



Approach to Research Integrity and Ethics at Bath Spa University

1. Background

This document sets out the University's approach to Research Integrity and Ethics. It is based on guidelines produced by Universities UK ([The Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#)) and the UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) [Policy and Guidelines on the Governance of Good Research Conduct](#).

The University has a commitment to the following principles:

- That our research is underpinned with common values of rigour and integrity
- That we nurture a research environment that supports research of the highest standards of rigour and integrity
- That our research confirms to all ethical, legal and professional obligations
- That we use transparent, robust and fair processes to handle allegations of academic misconduct
- That we continue to monitor, and where necessary improve, the suitability and appropriateness of the mechanisms in place to provide assurances over the integrity of research

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Definition: In line with the UK funding bodies' definition as set out in the [UK Concordat](#), research is defined as 'a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared...It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction'.
- 2.2 Scope: In line with the [UKRI Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct](#), this document is relevant to all individuals involved in research at the University, irrespective of the subject of research, entry into research or any other consideration, including the following:

- undergraduate and postgraduate students undertaking research as part (or all) of a qualification whether taught or by research (MPhil/PhD)
- all staff (academic, contracted and professional services) undertaking research, collaborative research with outside organisations, contract research and consultancy
- all staff (academic, contracted and support) undertaking research with students or with other members of staff
- all those who are collaborating or being mentored by university staff and are undertaking research with which the University can be associated. This includes collaborative research and research involving international partnerships, as well as academic visitors and visiting research fellows.

2.3 *Expectations:* The principles and guidelines set out in this document expect all of those within its scope to observe the highest standards of integrity, honesty and professionalism, and to embed good practice in every aspect of their work. This includes the interpretation and presentation of research results and contributions to the peer review process and the training of new researchers, staff and students as well as the conduct of the research itself. That is, individual actions must comply with the principles of honesty, openness, transparency and research rigour.

3. Maintaining the Highest Standards of Research Integrity

- 3.1 In line with the [UUK Concordat](#), staff at the University are expected to maintain the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research, the core elements of which are: honesty; rigour; transparency and open communication; care and respect
- 3.2 The University has developed a [Code of Good Practice for Research](#) which sets out the expectations of staff undertaking research, and the procedures that the University has in place to ensure that research is conducted in accordance with standards of best practice, including systems to promote research integrity, and transparent robust and fair processes to investigate alleged research misconduct.
- 3.3 The University has a commitment through the provision of a researcher development programme, and through its leadership development programme, to ensure that a supportive and informed research environment is available for all staff across the University. This includes defending them when they live up to these expectations in difficult circumstances. This commitment is set out in the [University's Action Plan for the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#), and recognised through its [HR Excellence in Research award](#).

4. **The conduct of research according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards**

4.1 In addition to the core principles that underpin integrity, research is governed by a range of ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards. These frameworks are important in maintaining and enhancing public trust in research.

4.2 The University has a clear policy on ethical approval which is available to all researchers, and ensures that all researchers are aware of and understand policies and processes relating to ethical approval through its researcher development programme, academic staff induction and [staff development review processes](#).

4.3 Advice and guidance on ethical, legal and professional obligations and standards can be accessed through the availability of supervising tutors and Directors of Study, research mentors in Research Centres and Schools, and through the University's Research Support Office. The University's Research, Knowledge Exchange and Consultancy Committee (RKECC) is responsible for the monitoring and review of research integrity and ethics systems and processes across the University, and reporting on these annually to the University's Governing Body.

4.4 The University has a clear policy and protocols on [information governance](#), including [Data Protection Policy](#) and guidance and support are available to both staff and students on this issue.

5. **Embedding a Culture of Research Integrity**

5.1 In line with the [UUK Concordat](#), the University is committed to providing 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.

5.2 The University has set out its policies, practices and procedures in relation to research ethics and integrity through the following documentation:

- Approach to Research Ethics and Integrity at Bath Spa University (this document)
- [Code of Good Practice for Research](#)
- [University Ethical Approval processes](#)
- [Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct in Research](#)
- [University Whistleblowing policy](#)
- [University Complaints Policy](#)
- [Ethical Fundraising Policy](#)

- 5.3 Members of our Research Leaders Community and Directors of Research are available in all Schools to support staff engaged in research activities, and a clear Line Management system is put in place for all staff employed on research projects as part of the project management arrangements. Principal Investigators responsible for research teams are required to undertake leadership and Staff Development Review Training. This should ensure that potential concerns are raised at an early stage, and that support is provided for those researchers in need of assistance.
- 5.4 As part of our [HR Excellence in Research Award](#) the University has an action plan in place to ensure that it has a research environment that nurtures good research practice and encourages a culture of research integrity.
- 5.5 The University has made a commitment to supporting researcher development and offers a comprehensive [research development programme](#) for its staff.
- 5.6 The University also recognises that it has a duty of care to its own staff, and that this includes the avoidance of harm for those undertaking research. All PhD students and staff are therefore required if appropriate to undertake a risk assessment as part of the ethical approval processes.

Staff are also able to access an Employee Wellbeing Assistance Programme– [Lifeworks](#) – which offers advice on matters such as health, family and work-life balance, and also provides staff with an independent counselling service if required. Students are able to seek help and advice through the [University Student Support Service](#).

6. Research Misconduct

- 6.1 In line with the [UUK Concordat](#), the University is committed to using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct, should they arise. The University's [Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct in Research](#) clearly sets out definitions of misconduct, and the procedures that have been put in place to deal with it effectively and fairly.
- 6.2 The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) is responsible for ensuring that allegations of misconduct are dealt with appropriately, and for ensuring that the correct steps are taken to remedy any situations arising out of an investigation. This can include imposing sanctions, correcting the research record and reporting any action to regulatory and statutory bodies, research participants, funders or other professional bodies as circumstances, contractual obligations and statutory requirements dictate.
- 6.3 The University has a duty to ensure that individual researchers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to misconduct, and to embed an awareness

and understanding of these within the researcher staff development programme, as part of academic staff induction and during the appraisal process.

- 6.4 The University has a [complaints policy and set of procedures](#) through which students are able to raise any issues or concerns relating to academic misconduct.
- 6.5 The University has a [whistleblowing policy](#), the purpose of which is to encourage staff to raise genuine concerns about malpractice within the University without being subject to any detriment including victimisation and disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. These include concerns about the integrity of research being conducted under the University's auspices.
7. Commitment to Strengthening Research Integrity
- 7.1 In line with the [UUK Concordat](#), the University is committed to strengthening the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly, and to ensuring that these review outcomes are communicated openly and effectively.
- 7.2 The University's Research Ethics Committee (REC) reviews this commitment annually by:
- 7.2.1 Considering a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues.
- 7.2.2 Evaluating processes for allegations of misconduct to ensure that they are transparent, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation.
- 7.2.3 Receiving a report on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken.
- 7.3 The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) is responsible for providing an annual statement to the Board of Governors summarising the REC report, and confirming that the University continues to ensure that its environment promotes and nurtures a commitment to research integrity, and that suitable processes are in place to deal with misconduct. This statement will be made publicly available on the University's website.