Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2023/24

Section 1: Key contact information

1A	Name of organisation	The University of Manchester
1B	Type of organisation	Higher Education
1C	Date statement approved by governing body	
1D	Web address of research integrity page	Research governance, ethics and integrity at The University of Manchester
1E	Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Professor Soren Holm Soren.Holm@manchester.ac.uk
1F	First point of contact for information about research integrity	April Lockyer April.lockyer@manchester.ac.uk

Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture

2A. Description of current systems and culture

- **Governance**

The Vice President for Research provides strategic leadership for the University's research activities and is supported by the Research Strategy Group (RSG) and Research Operations Group (ROG) which include the Associate Deans for Research representing each Faculty.

The University's Research Compliance Committee (RCC), chaired by the Vice President for Social Responsibility, is responsible for advising on policies and procedures that promote research integrity and good research conduct. RCC reports annually to the Board of Governors, which includes this statement of research integrity for approval.

The University has a Research Integrity Promotion Group (RIPG) that includes senior representation from all three faculties. RIPG is responsible for maintaining and delivering on the University's Research Integrity Promotion Plan.

The University has a Research Ethics Oversight Committee, chaired by the Academic Director for Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity, that sets ethical standards for research involving human participants including the development of policy and guidelines regarding best practice in this area.

- **Policies and Systems**

The University's standards of research integrity are set out in its Code of Good Research Conduct (Code of GRC). The Code of GRC is supported by policies and procedures that ensure the University complies with regulations and legislation that govern research. This includes the following policies:

- Code of Practice for Investigating Concerns about the Conduct of Research
- Policy on the Ethical Involvement of Human Participants in Research
- Policy on the use of Animals in Research and Teaching Activities
- Policy on Compliance with the Human Tissue Act
- Policy for Compliance with The Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations 2004 and subsequent amendments (Investigational Medicinal Products) and other Clinical Research
- Policy for compliance with the UK Medical Devices Regulations 2002 (UK MDR 2002) clinical investigation of medical devices
- Statement of Research Contributions
- Policy on Responsible International Research Collaborations

The University has robust systems in place to ensure the highest standards of ethical conduct of research involving human participants. Research that requires NHS ethical review and University sponsor oversight undergoes a sponsor review that ensures that the research aligns with the University's ethical principles and policies particularly in relation to data protection.

All other research involving human participants undergoes ethical screening commensurate with its level of risk. Low to medium risk research is either screened via a school-based process for student research or our central proportionate review process for staff projects. All high-risk projects are reviewed by one of our University Research Ethics Committees (UREC). We have four URECs that are all centrally based to ensure independence and consistency. The UREC chairs are members of Research Ethics Oversight Committee.

All research involving animals is required to undergo ethical review regardless of whether the research is regulated. The University holds a position that research conducted outside of the University of Manchester must be conducted to the equivalent ethical standards.

- **Communications and Engagement**

Guidance and information about good research practice is provided on the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity website with links to the Office for Open Research.

Initiatives to support engagement with research integrity are coordinated via the University's Research Integrity Promotion Group.

In depth guidance for researchers on how to conduct their research ethically is provided in our online [digital handbooks](#).

- **Training and Development**

Research Integrity training is mandatory for all research active staff and PGR and must be undertaken every three years. The online research integrity training is provided by Epigeum. Early career researchers and PGR are required to do the full course of 8 modules; Good Research Conduct, Irresponsible Research Practices, Planning Your Research, Managing and Recording Your Research, Data Selection, Analysis and Presentation, Scholarly Publication, Professional Responsibilities, and Communication, Social Responsibility and Impact. Five supplementary modules are encouraged to be taken where they are relevant to the research being carried out; Conflicts of Interest, Research Involving Human Participants, The Care and Use of Animals in Research, Intellectual Property and Export Controls.

Staff involved in research must complete the following 3 modules: Good Research Conduct, Irresponsible Research Practices and Scholarly Publication, although all modules are available and encouraged to be taken.

Completion of the research integrity training is monitored by the faculties who receive 6-monthly reports from the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team.

All Schools within the University organise conference/seminar series for their PGR and early career researchers providing opportunities for them to present their research. Early career researchers are mentored by experienced academics and Schools are extending their mentoring schemes to mid-career researchers.

The '[Open Research Fellowship Programme](#)', delivered by the [Office for Open Research](#), provides an opportunity for staff to contribute to developing diverse elements of open research. Successful Fellows receive a buyout of one day a week for up to a year to focus on projects that aim to define, investigate, or facilitate open research practices in their subject area or institutionally. Fellows become part of a network of advocates, promoting open research within their departments and fostering a community of practice. The first seven Fellows were appointed in October 2023. Drawn from across all three faculties, these Fellows are developing a range of open research projects including strengthening the FAIR publication of data relating to chemical analysis; creating an online guide for using new open-source software to analyse DNA sequence data processing; and enabling plain English summaries for health research grants and theses. The Fellows have also worked to develop high-quality training and provide expert input to the [Open Research Skills Training Programme](#) and an Open Research Skills Framework. This Framework will help develop open research skills across the University and provide researchers with signposting to policy and compliance requirements, systems and tools, services, and support from across the University and wider sector.

