Template: annual statement on research integrity

If you have any questions about this template, please contact: RIsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk.

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	University of Sheffield
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)	28/11/24
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/research-services/ethics-integrity
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Professor Sue Hartley
	Email address: S.Hartley@sheffield.ac.uk
1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for	Name: Lindsay Unwin

anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Email address: l.v.unwin@sheffield.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

Policies and systems
To govern the diverse research undertaken by the University, the following processes and systems are in place:

Policy / system	Purpose	Maintainer
Code of Ethics	Overarching framework of ethics and conduct	University Secretary's Office
Staff Code of Conduct [internal]	Behavioural expectations of staff, embodying our values	HR
Student Code of Conduct [internal]	Behavioural expectations of students	Student & Academic Services
Definition of research excellence	Emphasises the importance of process and behaviours in producing excellence, as well as inputs and outputs	Research, Partnerships & Innovation

Good Research & Innovation Practices policy	Overarching expectations for all research and innovation activities, including expectations for research data management and clinical trials transparency.	Research, Partnerships & Innovation
Research Ethics Policy	Principles for research involving human participants, personal data and human tissue and approval procedure, with ethical review of projects devolved to schools.	Senate University Research Ethics Committee
Research Ethics online application system	Managing ethical review procedures, including checking mandatory training requirements in information and data protection.	Research, Partnerships & Innovation
Preventing Harm in Research & Innovation (Safeguarding)	Prevention of harm to all individuals involved with or affected by our research and innovation activities	Research, Partnerships & Innovation
Security-sensitive research policy	As part of our Prevent duty, ensures the welfare of researchers in sensitive or extremism-related areas and to protect legitimate research from misinterpretation.	Research, Partnerships & Innovation
Research Governance Procedure [internal]	Ensures research in health and social care is sponsored in line with the UK policy framework for health & social care research, including arrangements for human interventional studies.	Research Governance Sub-Committee
Ethical Policy on the Use of Animals in Research	Commits researchers to meeting or exceeding legal standards for animal husbandry, care and use of animals, where no alternative is available.	Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body

myPublications [internal]	Online repository for managing research outputs, impact activities and professional activities, including synchronisation with ORCiD.	Research, Partnerships & Innovation
White Rose Research Online and ETheses Online	Institutional open access repositories for publications and theses.	Library
DMPOnline	Facilitates the creation and editing of data management plans	Library
Online Research Data at Sheffield (ORDA)	Online repository for managing and sharing research data.	Open Research Advisory Group
Research Storage Service and Secure Data Service	Provides secure and accessible storage of research data, including sensitive or high-compliance data (including ISO.IEC 27001:2022 and NHS Data Protection Security Toolkit certification).	IT Services

Communications and engagement
- Our induction web pages for new staff include practical information and support relevant to researchers, including a Research Staff Induction Pack, which signposts key policies relating to responsible research and research integrity.
- Our central research ethics & integrity webpages, provide details of who is responsible for research integrity within the University and who can be contacted with queries or concerns. In addition, a tool is available to help staff, students or external individuals identify the routes available to them for raising a concern.
- The UREC communicates updates and developments relating to research ethics to a network of Principal Ethics Contacts based in schools, and Faculty representatives on the UREC are encouraged and supported to facilitate discussions and network building within their Faculties. The committee also runs an annual funding programme for staff or PGR students to run small projects promoting research ethics. Four staff-led projects and one PGR student-led project have been funded during 2023/24.
- Our Internal Communications team run regular campaigns to highlight new and existing requirements for research, including staff and student newsletters, internal web pages and events.

