

TEESSIDE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH GOVERNANCE

ANNUAL STATEMENT ON ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING RESEARCH INTEGRITY

OCTOBER 2016 FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2015-16

Approved by University Academic Board – 2 November 2015

Institutional context of this statement

Research integrity activity is co-ordinated by the Graduate Research School (GRS) and the University Research Ethics and Integrity Committee (UREIC). The Research Governance & Training Manager in GRS is Secretary to UREIC and, in tandem with Chair of UREIC, is responsible for leading the University's work in research integrity assurance.

The terms of reference of UREIC are:

- (a) To oversee the research ethics and research integrity training provided by the University.
- (b) To consider issues relating to research ethics and integrity, including the ethical propriety and legal compliance of research projects, as referred to it by RPC, URDSC, RESCs of Schools, or individual staff or students.
- (c) To review, on a regular basis, the University's policies, procedures and guidelines relating to research ethics, research conduct and research integrity.
- (d) To report annually to the Research Policy Committee.
- (e) To provide information and advice to researchers in the University on issues relating to research ethics.
- (f) To consult internally/externally as necessary.

UREIC met four times over the 2015-16 academic year. The Committee's agenda covered all aspects of research ethics review done by School RECs; and a specific section of each meeting agenda devoted specifically to strategy and policy on research integrity in all its aspects.

For 2015-16, the Committee made significant progress in implementing aspects of research integrity assurance agreed in previous academic years and referred to in the Annual Statement for 2014-15.

Supporting and strengthening research integrity: strategy

The *Framework and Code of Practice for Ensuring Research Integrity* in its current form has been in place since academic year 2012-13. A list of the relevant documents applicable to research ethics and integrity is given at the back of this statement.

In 2014-15, appropriate staff for a School-based research integrity role were identified, independent of the School RECs, and it was agreed that the role be called *Research Integrity Liaison Officer*. Staff identified for this role are now ex-officio members of UREIC and attend UREIC meetings alongside REC Chairs and other University staff with duties associated with ethics, integrity, and compliance.

Due to a significant re-structuring of School-based management and a brand new Research & Innovation Strategy during 2015-16, the committee noted at the meeting of May 2016 that it would be important to **revisit all aspects of its work on research integrity in order to determine whether previously agreed processes were appropriate**. This would take place early in 2016-17.

Supporting and strengthening research integrity: guidance, support, training

Formal training is led by the Research Governance & Training Manager. All materials used are bespoke and based on international standards and principles. Advice and guidance is also provided frequently to individual members of staff and students by appointment with the Research Governance & Training Manager.

A significant **development during 2015-16** was the agreement and approval of a new Ethical Funding and Sponsorship Policy, accompanied by an annual briefing to be used with senior management. The process of the briefing also permits for current students and staff to put forward issues for consideration by the UREIC related to the ethics of organisations from whom the University may receive research funding or sponsorship.

Addressing research misconduct

The University has two documents relating specifically to reporting and investigation of allegations of research misconduct. The *Framework and Code of Practice for Ensuring Research Integrity* is an institution-wide document setting out principles, standards, and responsibilities for research integrity, as well as definitions of research misconduct and procedures for allegations and investigations. In addition, the *Regulations Relating to Research Misconduct on Research Degrees* sets out definitions and procedures applied specifically to research degree programmes, including stages of reporting by supervisors, examiners, or other parties. The definitions of misconduct are the same in both

documents, with extended definitions where misconduct applies in examination situations that do not apply to other students or to staff.

In 2014-15, significant revision was made to the section of the *Framework* related to allegations of research misconduct against staff. Detailed screening procedures for allegations were created and clear specifications about the composition of investigation panels and criteria for referring decision making to the *Disciplinary Policy* and associated procedures following screening were added. The revised section of the *Framework* was approved by the University's Academic Board on 8-July-2015. **During 2015-16, the new procedures relating to staff were discussed in consultation with the trade unions and, following minor amendment, were fully in place by the end of the academic year.** The *Regulations relating to Research Misconduct in Advanced Independent Work (AIW) on Professional Doctorate Programmes* were also revised and approved.

Instances, allegations and investigations of research misconduct

The responsibility for receiving of research misconduct allegations and for convening screening processes or formal investigations lies with the Graduate Research School, with monitoring responsibilities by UREIC. Reporting of misconduct on research components of professional doctorates and taught postgraduate courses is collated retrospectively annually by OSCAR (Office of Student Complaints, Appeals and Regulations). Currently, systems are being developed to allow for finer granularity in the way this data is collected for use in future reporting.

One formal allegation was received against a former member of staff. Upon consultation between the Research Governance Manager and the Senior Solicitor, it was agreed that no research governance policies had been breached but there were possible legal ramifications related to the allegation. A response to the allegation was made according to legal norms by the Department of Legal & Governance.

No formal allegations were received or investigations undertaken against students in 2015-16.

Summary of relevant research integrity documentation

Policy, Procedures and Guidelines for Research Ethics

<http://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/DocRepo/Research/ethics.pdf>

Framework and Code of Practice for Ensuring Research Integrity

<http://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/docrepo/research/code%20of%20practice1.pdf>

Regulations Relating to Research Misconduct on Research Degrees

<http://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=Student%20Regulations&name=Research%20Regulations>

Guidance on Data Protection in Research Contexts

<http://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/docrepo/research/Guidance%20on%20data%20in%20research%20contexts.pdf>