Annual Research Integrity Statement

2022-23   (P2324-177)

Name of institution: Swansea University	
Period under review: August 2022- August 2023	
Approved by Governing body: University Council. **Approval by other Governance committees:** 1. University Research Integrity Ethics & Governance committee: 27 October 2023. 2. Senior Leadership Team: October 2023. 3. University Research Impact & Innovation Committee: November 2023. 4. University Senate: Nov 2023	**Date made publicly available:** November 2023.
Web address of statement: Research Integrity - Swansea University	
Web address of institutional research integrity page: Research Integrity: Ethics and Governance - Swansea University	
Named contact points for: • **Concerns about research integrity/ research misconduct:** Professor Helen Griffiths (Pro Vice Chancellor Research & Innovation) researchmisconduct@swansea.ac.uk or pvcresearch@swansea.ac.uk • **Questions/ information on research integrity:** Mrs Anjana Choudhuri. researchintegrity@swansea.ac.uk	
Date statement sent to HEFCW: To be confirmed.	

INTRODUCTION

This is the 8th Annual Research Integrity Statement for Swansea University, covering the academic period of 2022/23. This report provides a short summary of the activities undertaken by the University to demonstrate its commitment to the 5 principles of the **Concordat to Support Research Integrity**. The statement provides assurance that the processes for dealing with allegations of research misconduct are transparent, robust, and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation. Data on research misconduct allegations and any investigations are included in the report along with a statement on lessons learnt to prevent recurrence.

The statement also includes evidence of how the institution is creating a research culture in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct. The University expects its staff (including honorary staff), students, visitors, and collaborators to undertake research, in accordance with the research integrity policies and processes published on the University Research webpages. (Research Integrity: Ethics and Governance - Swansea University).

The University continues to be a subscriber to UKRIO and provides guidance and training on research ethics and governance processes to University Staff and Students through the University's Intranet pages.

1. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE RESEARCH INTEGRITY

- **Research Culture**

Research Culture monitoring, initiatives, and development at Swansea University is driven by the Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor (PVC) for Research Culture, and the newly appointed Research Culture Manager, in collaboration with the PVC for Research and Innovation and other relevant stakeholders in Research and Innovations services at Swansea. In June 2023, Swansea participated in the national Culture, Employment, and Development of Academic Researchers Survey (CEDARS) to gain perspective and an understanding of the current outlook and views of our research community and any issues they face, which will be used to direct our priorities towards how we support researchers and promote a positive research culture at the University over the next few years.

Some of the initiatives that have made pace in the past year include the Technician Commitment, a sector-wide initiative led by the Science Council, to help address key challenges facing technical staff working in research. The Technician Commitment working group submitted its action plan to the Science Council in January detailing plans such as the Annual Technician Symposium which aim to recognise, value, develop and support the technical community at Swansea.

- **Open Research**

Much progress has been made at Swansea University over the past year into establishing the policy and practice of Open Research, which can be defined as a set of tools and practices aimed at making research outputs widely accessible, understandable, reproducible, and criticisable, accelerating through sharing and transparency the process that has characterised advance of knowledge in the research community. Swansea University has submitted a letter to join UKRN (UK Reproducibility Network) and the Open Research programme to ensure consolidation and further development of Open Research culture and practices. For example, Swansea University has updated its open access policy to include a Creative Commons Licence on all publications, following best practice within the sector.

In January 2023, Swansea University successfully maintained the European Commission HR Excellence in Research Award which recognises institutions that have met the principles of good working conditions for researchers and demonstrate a commitment to the implementation of the UK [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](). The action plan submitted to Vitae has several proposals and initiatives that focus on career development of research staff, such as the provision of Active Bystander training which aims to raise awareness of Swansea University's harassment and bullying policy and procedures whilst providing tools for staff to recognise and tackle any unwanted or disrespectful behaviour within their research environment.