Culture, development and leadership

- Since 2020, we have a University-level 'Research Practice Lead' leadership role, focussed on continual research improvement and robustness of research findings, by supporting academic-led initiatives, including research on research ("meta-science") which can inform research quality. The role was created as part of the University's commitment to the UK Reproducibility Network and supports a major Research England Development Fund grant to develop, deliver and evaluate training on open research methods.
- A Steering Board for Research Culture was created in 2021/22 comprising representatives from across the research community. Reporting to Senate Research & Innovation Committee, the board oversees activities to maintain and develop a positive research culture, including the strategic allocation of Research England's Enhancing Research Culture fund.   This has funded central support for open research practices as well as supporting 66 projects from researchers at all levels.
- Mandatory training for all postgraduate research students on research ethics and integrity, delivered at Faculty level, has been in place since 2011 and was updated in 2020/21. This aims to encourage PGRs to critically reflect upon their own actions and behaviours and their interactions with others involved in their research and to heighten PGRs' ethical sensitivity and reasoning.
- We have purchased an online research integrity course aimed at postgraduate research students and post-doctoral researchers, which includes assessment functionality. The University has also purchased an on-line research integrity self-assessment exercise aimed at more established academics. The course and self-assessment exercise are promoted to staff and PGR students across the University in a variety of ways, including via new staff induction packs, and the University's central ethics and integrity webpages.
- The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) provides regular training sessions for those who undertake the review of ethics applications. Other information sessions and online resources, including videos and recorded presentations, are available for particular training needs.
- We have mandatory training for all researchers to ensure that the requirements of GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 are met, supported by a network of 'Information Champions'.
- Other centrally-run workshops for researchers are held on a needs basis, addressing relevant topical research integrity issues including Information Security, Research Data Management, Licensing and Copyright.
- PGR students are supported through a wide variety of sessions provided through the Doctoral Development Programme, and events organised by Centres for Doctoral Training and Doctoral Training Partnerships, with supporting digital materials.
- The University Library provides a range of advisory and guidance services for staff and students, utilising the skills and experience of specialist staff covering specialist systems, scholarly communications, publishing, licensing and copyright. On open research, best practice is shared with and between the

- research community via the regular seminars, the monthly Open Research Conversation events and the Open Research Prize.
- The University subscribes to the UK Research Integrity Office, providing staff and students with access to a range of events and resources to support research ethics and integrity.

Monitoring and reporting
- Data relating to the ethics applications reviewed by each school is gathered annually for consideration by the UREC. In addition, each school is required to submit a short update report on an annual basis, to provide details on how they have implemented the ethics review procedure in the past year, to share good practices, and to highlight concerns or support needs.
- The UREC visits each academic school every five years; this visit includes an audit of ethics documentation relating to reviews conducted in the school and a discussion regarding the ways in which the school raises awareness of the Research Ethics Policy.
- UREC annually audits the ethics arrangements for one or more ESRC-funded projects which have received University ethics approval. The process involves a detailed check of the ethics documentation and a meeting between the researcher(s) and a sub-group of UREC, to ensure that the research is proceeding in line with the terms of the ethics approval and the University's Ethics Policy. Audit reports are then provided to UREC for consideration.
- UREC annually considers a summary report on ethics breach investigations completed in the previous year, in order that any trends or other issues can be identified and appropriate action taken.
- A monitoring and audit process is in place to ensure that the University's policy relating to clinical trials transparency is followed for University-sponsored studies.

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 2023-24, a working group has drafted a replacement for the University's Good Research & Innovation Practices policy, bringing the content up-to-date, covering new areas of research practice and aiming to make the policy's contents more concise, more accessible and useful to researchers. The draft

policy and associated guidance will undergo consultation and be launched in 2024-25.

- Projects awarded from Research England's Enhancing Research Culture fund have improved our research integrity, including:
    - Creation of an Open Research Digital Handbook, led by the Library.
    - Part-funding the Open Research Working Group, including a network of Open Research Champions.
    - A project examining how our Research Ethics Policy can advise on and address issues of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
    - A project producing videos on grant management for new PIs, with perspectives and advice from a variety of researchers and supporters of research.

- In September 2022, the Research Practice Lead and the University Library's Scholarly Communications team organised the inaugural OpenFest event with over 100 colleagues from across the University presenting and discussing best practice in open research. The event ran again in September 2023 and September 2024, both times now in collaboration with colleagues at Sheffield Hallam University, to bring a wider range of perspectives into discussions.

- In 2023 the University re-ran its 'Unleash Your Data and Software' prize, a competition open to all researchers, including postgraduate research students and those in research-related roles, to win up to £5k to improve the FAIR-ness of their data or software. Additionally the Library has run a series of themed outreach events during Open Access week and 'Love Data' week to highlight new developments and the support services available in these areas.

- In collaboration with the academic-led Open Research Working Group, the Library hosted a 'Changing Research Culture' event in July 2024, which focused on practices around openness and transparency with reference to UKRIO's component principles of research integrity.

