

Compliance with ‘The Concordat to Support Research Integrity’

Annual assurance statement to Research England

Background

- 1 The requirement for an annual assurance statement was introduced as a condition of HEFCE grant from 2013-14, for institutions eligible to receive HEFCE funding for research. This follows the consultation ‘Research integrity concordat: Consultation on proposed implementation from 2013-14’ (HEFCE 2012/32), the outcomes of which are available through the [Research England website](#). The funding agreements for 2013-14 therefore state:
- 2 ‘The institution is required to comply with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity published by Universities UK (UUK) in July 2012 [...] Institutions in receipt of research grant from the Council are also required to provide assurance of their compliance with the Concordat through the annual assurance return to the Council and following any guidance that the Council may provide. Institutions will be asked to confirm their compliance with the Concordat in the annual assurance statement, which will be subject to routine audit. Institutions will not be required to provide additional evidence in the assurance return. We will additionally monitor the implementation of the concordat through the information shared by other funders at the integrity working group (see paragraph 13).’
- 3 In line with statutory requirements, the University is now asked to confirm its compliance with the Concordat in the annual assurance statement to Research England, who took over the Research and Knowledge Exchange functions of HEFCE from April 2018.
- 4 A report on compliance by Buckinghamshire New University is attached for consideration.

Risk

- 5 As set out in section 1 above, compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity is a condition of Research England grant from 2013-14, for institutions eligible to receive Research England funding for research.
- 6 If the University does not include a statement of compliance in its annual assurance statement, it will risk the payment of Research England grant in 2019/20.

Recommendation

- 7 That Council consider the compliance report attached for approval and inclusion in the Research England annual assurance statement

Report on compliance of Buckinghamshire New University with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity

- 1 The University is committed to upholding the principles described in the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*.
 - Maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research
 - Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards
 - 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
 - Using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise
 - Working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing process regularly and openly.

Maintaining the highest standards of research integrity

- 2 In line with the Concordat, employees at the University are expected to conduct research according to the highest standards of rigour and integrity. These draw on the core elements of honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, care and respect.
- 3 To enable researchers to understand the expected standards required of researchers, the University has a Code of Good Research Practice, revised in 2018. This includes a research integrity checklist which lists key points of good practice throughout all stages of a research project and is applicable to all subject areas.

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

- 4 In addition to the [Code of Good Research Practice](#), the University has a number of policies and procedures which support the University's commitment to Research Integrity:
 - [Intellectual Property – Policy and Procedures](#)
 - [Data Protection Policy \(updated 2018\)](#)
 - [Research Ethics Policy \(revised 2018\)](#)
 - [Open Access Policy](#)
 - [Raising issues of concern \(Whistleblowing\) Policy](#)
 - [Health and Safety Policy](#)

Embedding a culture of Research Integrity

- 5 An ethics framework has been in place in the University since 2013.

- A University Research Ethics Panel utilises a University-wide ethics submission form to review all ethics submissions from employees and research students and to receive any other applications referred by sub-committees.
 - All schools are required to establish sub-committees to review ethics submissions for projects undertaken by undergraduate and taught postgraduate students.
 - All school ethics sub-committees provide standardised annual reports to the University Research Ethics Panel
- 6 A procedure for monitoring and audit of ethics sub-committees is in place.
 - 7 External ethics proposals submitted by employees of Bucks (e.g. to NHS Ethics Committees) are reported to the University Research Ethics Panel.
 - 8 All proposals from external researchers seeking access to Bucks employees/students are reviewed and recorded through the University Research Ethics Panel ensuring that the appropriate approvals have been given.
 - 9 An 'Ethics' organisation is available in Blackboard that is accessible by all staff and students and contains various resources, model templates and meeting dates.
 - 10 The University Research Ethics Panel meets monthly to ensure timely consideration of applications.
 - 11 The membership of the University Research Ethics Panel is large with members expected to attend a minimum of 4 meetings per year. The large membership helps to promulgate good practice, ensure parity across the University and provide expertise from a range of disciplines.
 - 12 A requirement has been introduced for University Research Ethics Panel and Ethics Sub-Committee members to receive training in ethics issues. This entails completing online modules in 'Good Research Practice' and 'Working with human subjects' followed up by a meeting to discuss the content with other members.
 - 13 A further development session for academics and research students took place at the annual staff development conference in September 2017. The Ethics Panel chair led a workshop to discuss ethical considerations around student practice-based research.
 - 14 All research students receive details of ethical processes at Bucks at induction along with signposting for further training and resources.
 - 15 Observers to Panel meetings are welcome, both with regard to transparency and as a development opportunity.
 - 16 In 2016, UCFB, a partner college of Bucks, set up their own sub-committee for ethical review of undergraduate research and the Lead has joined the University Research Ethics Panel.
 - 17 The University has made a commitment to supporting researcher development through a subscription to the [Vitae Researcher Development Framework Planner](#) to assist researchers in their professional development and career planning. This also enables the University to signpost development resources to researchers.
 - 18 Ethical considerations have been embedded in course validation and re-validation procedures.

- 19 Guidance is now available for obtaining informed consent to enable future re-use of data in line with the move towards open access data sharing.
- 20 Guidance and model documentation regarding consent have been updated to support researcher compliance with the General Data Protection legislation.
- 21 Since 2017, Bucks has been a member of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO). Ethics panel members have attended UKRIO annual conferences to support their development.
- 22 In 2018, Bucks conducted its first UKRIO institutional self-assessment. Review indicated good standards in most areas with minor actions identified. Dissemination specifically for new staff was highlighted as an area for improvement. From 18-19, it is planned to implement an introduction to ethics and research integrity within the staff induction programme. As Bucks is undergoing a period of structural change including introduction of a new Academic Framework, culture and development for research integrity will be re-examined next year.

Research Misconduct

- 23 A procedure for handling allegations of research misconduct is outlined in the Code of Good Research Practice and is linked to the University's disciplinary procedures.
- 24 In line with the Concordat, the University is committed to using transparent processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct if they should arise.
- 25 The University has a student complaints policy and set of procedures through which students are able to raise any issues or concerns.
- 26 There have been no formal investigations of staff research misconduct at the University in the 2017/18 academic year.

Commitment to Strengthening Research Integrity

- 27 The steps taken so far have supported and strengthened research integrity at the University. The University is committed to reviewing progress regularly and transparently and to ensuring that decisions are communicated effectively.
- 28 The Research and Enterprise Committee will continue to review this commitment by taking the following actions:
 - Reviewing on a regular basis the number of applications for ethical approval considered by the University Research Ethics Panel and the Ethics Sub-Committees.
 - Ensuring full coverage in Sub-Committee provision in light of changes in school structure.
 - Considering actions to embed the principles of the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* in the research activities conducted at the University.
 - Ensuring that all members of the University Research Ethics Panel and its Sub-Committees receive training on issues relating to good research practice and working with human participants.

- Ensuring that all new academic staff receive information regarding research integrity, ethical processes and signposting for further resources.
- Reviewing processes for allegations of research misconduct to ensure they are appropriate to the needs of the University.
- Receiving reports of any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been conducted.