Annual statement on research integrity – Bath Spa University

If you have any questions about this template, please contact: riconcordat@ukcori.org.

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	Bath Spa University
1B. Type of organisation: **higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)**	Higher Education Institution
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	10/12/2025
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/research-and-enterprise/research-strategy/integrity-and-ethics/
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Professor John Strachan Email address: j.strachan@bathspa.ac.uk
1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Name: Joe Fort Email address: j.fort@bathspa.ac.uk

Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken

2A. Description of current systems and culture

Please describe how the organisation maintains high standards of research integrity and promotes positive research culture. It should include information on the support provided to researchers to understand standards, values and behaviours, such as training, support and guidance for researchers at different career stages/ disciplines. You may find it helpful to consider the following broad headings:

- Policies and systems

- Communications and engagement

- Culture, development and leadership

- Monitoring and reporting

Bath Spa University remains committed to maintaining the highest standards of research integrity and fostering a positive, inclusive, and reflective research culture. Our approach is underpinned by the five principles of the 2025 Concordat to Support Research Integrity: honesty, rigour, transparency, care and respect, and accountability.

Policies and Systems
Research integrity is embedded institutionally through a structured governance framework led by the University Ethics Committee (UEC), which reports quarterly to the Research Ethics Committee (REC). Ethical review is delivered through the Ethics Peer Review College (EPRC), coordinated by School Ethics Leads and supported centrally by the Research Support Office (RSO).

In 2024/25, Bath Spa University actively engaged in the development of the revised Concordat via GuildHE, contributing sectoral insights and feedback. We are now using the UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool for the Concordat to systematically map our institutional practices against the Concordat's commitments. This tool is being used within the UEC to monitor progress, identify gaps, and inform strategic planning.

Key policy developments include:
- Updated Safeguarding Guidance for researchers working with under-18s and adults at risk.
- Expanded GenAI guidance to support ethical use of emerging technologies in research.

- Continued harmonisation of ethical approval processes across disciplines.
- Revised toolkits to introduce Research Integrity and Conduct principles to Undergraduate Students. These are being rolled out across Academic Schools during 2025/26 to improve consistency of framing and messaging across disciplines of the Concordat and its principles in teaching inputs.

Communications and Engagement

Research integrity messaging is coordinated by the RSO and disseminated through multiple channels: staff induction, newsletters, webinars, intranet resources, and School-level meetings. The School Ethics Leads serve as embedded points of contact, enabling both formal and informal engagement with RI matters.

The development of the GenAI Toolkit for Researchers exemplifies our co-creative approach, modelling best practice and fostering ownership of RI principles across the academic community.

Culture, Development and Leadership

Our institutional culture is shaped by strategic initiatives that embed integrity into everyday academic practice. The launch of three academic career pathways has enabled tailored support for researchers across teaching, research, and knowledge exchange roles. These pathways are supported by five-year career planning sessions, which include RI considerations.

The Research & Enterprise Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group (REEDIWG) continues to amplify diverse voices and inform policy development. RI training is embedded within the Researcher Development Programme, with new sessions on data management, AI ethics, and safeguarding.

Leadership on RI is demonstrated through active engagement with the Concordat, strategic use of the UKRIO tool, and the integration of RI into curriculum design, public engagement, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Monitoring and Reporting

The UEC's activity is structured around three thematic pillars:
- Training and Development
- Resources, Guidance and Policy
- Embedding Ethical Practice in Curriculum

Ethical approval submissions are monitored centrally for staff and PGRs, with devolved oversight for taught students. The UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool is now a standing item within UEC meetings, supporting continuous improvement and alignment with national standards.

No allegations of research misconduct were reported in the 2024/25 academic year. Our policies and procedures remain transparent, robust, and fair, with clear mechanisms for reporting and escalation, and the UEC is currently working with HR to better promote and embed the principles of the 2025 Concordat into our practice.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

Please provide an update on any changes made during the period, such as new initiatives, training, developments, also ongoing changes that are still underway. Drawing on Commitment 3 of the Concordat, please note any new or revised policies, practices and procedures to support researchers; training on research ethics and research integrity; training and mentoring opportunities to support the development of researchers' skills throughout their careers.