- **Leadership and Culture**

As a member of the N8 Research Culture and Environment Group and emerging sector groups (e.g. Wellcome Institutional Research Culture Community) the University is involved in ideas and best practice sharing and collaborative opportunities.

The Vice President for Research provides strategic leadership for the University's research activities and is supported by the Research Strategy Team based in the Directorate of Research and Business Engagement which includes a recently appointed Research Culture and Assessment Manager.

Priority 3 of the University's research strategy is "an open and responsible research environment" in which the University commits to "complete our strategic investment in transforming our research environment to support open research and a modernised responsible research framework for how we organise, resource, conduct and share our research to meet the highest standards of conduct and integrity; environmental sustainability; equality, diversity and inclusion; and positive economic and social impact."

The Vice President for Social Responsibility is a member of RSG and is responsible for setting the standards of good research conduct supported by the Academic Director for Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity and the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team based in the Directorate of Research and Business Engagement.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

- **Policies and Systems**

- Policy on Responsible International Research Collaborations

This new policy aims to ensure that our researchers are risk aware and empowered to make informed decisions when engaging in international partnerships.

The University has developed and implemented a Research Risk Profiler designed to address the risks and compliance considerations of individual research projects, particularly in an international context. The tool helps researchers identify the key risks of their research that may require further investigation and signpost them to the advice and processes that will support them given the outline risk profile.

- Policy for compliance with the UK Medical Devices Regulations 2002 (UK MDR 2002) clinical investigation of medical devices

This new policy outlines the responsibilities of the University where it is the sponsor of a clinical investigation of a medical device led by its staff or the manufacturer of the medical device. The policy is underpinned by separate procedures outlined as SOPs, which provide

the structure which should be applied when undertaking and managing such clinical investigations.

- Development of a [Framework for Responsible Research and Innovation](#)

The RRI Framework encapsulates the expectations and activities that support responsible research and innovation at The University of Manchester. It was developed to support Priority 3 of the University's Strategic Plan for Research and Discovery and is intended to strengthen the coordination between the different agendas that support responsible research and innovation within the University. It builds on University initiatives to advance and pilot RRI in order to develop effective and integrated support mechanisms to assist researchers to conduct their research responsibly.

- Review of policies and processes to ensure they align with a positive research culture that encourages research integrity

We utilised some Enhancing Research Culture (UKRI) funding to employ a former PhD student to undertake a review of the University's Statutes, Ordinances and General Regulations and its policies and procedures in order to ensure they support and promote a positive research culture. The European SOPs4RI toolkit was used to form the criteria for the audit as follows:

1. Does the University take steps to nurture a supportive environment?
2. Are competition, publication pressure and detrimental power imbalances explicitly addressed and supported by appropriate processes.?
3. Are conflicts explicitly addressed and supported by appropriate processes?
4. Are fair, transparent and responsible policies to assess, appoint and promote researchers in place?
5. Are diversity and inclusion actively promoted?
6. Are collegiality, openness, reflection, and responsibility encouraged within the research environment?

The audit resulted in a report presented to the Vice President for Research and Research Strategy Group. Recommendations to change policies and processes have been made and are being implemented.

- Major review of ethical review processes

This year we conducted a major review of our ethical review processes with consultation across the University. This resulted in the rebuilding of our online Ethical Review Manager, focusing on making the interface as user friendly as possible (taking specific account of the diverse needs of our community). Feedback has been very positive thus far and it has reduced the burden on the URECs as well as improved the overall experience for applicants.

The University's [Ethics Decision Tool](#), which enables a researcher to determine the level of ethical scrutiny required for their project, has also been updated this year in order to

make it more accessible by simplifying the language used, also additional definitions of key terms have been added together with new paths for human tissue studies, social media research and international collaborations.

- **Communications and Engagement**

A priority for investment by the University using Research England additional funds for Enhancing Research Culture was enhancing collaboration and team recognition. To that end the University implemented the following projects:

- **Discipline Hopping Fund**: Aimed to increase the inter- and multi-disciplinary capabilities of the researcher community by providing funding for short placements whereby early career researchers, including postdoctoral researchers, can acquire skills and knowledge beyond their home discipline.

- **Team research training and development activities:** To promote and support team research and an interdisciplinary research culture. Initial pilot with the Pankhurst Institute and Manchester BRC communities, and now open across all faculties. The first community event was held in May 2024.