- In 2022/2023, the Library led a project with Research England funding to develop discipline-specific guidance with seven pilot departments on making their data and software FAIR. This work supports researchers to meet the FAIR principles and has been expanded to include a resource with discipline-specific guidance and a pilot data stewardship service. This guidance has been further developed over 2023/2024 with FAIR Data and Software video Case Studies, guidance and training on working with the FAIR Principles for researchers who work with qualitative and sensitive data, guidance on working with the FAIR Principles in participatory research, guidance on publishing and sharing FAIR research software (as part of a FAIR4RS training programme developed by Research Software Engineering), and open research guidance for Technicians. The Library has also produced a series of Open Access monograph case studies with Sheffield authors reflecting on their experiences with publishing their

longform publications open access, and a series of case studies on creating Open Educational Resources.

● There has been a collaboration between the University Library, Research, Partnerships and Innovation and IT Services to create an Open Research Training Portal which brings together all the Open Research training opportunities from different parts of the University in one place. In 2023/2024, the Library co-delivered a two-part training session and practical workshop on pre-registration.

● Demand for training for those who review ethics applications has been increasing over recent years. An enhanced programme of workshops took place during the 2023/24 academic year to help meet this demand, including three successful half-day in person workshops. This will continue into 2024/25.

● The UREC undertook a consultation with Principal Ethics Contacts in 2023 to understand more about the challenges staff and students face in meeting the requirements of the Research Ethics Policy, and what additional guidance/resources would be most beneficial. The UREC considered this feedback and decided to focus work on two key areas: (1) redevelopment of the central ethics webpages to improve navigability and accessibility; and (2) a review of the guidance on developing participant information sheets and consent forms. Work has been in progress throughout the 2023/24 academic year and updated web pages and guidance were published early in 2024/25.

● Training for Research Governance Leads and others involved in supporting the process of monitoring University-sponsored health and social care studies took place in early in the 2023/24 academic year, following the launch of new guidance in Summer 2023.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

This should include a reflection on the previous year's activity including a review of progress and impact of initiatives if known relating to activities referenced in the previous year's statement. Note any issues that have hindered progress, e.g. resourcing or other issues.

A new Research Integrity Steering Group, reporting to the Senate Research & Innovation Committee, has been established , with a remit to advise on:
● policies and guidance for research integrity
● the need for awareness-raising, training and support
● good practice and opportunities to enhance research integrity
● reviewing learning and follow-up actions from misconduct investigations

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- reviewing accordance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity

We have agreed three major areas for the group to focus on in 2024-25:
- Taking the temperature: proposing quantitative and qualitative indicators of research integrity across the University, to give a broader picture of our research practice, informed by external developments including the UK Committee on Research Integrity's report on indicators and requirements for REF 2029's People, Culture & Environment section.
- Training and development for research integrity: reviewing our current position across all research stages, including gathering data on current uptake and whether a more formal programme for experienced researchers should be introduced.
- Raising concerns: exploring mechanisms to encourage researchers to raise and discuss research integrity issues they observe. Although in part motivated by the low numbers of research misconduct allegations we receive, we are also interested in identifying more instances of other questionable research practice and 'near-misses'.

- An Artificial Intelligence Task & Finish Group has been set up, to examine the opportunities, challenges and risks of how generative AI may be used in research and to provide supportive guidance for researchers to responsibly make use of these technologies.

- Work to further enhance training provision for those who carry out ethical review will be taking place during 2024/25, including reviewing how online ethical review workshops are run, and introducing reporting mechanisms to help schools monitor and improve training compliance.

- In September 2024 the University will launch the new Office for Open and Research and Scholarship. Led by the Library, the Office for Open Research and Scholarship is a new cross-University partnership between the academic Research Practice Lead, the academic-led Open Research Working Group, and colleagues in Research Partnerships and Innovation, and Research IT. Building on the University's commitment to open research in the University statement on Open Research, the creation of the Office affirms the high priority Sheffield places on open research and scholarship and the University's commitment to transforming practices. The Office will lead on key open research initiatives aligned with the new Research Culture Position Paper and Action Plan (2023-2029), including establishing a Data Steward Network and a Sheffield Editors and Publishers Network (for academic colleagues with editorial and publishing roles), and supporting the academic-led Open Research Champions network. Working in liaison with the University's five Faculties, the Office will strategically enhance and develop the University's support, guidance, policy, and platforms for open research and scholarship.