During the 2024/25 academic year, Bath Spa University has continued to strengthen its research integrity infrastructure and culture through targeted developments in policy, training, and researcher support. These initiatives reflect our commitment to Commitment 3 of the 2025 Concordat: embedding a culture of integrity through governance, best practice, and researcher development.

Strategic Engagement and Concordat Alignment
- BSU contributed to the development of the revised 2025 Concordat to Support Research Integrity via GuildHE, ensuring representation of creative and interdisciplinary research environments.
- The University Ethics Committee (UEC) has adopted the UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool to map institutional practices against the revised Concordat's commitments. This tool is now embedded into UEC operations and informs strategic planning and continuous improvement.

Training and Researcher Development
The Researcher Development Programme was expanded to include:
- A new session on Research Data Management, now part of the core offer.
- Enhanced training on the ethical use of Generative AI (GenAI), aligned with BSU's institutional guidance. Staff and students are directed to the University's dedicated AI in Research guidance for further support.
- Continued delivery of safeguarding and ethics training, with bespoke sessions for researchers working with under-18s and adults at risk.
- BSU participated in the UKRIO pilot of the "Introduction to Research Integrity" online training, with plans to integrate this into our mandatory training provision.
- Broadening of our e-learning offer, with the new roll-out of the Epigeum Research Integrity Refresher course – a shorter, 60 minute training course for staff to use to refresh on RI matters
- During 2025/26, we are also rolling out the Advanced Research Integrity module for Ethics Leads, Reviewers, and Senior Academics overseeing research integrity and ethics processes in their areas.

Resources and Infrastructure

- The Research Integrity SharePoint site was launched, providing a centralised hub for policies, training materials, guidance, and case studies.
- A dedicate public-facing resource on Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in Research was launched - AI in Research – Bath Spa University
- Revised guidance for completing an Ethics Application well, and on Safeguarding (working with Under 18s and Adults at Risk) was launched to positive reception.
- The Public Engagement Toolkit, launched in 2023/24, has received positive feedback from staff engaged in Knowledge Exchange (KE) and public-facing research. It continues to support ethical engagement and is being used as a model for future best practice resources.
- A business case for a new online ethics management system was approved, with procurement underway for implementation in 2025/26. This rollout is being used as a strategic opportunity to deliver refresher training and relaunched Concordat awareness sessions for staff and students. Training on the new system will be packaged with broader inputs on research integrity principles, policy updates, and best practice guidance to ensure holistic engagement with matters of RI amongst our staff and student community.

Support Across Career Stages

- The introduction of three academic career pathways has enabled tailored RI support and clearer expectations for researchers.
- Five-year career planning sessions, supported by strategic research centre leadership, have helped staff articulate RI-related development needs and ambitions.
- The UEC has begun developing pathway-specific RI resources, including guidance for public engagement and knowledge exchange activities.

Culture and Inclusion

- The Research & Enterprise Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group (REEDIWG) continues to review equality impact assessments and advise on inclusive research practices.
- Informal mechanisms for engagement with RI—such as drop-in sessions, peer-led discussions, and embedded ethics leads—have grown in popularity and effectiveness.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

The 2024/25 academic year has seen Bath Spa University make meaningful progress in embedding research integrity across its academic community. Building on the foundations laid in previous years, the University has focused on consolidating its governance structures, expanding training provision, and enhancing researcher support.

Reflections on Progress

- The formalisation of the University Ethics Committee (UEC) within institutional governance has enabled clearer oversight and more strategic planning around research integrity. The committee's adoption of the UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool has provided a structured framework for evaluating progress against the 2025 Concordat, and has helped identify areas for future development.

- The Public Engagement Toolkit, launched in 2023/24, has been well received by staff engaged in Knowledge Exchange (KE) and public-facing research. It has supported ethical engagement and is now being used as a model for developing further best practice resources.

- The expansion of the Researcher Development Programme, particularly the addition of sessions on Research Data Management and Generative AI ethics, has increased engagement and awareness of emerging integrity challenges.