- **Trusted Research**

In 2022, the UK Government published a new ['Cyber Strategy'](). The UUK guidance on ['Oversight of security-sensitive research material in Universities']() was also published simultaneously. In 2022-23, the University therefore undertook a scoping exercise to establish the requirements of a university wide 'Cyber Essentials (CE) accredited environment. Such a 'Trusted Research' environment will assist researchers who produce, or handle security sensitive research materials, bid for research council projects that often request for 'Cyber Essentials' as a pre-requisite at the bidding stage. The University currently does not hold a CE accreditation and is therefore unable to bid for some research grants.

The scoping exercise established that it would be challenging, if not impossible, to obtain full accreditation for the University against the latest version of the Cyber Essentials standard.

Senior Managers within the Information Systems & Services and the IT Services Cyber Team proposed to set up a 'Trusted Research' environment in the Amazon cloud, allowing access to a limited number of securely managed end user devices. These elements together will form the basis of the scope for an end-to-end secure research environment against which it will be possible to obtain and retain CE accreditation. It was agreed that each research project requiring a CE accreditation would be costed at the funding bid stage to make the environment available for use immediately after funding becomes available. Such a solution will enable research projects to run smoothly; reduce the overheads required to develop unique cyber security solutions; as well as reduce the burden on the Procurement and Legal Teams involved in procuring unique, bespoke solutions. It will be hosted on the Cloud and will be accessible only from appropriately secured end user devices. The Amazon Trusted Research Environment was agreed as the best option. The benefit of utilising TRE on Amazon Web Services (AWS) will enable:

- Compliance with privacy legislation, safeguarding the trust of data providers.
- Meeting the need to securely collaborate on shared, sensitive datasets.
- Closer management and monitoring of research costs and the consumption of IT resources
- Advantage to be taken of the scalability, agility, and adaptability of cloud computing.

- **Research Governance:**

The Research Governance aspect in Swansea University focuses primarily on the University's compliance to the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research (2017). The Research Governance team manage, oversee, and regulate research activities where the University is the Sponsor of the research. These activities include approvals of research applications to work with the NHS patient and data, drafting Clinical policies, processes, systems, and enforcement mechanisms involving monitoring, legal & regulatory compliance, and insurance.

During 2022-23, the Research Governance Website was relaunched providing more clarification and access to relevant information, document templates and processes. The monthly drop-in clinics were re-introduced for staff in the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Science and the Sports Sciences staff in the Faculty of Science & Engineering in the Bay Campus.

Quality Assurance and Monitoring of the Healthcare projects rated as 'high risk' were supported by Sponsorship Support Visits, CAPA, and the Research Governance team presence on Trial Steering Committees. All projects were subjected to Annual Reporting and on the official closure, the completed projects were archived in liaison with Human Tissue Officer (HTA) and Data archiving. Breaches and safety reports were actioned within the HRA /NHS REC time.

An online portal on Infonetica Ethics Management system on 'Sponsored Projects' has been developed, tested, and gone live for use by University staff and students. All new sponsorship applications can be reviewed on the portal by the Swansea University Sponsorship Oversight Committee (SUSOC) committee and would continually be monitored for the life span of the projects with amendments and end of study.

- **Human Tissue license:**

The Human Tissue Authority (HTA) regulates organisations that require human tissue for research, medical examination, post-mortem examination, education and training, and public display. In the research setting, the HTA licences premises to remove, collect, store, use and/or dispose tissue from the living and deceased for research purposes. Swansea University Medical School (SUMS) had applied for a Human Tissue license and was granted one in 2016. This ensured that all human tissue using projects conducted within the Medical School that used tissue operated within the law. This licence was a hub and satellite site licence with SUMS as the hub and Swansea Bay University Health Board (Singleton and Morriston Hospitals) as satellites. As the licence became operational it became clear that broader licence coverage for Swansea University was required. Other Schools in the Faculty of

Medicine, Health and Life Science as well as the Sports & Exercise Sciences had human tissue research governance and regulation requirements.

