TEESSIDE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH GOVERNANCE

ANNUAL STATEMENT ON ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING RESEARCH INTEGRITY

ACADEMIC YEAR 2016-17

Approved by University Academic Board 18-10-2017

Institutional context of this statement

Research integrity activity is co-ordinated by Research and Innovation Services (RIS) and the University Research Ethics and Integrity Committee (UREIC). Research Governance functions within RIS are overseen by the Governance Manager who is also 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 RIC, PRAB, 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 and Innovation 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 2016-17 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.

<u>Supporting and strengthening research integrity: strategy and implications of changes to institutional context</u>

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 an academic unit based research integrity role were identified, independent of the School RECs, and it was agreed that the role be called *Research Integrity Liaison Officer* (RILO) and be attached to the Research Institutes. Staff identified for this role were agreed as ex-officio members of UREIC and attended UREIC meetings alongside School REC Chairs and other University staff with duties associated with ethics, integrity, and compliance. These staff continued to attend UREIC meetings throughout 2016-17, even pending the changes discussed below and whilst other arrangements were discussed.

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.

The Committee discussed the implications of the institutional re-structure as a standing item throughout 2016-17. The previous Graduate Research School, responsible for support of UREIC, was disestablished part-way through the academic year and a new Research and Innovation Services department established, although there is continuity between the Governance function within one of the three sub-departments and previous responsibilities in the previous Graduate Research School. The sub-department continues to support UREIC, research governance, ethics and integrity across the University. Research integrity assurance processes –especially the identified Research Integrity Liaison Officers - and the way that the Committee had previously that liaison roles should function - were affected by the institutional changes in two major ways:

> 1) Each of the RILOs was linked with a Research Institute rather than a School and was explicitly kept separate from existing School REC membership –particularly the Chair – in order to properly define the role and its distinctiveness from standard ethics review processes. Previously, the Research Institutes were the best institutional structure for doing this, since they situated the RILO closely within the research environments covered by the Institutes and, thereby, the University as a whole. From 2016-17, the Research Institutes were no longer a central pillar in the University's research strategy and the functions previously assigned to Institutes were moved back into Schools with a link to the senior management structure in each School, particularly the Associate Dean (Research & Innovation) and Principal Lecturer

(Research & Innovation). The Committee agreed that the RILO role should move into a School rather than being linked with a Research Institute but implementing this change was affected by (2) below.

2) During 2016-17 a number of further major changes to the existing School structure took place, during the latter part of the academic year, which included the disestablishment of one School and changes to three others as a result. Only one School remained as previously in terms of staffing, students and disciplines. The movement of staff between Schools and confirmation of senior management structures in each, was only confirmed in the latter half of the academic year. The Committee was unable to progress with changes to RILO roles in Schools as a result as most of the confirmation took place after the final meeting of UREIC in May 2017.

As a result of the two sets of issues above, the last meeting of the Committee in May of 2017 was only able to agree tentatively the way forward with further implementation of research integrity assurance pending full establishment of new School structure and confirmation of senior management roles. Of the existing RILOs on the Committee, only one could remain for 2017-18 given the changes. Therefore, the Committee agreed that in the first part of 2017-18, the Chair and Secretary of UREIC – in tandem with RIS- would establish the new liaison functions of the RILOs with the appropriate senior management in each of the Schools, two of which were now significantly different in terms of staff composition and discipline coverage. Once agreed, new RILO appointments would be made for the remaining places on the Committee. Briefing events would be held with new RILOs once appointed.

Supporting and strengthening research integrity: guidance, support, training

Formal training is led by the Governance Manager in RIS. 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. All new PGR students attend a mandatory 'Research Values and Standards' session, which is also open to other students and staff. This runs three times a year in addition to which two levels of training are provided centrally for research ethics, which run at least three times a year. Bespoke training is also provided for research ethics committee members.

New policy

A significant new **policy development during 2016-17** was the agreement and approval of a process for handling Security-Sensitive Research. Research proposals received by School RECs which involve security-sensitivity are referred as standard to UREIC for review and appropriate legal advice sought for each project. In 2017-18, the Committee will provide SRECs with definitional guidance on what kind of projects should be referred in liaison with School RECs

All aspect of consent and data-related procedures are currently under review for the purposes of ensuring compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation from May 2019.

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.

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 Director of Research and Innovation Services 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).

One complaint against a member of staff is currently under investigation.

An allegation of Stage One (first offence) research misconduct against a research student was made during 2016-17 but was not pursued further after a stage one investigation was held

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