- Informal engagement mechanisms—such as drop-in sessions, peer-led discussions, and the embedded role of School Ethics Leads—have continued to grow in popularity, helping to normalise conversations around research ethics and integrity.

Challenges and Barriers

- Resourcing remains a key challenge, particularly in relation to the operational delivery of ethical approval processes. The administrative burden on staff and reviewers has limited capacity for strategic development and innovation.

- While the business case for a new online ethics management system has been approved, procurement has been deferred to 2025/26 due to resource constraints. This delay has impacted planned streamlining of approval workflows and digital transformation goals.

- The need for consistent and accessible training across all career stages remains a priority. While uptake of new sessions has been strong, ensuring that training reaches senior researchers and those in leadership roles continues to require targeted effort.

Plans for Future Development

- The rollout of the new ethics system in 2025/26 will be used as a strategic opportunity to deliver refresher training and Concordat awareness sessions for staff and students. Training on the system will be integrated with broader inputs on research integrity principles, policy updates, and best practice guidance.

- The UEC will continue to use the UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool to monitor institutional alignment with the new 2025 Concordat and inform future planning.

- Further development of pathway-specific RI resources is planned, particularly for staff engaged in public engagement and KE activities.

- The University will explore opportunities to enhance EDI integration within RI training and policy, building on the work of the REEDIWG and feedback from staff and students.

- A review of RI communications and visibility is planned, including improvements to intranet navigation and external signposting of RI policies and contacts.

In summary, Bath Spa University has made strong progress in embedding research integrity into its culture and systems, with clear plans to address remaining challenges and build on recent successes.

2D. Case study on good practice (optional)

Please describe an anonymised brief, exemplar case study that can be shared as good practice with other organisations. A wide range of case studies are valuable, including small, local implementations. Case studies may also include the impact of implementations or lessons learned.

Summary of Good Practice
Bath Spa University increased researcher confidence in engaging ethically with Artificial Intelligence (AI) through the development and launch of a comprehensive institutional guidance framework: AI in Research – Bath Spa University. This initiative aligns with the 2025 Concordat's measures of success by promoting a culture of integrity, providing clear expectations, and demonstrating tangible impact. The University has made this resource public-facing, to enable transparency of our regulations, processes, and philosophy relating to artificial intelligence in research.

What We Did
The guidance was developed collaboratively by the Research Support Office, the University Ethics Committee, Legal Services, and Library Services, ensuring a holistic approach. It was explicitly framed around the five key principles of research integrity - honesty, care and respect, rigour, accountability, and transparency - as a lens for enabling researchers to critically evaluate and consider their use of AI in their practice. This human-focused approach helped demystify a rapidly evolving and potentially overwhelming technical topic, empowering researchers to make informed, ethical decisions. Key features include:

- A risk-assessment checklist for ethical approval applications.

- Tool-neutral principles adaptable to evolving technologies.

- Integration with existing research integrity frameworks rather than treating AI as an exception.

Impact
The University-wide AI in Research Town Hall launch event for the guidance (with nearly 100 researchers in attendance) showed measurable success. Researchers were surveyed, and by the end of the session, there was a:

- 27% increase in staff feeling "very or fairly confident" about using AI ethically.

- 25% decrease in those feeling "less confident or not at all confident".

– This demonstrates progress against the Concordat's expectations for awareness, training, and institutional support, while also showing the wider impact of creating well-structured opportunities for staff at all levels to engage. Such engagement significantly boosts confidence and understanding of research integrity issues.

Lessons Learned

- Proactive integration of integrity frameworks is essential when addressing emerging technologies and matters of research integrity. Early alignment ensures that ethical considerations are embedded from the outset, reducing risk and strengthening transparency, rigour, and accountability.

- Embedding guidance within core ethics systems guarantees sustainability and consistency, transforming one-off initiatives into long-term cultural change.

- Structured, consultative engagement - through forums and interactive platforms - builds trust, drives uptake, and delivers measurable improvements in researcher confidence and understanding of integrity principles.