- **Research Staff Collaboration and Dissemination Fund:** Top up funds to extend the impact of two existing funding streams for research staff to disseminate their research or to establish a collaborative research project with a cross disciplinary partner(s). Funds are allocated proportionally per faculty.

- **Training and Development**

A priority for investment by the University using Research England additional funds for Enhancing Research Culture was developing research leadership across all career stages. To that end the University implemented the following projects:

- **PGR incentive for timely submission:** Three-month stipend awards allocated evenly across Faculties to drive positive behaviour and support PGRs' careers.

- **Prosper Project implementation:** Innovative training developed and delivered by a dedicated post in the Researcher Development Team to build capabilities and opportunities for successful academic and industrial career paths, and to enhance mobility between these pathways.

- **Development internships:** Internships for PGRs to work on a range of projects that will enhance our Researcher Development offer, while also providing a development opportunity for PGRs and improving their employability.

- **An integrated and amplified approach to diversify our early career researcher community and develop an equitable and inclusive research leadership pathway:** Diversify early career researcher community and develop research leadership

pathway through evaluation of pilot initiatives mapped against critical early career researcher stages:

- Pre-PhD three-month research placements for under-represented late-stage undergraduates, including support workshops.

- 6-month post- PhD funding for researchers from under-represented groups.

- **'Leading Researchers' programme:** An 8-month collaborative interdisciplinary leadership development programme (commissioned from [64 Million Artists](#)) to enable mid-career and senior academics to raise their research ambitions and achieve their goals. Cohort 2 started in April 2024, with participants nominated by Heads of School.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

- **Policies and Systems**

- There will be a comprehensive review of the University's Code of Good Research Conduct and Code of Practice for Investigating Concerns about the Conduct of Research.

- The University's Publication Policy will be reviewed and updated.

- The University's Policy on the Use of Animals in Research will be reviewed and updated.

- In an effort to improve engagement with research participants and access to University research projects, we will undertake a consultation exercise to gain stakeholder feedback on our Participant Information Sheet template.

- We will work towards the implementation of Data Safe Haven version 2 and improved storage for our research data

- We will develop an in-house research integrity refresher for experienced staff who have already undertaken the comprehensive Epigeum course.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

The University has the following processes for handling allegations of misconduct:

[Code of Practice for Investigating Concerns about the Conduct of Research](#)
[Whistleblowing (Public Interest Disclosure) Policy and Procedure](#)
[Dignity at Work and Study Policy](#)

The University's Code of Practice for Investigating Concerns about the Conduct of Research provides the University's definition of research misconduct which aligns with the UUK definition outlined in its Concordat to Support Research Integrity. This process is currently under review.

Key lessons learned from recent research misconduct cases include:

- Publications:
    - Promotion of the publication policy to ensure researchers know what is expected of them, including guidance for PGR students on what they can publish from their PhD (and with whom).
    - Clearer guidelines required for the use of images in publications, including how to cite repeated use of images.
    - Update Publications Policy to include the requirement for authorship to be decided at an early stage of a project and documented. The decision should be revisited and updated upon agreement when changes take place.
- Clear understanding is needed by researchers of what their involvement in a research project means in terms of ownership of ideas, and who can take the work forward should a collaboration end.
- Clarification required for exiting staff members on what they can take, e.g. data, and under what conditions they can publish this data, including use of affiliation and co-authors.
- Greater promotion of ethical review guidelines to reduce potential misunderstandings of the process.
- Recruitment processes for PGR. It should be determined if all pertinent information is being requested during the application process. Also, a screening process should be devised for research identified as sensitive.
- Consideration needs to be given as to how the University should scrutinise ethical issues that currently fit outside the purview of the URECs.
- Clarity should be provided in policy/guidance material regarding what a PhD student can/cannot do in relation to research activity when they are a registered student of the University; what they should inform their supervisor about; and when they should/should not affiliate the University to a research paper.
- Guidance and training for supervisors should be reviewed to ensure it clarifies their responsibilities for screening students for potential conflicts of interest and what input they should have in articles published outside of the student's PhD activities.
- Guidance about conducting ethnographic research should be reviewed with input from the URECs to ensure it covers all related ethical issues.

- The University's processes for responding to issues that cause reputational harm to the University should be reviewed to ensure they are sufficiently responsive to the issues raised.
- Clearer feedback could be provided to Complainants and Respondents about the decision to proceed to an investigation or not.
- Potential for processes to be revised to consider counter-claims.

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	No. of allegations reported	No. formal investigations	No. upheld in part after investigation	No. upheld in full after investigation
Fabrication				
Falsification	1	1	1	
Plagiarism	1	1		1
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	2	1		1
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)	2			
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)	1	1	1	
Other*				
Total:	7	4	2	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.