- Following the launch of the Staff Code of Conduct in October 2022 departments engaged staff in discussions around culture and behavioural expectations (including research culture, where relevant). Current work in this area includes a review of the Dignity at Work toolkit and continued development of our internal policies, including a specific Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct policy. This work is aligned with the increasing expectation across the sector from funding and regulatory bodies to address unacceptable behaviours within research cultures, and more widely, amongst the student population. Other relevant work includes further awareness raising of the Report + Support service. A communications campaign was launched in October 2023, developed by Student Communications and the Report + Support Oversight Group. This aimed to address barriers to reporting unacceptable behaviours, enabling the University to offer enhanced support to individuals and improve our workplace culture. The campaign included images for social media, web pages and screens around campus to raise awareness of the Report + Support platform for staff and students. Targeted additional messages were also developed for staff, for example, what happens once a complaint has been made, and how Report + Support is relevant for all staff, including Principal Investigators.

- Work has been underway during the 2023/24 academic year to review the University's partnership with Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and to agree a way forward for the jointly funded clinical research office. Discussions have encompassed research governance and sponsorship and have highlighted some limitations to the University's current arrangements. An internal audit of the University's research governance arrangements for health and social care has identified similar issues. As a result, proposals are due to be put forward to the University's leadership to seek support for additional funding to enable a truly joint research office to be set up with the Trust, with appropriate governance arrangements to support the University's ambitions in health and social care research going forward.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

Please provide:

- a brief summary of relevant organisation policies/ processes (e.g. research misconduct procedure, whistle-blowing policy, bullying/harassment policy; appointment of a third party to act as confidential liaison for persons wishing to raise concerns) and brief information on the periodic review of research misconduct processes (e.g. date of last review; any major changes during the period under review; date when processes will next be reviewed).

- information on how the organisation creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct (e.g. code of practice for research, whistle-blowing, research misconduct procedure, informal liaison process, website signposting for reporting systems, training, mentoring, reflection and evaluation of policies, practices and procedures).

- anonymised key lessons learned from any investigations into allegations of misconduct which either identified opportunities for improvements in the organisation's investigation procedure and/or related policies / processes/ culture or which showed that they were working well.

- The University's Good Research & Innovation Practices policy sets out the principles governing all research and innovation activities at the University as well as expectations concerning good practices in specific research and/or innovation activities (e.g. authorship; collaboration). The policy also includes information about what constitutes unacceptable research and innovation practices.

- The University has an 'Investigating and Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct Policy and Procedure' which applies to allegations of research misconduct against staff members.

- A Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy and the Investigating and Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct Policy advise those who report suspicions of potential research misconduct in line with the relevant policy, that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment by the University and that all associated complaints of victimisation of an individual will be treated seriously and may provide grounds for disciplinary or other appropriate action.

- The University's Staff Code of Conduct emphasises the importance of a shared responsibility towards building a supportive and inclusive community, in which all staff are treated with respect, and includes an expectation that staff report activities which are in breach of University regulations and challenge inappropriate behaviour. An updated Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct policy was developed throughout the academic year 2023/24 in collaboration with trade unions and other stakeholders. This will operate alongside the Staff Code of Conduct, and will be launched and embedded within the 2024/25 academic year.

- Following audit recommendations, the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy has been updated in 2024 and is expected to be signed off and launched early in the 2024/25 academic session. Steps to increase awareness of this policy and other routes to raising concerns (including the Report + Support platform) are being taken, including the addition of new questions in the bi-annual staff survey which is open to all staff, and regular features in all-staff communications.

- The Research Misconduct policy was reviewed and updated in 2022 in earlier work as part of the ongoing focus on clarifying both behavioural expectations and routes to raise concerns in the workplace. This focus continues in the current bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct work which supports and underpins a positive research culture.

- The University's central ethics and integrity web pages provide details of a first point of contact for receiving enquiries on matters concerning good research, along with an online tool to help staff or students identify the routes available to them for raising a concern.

- An annual review of the University's arrangements for meeting the requirements of the Concordat is undertaken by the University's Senate Research and Innovation Committee, supported by Research, Partnerships & Innovation, as part of the preparation of this annual Statement for the University's Council.

3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken

Please complete the table on the number of **formal investigations completed during the period under review** (including investigations which completed during this period but started in a previous academic year). Information from ongoing investigations should not be submitted.

An organisation's procedure may include an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. These allegations should be included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column.

Type of allegation	Number of allegations			
	Number of allegations reported to the organisation	Number of formal investigations	Number upheld in part after formal investigation	Number upheld in full after formal investigation
Fabrication				
Falsification	1			
Plagiarism				
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations				
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)	1	1		1
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)	1	1		1
Other				
Total:	**3**	**2**	**0**	**2**

*If you listed any allegations under the 'Other' category, please give a brief, high-level summary of their type here. Do not give any identifying or confidential information when responding.