and strengthen understanding of research issues at College and School level as well as topics brought to the attention of REIRG through the annual review process.

Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS)
The College’s Research Ethics and Integrity SharePoint pages are regularly updated with information supplied by Schools. The College has worked with the Institute of Academic Development (IAD) to produce a Facilitators’ Guide which combined with discipline-specific material can be used by schools to deliver in-house ethics training.

Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (MVM)
The Edinburgh Clinical Research Facility’s Education team continues to deliver a programme of courses covering all aspects of research best practice and upholding high standards in regard to research integrity. All the courses were updated in 2017/18 to take account of GDPR. To raise its profile further, the ECRF’s Education team makes regular use of its twitter account. The team are working closely with ACCORD to develop a half day research integrity course, and are also discussing the potential to adapt the material to an online course in collaboration with the MSc Clinical Trials course administrators.

Science and Engineering (S&E)
Biological Sciences is carrying out a comprehensive training and development programme to ensure all its staff and students will know about and understand how to follow its new Project Ethics Approval System. Geosciences has introduced a Policy and Guidelines on Publication Ethics. The school’s policy is intended address common issues that arise in regard to authorship of research outputs such as the order of authors, who should be included in a list of authors etc.

Central University Support Services
IAD launched its’ LEARN online training module and available to all students and staff. This cover a wide range of issues relevant to research integrity including ethical approval; plagiarism; authorship; collaboration; and publication ethics. The course is intended to be a cross University introduction to this topic. Schools are incorporating the module into their more discipline-specific training. IAD also undertook a comprehensive survey of the provision of research integrity training across the University. REIRG is studying the report to identify cross University learning points.

Outline of processes for ethical approval of research proposals, dealing with allegations of misconduct and review of these processes

Processes for ethical approval of research proposals and dealing with allegations of misconduct
Those wishing to see details of the ethics and integrity governance arrangements at University, College and School levels are referred to the report for 2014/15. An update report was provided for sessions 2015/6 and 2016/17 and further update reports will be provided for sessions 2018/19 and 2019/20. It is likely that the scope and content of the annual report that the University has to produce will change in order to comply with the new UUK concordat and increased scrutiny from Research Councils and other key funders such as the Wellcome Trust. REIRG anticipates having to revise the University Research
Ethics and Integrity governance arrangements accordingly.

**Review of processes**

**AHSS**
Mindful of the steady growth in interdisciplinary research, the College is encouraging its schools to share ‘areas of expertise’ so that interdisciplinary research projects can be scrutinised to the same degree as projects with a scope that lies wholly within one school. The College has identified a need for a cross-University discussion about the issues arising from ‘Big Data’ and a cross-University knowledge base about ethical protocols in other nations to support trans-national research projects. AHSS has also developed a College wide online Research Ethics and Integrity review form.

**MVM**
The MVM report has also identified a need to provide more information, advice and guidance for those carrying out research with international partners in the light of the growth in funding to support global health projects. The ACCORD Medical Research Ethics Committee has reported a rise in the number of projects involving research that will be carried out overseas.

**S&E**
The School of Mathematics is taking proactive steps to ensure that its staff and students in research groups that carry research with applications outside of Mathematics (e.g. mathematical Education and Statistics) are made fully aware of the school’s procedures for the assessment of research projects. The School of Biological Sciences has carried out a root and branch review of its procedure for assessing new research proposals with regard to any ethical issues that may arise.

**University level.**
The University’s web pages on Research Ethics and Integrity are now hosted by the Edinburgh Research Office. These pages were developed as a REIRG working group identifying best communication practice in websites of other members of the Russell Group that could be applied to an Edinburgh context. The transition to the Edinburgh Research Support Office webpages from the former location on the GaSP webpages means that the University’s Research Ethics and Integrity webpages now sit alongside other web resources for researchers.

**High level statement about allegations of research misconduct and any formal investigations**

**AHSS**
One case was identified and is the subject of formal investigation. Carrying out the investigation has identified a number of unforeseen issues with the UK Research Integrity Office Code of Practice on Research Misconduct that the University adopted with a glossary to map roles mentioned in the UKRIO CoP to UoE appointments. The issues relate to the fact that, in practice, the application of the UKRIO CoP is slower than one would wish for such a procedure and the informal and advisory stages need to be made more distinct.

**MVM**
No issues to report. The ACCORD office has investigated a number of cases in which there were departures from approved protocols or trial documents. Of these, on investigation, none were due to research misconduct. Each case was formally rectified by
Corrective and Preventative Actions. In each case the necessary measures were promptly implemented.

S&E
The College has identified a need for support for staff and students who had worked in the same group as an individual who has been dismissed after an investigation so that they are not penalised by association. The College has also recommended that the University considers how to communicate information relating to the outcome of any future investigation so that there is as much transparency as possible within the necessary legal constraints.

University Level
REIRG is working with University HR services to determine how best to address the issues raised by AHSS and S&E. We have also used the above mentioned UUK consultation to flag up these issues and stress that the UKRIO Code of Practice (CoP), which was published in 2009, should be revised. The University offered its services to support UKRIO in revising its CoP.
UNIVERSITY WEBSITES

University Research Integrity homepage

Links to the REIRG website; External online training resources; University policies relevant to Research ethics and Integrity; Research Funders’ policies on Research ethics and Integrity.

Research Ethics and Integrity - an Introduction

Hosted by IAD, -this LEARN online training module is available to all students and staff
Covers: ethical approval; plagiarism; authorship; collaboration; and publication ethics

College Research Ethics and Integrity websites

College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
College of Science and Engineering
College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

Academic and Clinical Office for Research and Development (ACCORD)
Covers clinical research-led involving human participants, tissues or data. This includes research falling within the scope of NHS Research Ethics Committee Review and all clinical trials covered by the Medicines for Human Use (Clinical trial regulations). Proposals put to these groups that is considered outside their remit is assessed by relevant University Research Ethics Committees.

Regulation of research involving animals

Maintaining high standards of Animal ethics and welfare
Commitment to replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research

EXTERNAL WEBSITES

Universities UK

UUK concordat on Research Integrity
The five commitments set out in the UUK concordat
- We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research
- We are committed to ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards
- 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
- We are committed to using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise
- We are committed to working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.

UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) (hardcopy of documents available from Edinburgh Research Office)
- Code of practice for Research – Promoting good practice and preventing misconduct
- Self-Assessment tool for the Concordat to Support Research Integrity

UK Research and Innovation (Umbrella body for UK Research Councils)
- Policies and Guidelines on Governance of good Research Contact (pdf)

These are described by UKRI as legacy documents and are valid until updated

House of Commons Science and Technology
HoC Science and Technology Report from its inquiry into Research Integrity (pdf)
Responses to the report from Dept. for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and UKRI (pdf)