



Annual Report and Statement on Research Integrity 2021/22

As an outstanding UK research-intensive university, the University of Exeter recognises that the highest standards of scientific, scholarly and professional integrity must be maintained and promoted. We aim to give due consideration to the ethical, social and environmental issues arising from our activities and are actively working to ensure that research integrity is embedded in the University's research culture and environment.

We are committed to acting in accordance with the principles described in the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and have developed a policy framework which aims to maintain the safety, rights, welfare and dignity of all members of the University and their research participants, and to maintain public trust. Policies include:

- Ethics Policy
- Research Ethics Framework
- Policy on working with animals
- Code of Good Practice in the Conduct of Research
- Misconduct in Research
- Codes of Conduct
- Public Interest Disclosure Policy

In 2021/22, actions undertaken to promote and embed research integrity included the following:

- The substantially revised University Research Ethics Framework was fully implemented¹ and during the year a new online application and review systems has successfully been embedded across all Colleges for staff and students. The framework revision and use of an institution-wide system is intended to further strengthen common standards and to provide additional assurance on the high quality of ethical review.
- Regular training sessions for research and CPD students, early career researchers, Research Ethics Committee members, academic and professional services staff were developed and delivered, alongside introductory online training modules and bespoke teaching for groups of undergraduate and masters students.
- Active involvement in national networks and events to share best practice and promote research integrity, for example as part of the Russell Group research integrity forum and UUK groups.
- The University became an institutional supporter of the UK Reproducibility Network, appointing a senior academic lead on reproducibility and research improvement with two additional deputy leads to support the work.
- University groups on the responsible use of metrics (the University of Exeter is a signatory to DORA), researcher development, EDI and open research continue to develop proposals to enhance the research culture at the University. The leads on

¹ <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/cqr/researchethics/codesandpolicies/>

research culture and research integrity work closely together to prioritise and develop plans on embedding a positive research culture.

- The University Ethics Committee and the Dual Assurance portfolio on Research Integrity, Ethics and Governance continues to provide oversight of activities and assurance for the University's governing body.
- Ongoing implementation of improved research governance and regulatory compliance processes, particularly on health research sponsorship, clinical trials, human tissue and animal research.
- Work continues to raise awareness of export controls and on aspects of the Trusted Research agenda, due diligence processes and decision making on partnerships. An additional post to take the lead in this area was approved and is currently in recruitment.
- The Research Ethics and Governance Team continue to work with colleagues across multiple departments and teams on, for example, compliance, quality assurance frameworks and data management.
- Resource for research governance and compliance is provided on a recurrent basis

The University Ethics Committee and the Dual Assurance portfolio on Research Integrity, Ethics and Governance continued to provide oversight of activities and assurance for the University's governing body. During the year, both groups considered a risk register and associated planned actions, received updates on the actions described above and approved policies where required. The groups also received annual reports from the University's Research Ethics Committees and reports in relation to regulatory compliance.

One allegation of research misconduct relating to a publication is currently at the formal stage of investigation. Two further concerns about research practice have been raised and are at the preliminary review stage. Advice and support has been provided in response to a number of researcher queries, for example in relation to authorship practice. Varied routes for researchers to seek advice and for reporting concerns are promoted although this will be a focus for further work.

The procedures for investigating and reporting misconduct are considered to be transparent and generally appropriate to the needs of the organisation. The Universities Code of Good Practice in the Conduct of Research and the Misconduct in Research process is under review to ensure that it continues to meet the requirements of the revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity and reflects lessons learned. This includes, for example, ensuring that any informal action taken at a departmental level to provide mentoring and development for researchers in response to concerns on research practice is recorded and monitored.

A programme of ongoing improvement is in place to ensure that continued progress towards our all our goals is maintained.

For further information on research integrity at the University of Exeter, please contact the [Research Ethics and Governance Team](#)

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