- Empowering researcher voice through in-person engagement proved transformative. The Town Hall launch complementing the guidance not only demystified AI and the technical guidance but created a dynamic culture of dialogue around research integrity. By applying integrity principles to AI and using AI as a lens to interrogate broader RI issues - such as consent, data governance, and rigour - the initiative elevated ethical debate across disciplines, with researchers valuing the safe space created to discuss, engage, ask questions, and learn. We believe that this demonstrated care and respect for opinions, discourse, and debate, which in turn supported our wider culture of research integrity.

Next Steps

The guidance will be embedded into ethics training as part of the rollout of the new ethics management system in 2025/26. Ongoing feedback will shape discipline-specific resources, and we plan to apply this model to other emerging research risks. The Town Hall launch proved highly effective, with data showing researchers found it valuable for deepening their understanding of AI. Building on this success, we will create further in-person forums to strengthen dialogue and support a positive research culture.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

Bath Spa University maintains a clear and robust framework for addressing allegations of research misconduct, aligned with the expectations of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and sector best practice.

Policies and Procedures

The University has in place the following key policies and mechanisms:

- Research Misconduct Procedure – outlines the process for reporting, screening, investigating, and resolving allegations of misconduct. It includes provisions for confidentiality, independence, and fairness, and is aligned with

UKRIO guidance.

- Whistleblowing Policy – provides a confidential route for staff and students to raise concerns, including those related to research integrity.

- Bullying and Harassment Policy – ensures that individuals involved in investigations are protected from victimisation or undue pressure.

- Code of Good Practice for Research – sets out expected standards of conduct and integrity across all disciplines.

- A named confidential liaison is available for individuals wishing to raise concerns anonymously or informally, with contact details signposted on the University's website and intranet.

The Academic Misconduct Policy was last reviewed in 2023/24 as part of a wider revision of the Academic Misconduct Policy. Updates included:

- Stronger emphasis on modelling best practice.

- Clearer articulation of expectations and sanctions.

- Enhanced guidance on emerging risks, including the use of Generative AI in research.

In light of the publication of the 2025 Concordat, the University is now undertaking a further review of its misconduct procedures, including the investigation procedure, to ensure full alignment with the updated commitments and definitions. This review will be completed during 2025/26, alongside the rollout of the new ethics management system.

Embedding a Safe and Supportive Environment

Bath Spa University fosters a research environment in which staff, researchers, and students feel confident and supported to raise concerns. This is achieved through:

- Clear signposting of policies and contact points via the Research Integrity SharePoint site and external webpages.

- Integration of research integrity principles into training, induction, and mentoring programmes.

- Informal engagement mechanisms, including School Ethics Leads, drop-in

sessions, and peer-led discussions.

- Use of the UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool to evaluate and improve institutional processes and culture.

The University Ethics Committee (UEC) regularly reviews feedback and emerging themes to ensure that policies remain fit for purpose and responsive to the needs of the academic community.

Lessons Learned

There were no formal investigations into research misconduct during the 2024/25 academic year. However, informal queries and feedback have informed the following improvements:

- Enhanced clarity in ethics guidance around AI use, safeguarding, and data management.

- Improved visibility of reporting mechanisms and contact points.

- Continued emphasis on positive modelling of expectations, rather than punitive framing, to encourage early engagement and open dialogue.

These developments have contributed to a more transparent and supportive culture, where integrity is embedded not only in policy but in everyday practice.

We're proud of the strong culture of integrity within our research community, and the absence of misconduct allegations reflects this commitment. At the same time, we are not complacent; we recognise the importance of ensuring that everyone - staff, students, members of the public, and collaborators - understands the processes and regulations for raising concerns, and feels empowered and able to raise allegations knowing they will be handled with care and respect for all involved.

With the launch of the 2025 Concordat, we are proactively strengthening awareness across the institution and improving our public-facing materials. This includes refreshed training on the Concordat's principles and a review of our procedures for handling misconduct concerns to ensure they are clear, accessible, and aligned with sector best practice.

Our goal is to maintain a transparent and open environment where anyone feels confident to raise concerns appropriately if needed. This approach demonstrates our leadership in fostering a research culture built on integrity, transparency, and continuous improvement - future-ready and aligned with sector expectations.