On appraising options for a pan-Swansea University HTA license, it was decided to restructure the licence, removing the Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB) satellite sites, and pursuing a licence to cover activities across both campuses and all Faculties. Removal of the satellite sites was completed in August 2022 and the next steps to securing a university wide license is underway. To enable progress and ongoing support for a university-wide human tissue research licence, a new post has of a Human Tissue Compliance Officer was recruited. This role will lead operationally on the new licence application with a broader portfolio of duties that will include maintaining documentation, undertaking audits, advice and sign posting, training, competency checking (e.g., consent), and liaising with the SU Research Governance Manager. The post-holder's remit will extend to all human tissue research activity not just that related to HTA licensable activities to ensure that best practice is embedded in the management of research tissues. A Quality Management System (QMS) providing SOPs for HTA relevant human tissue research activity has been made available on the University's website (https://www.swansea.ac.uk/research/research-integrity-ethics-governance/research-governance/human-tissue-act/).

- **Animal Research:**
An internal audit of ASPA Compliance was undertaken between October 2022 and December 2022 with the final report submitted 16th December 2022. A few specific controls weaknesses were noted; generally, however, controls evaluated were adequate, appropriate, and effective to provide reasonable assurance that risks were being managed and strategic objectives were met.

- **Research Integrity Champions:**
The Faculty Ethics Leads took on the role of Research Integrity Champions and conducted staff training sessions. It is envisaged that these roles will be evolve further in 2023-24 to provide further support and guidance to researchers across the Faculties.

➢ **Committees and Working Groups supporting research integrity:**

- University Research Integrity: Ethics and Governance Committee (URIEGC): The University Research Integrity: Ethics & Governance committee continued to provide support, transparency, and accountability to all matters of research integrity and governance and ensure that the University complied with its commitments to the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*. This committee, chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & Innovation) also reviewed referrals of ethics cases from the Faculties through its sub-group. The committee continued to monitor high risk research activities and receive quarterly reports from Faculties, Schools and other areas like Research Governance, Human Tissue Compliance, Trials Unit, and the Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body (AWERB).

➢ **Policies and Processes to support research Integrity:**

- **Revisions to Existing Policies, Processes & Guidance:**

Policy on Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct: The University Policy on Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct was revised to bring it in line with the revised UKRIO guidance (Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research) (Published in March 2023). The revised guidance was approved by the University Research Integrity: Ethics & Governance Committee.

Policy on risk assessment of research projects: The 'Policy on Risk Assessment of Research projects', was revised and approved by the University Research Integrity: Ethics & Governance Committee to bring it in line with the requirements of online ethical approval system.

Code of Practice on Authorship: Secondary to queries raised at a research misconduct screening panel, the University Code of Practice on Authorship was revisited and revised to bring it in line with [UKRIO](#), [COPE](#) and [ICMJE](#) regulations.

- **Creation of new research policies:**

Research Publications Policy**:**
The new Research Publications Policy was created to enable researchers retain re-use rights of their own work. The policy requires full and immediate open access of all funded and unfunded peer reviewed research articles, published in either a journal, conference proceeding or publishing platform and book chapters.

Safeguarding Policy: In July 2023, the University produced a revised 'Policy on Safeguarding – Protecting Children and Adults at risk'. The University appointed a Safeguarding team to ensure that it met with the UK Govt compliance requirements for the area. The Safeguarding and Prevent policies, training and the webpages have also been updated with information and guidance for staff and students ([Safeguarding - Swansea University](#))

Guidance on Ethical review:
To ensure that ethics reviewers understood the requirements of conducting a robust ethics review, a guidance on an ethical review was produced. The guidance, based on the UKRIO checklist for REC review panels provides reviewers ideas on how to conduct a consistent, coherent, and well-informed ethics review.

Guidance on informed parental consent & Gatekeeper consent form:
To bring processes in line with the revised 'Policy on working with Children and Young People', a new guidance on informed parental consent and a gatekeeper consent form were drafted and approved by the University Research Integrity: Ethics & Governance committee (URIEGC). The forms and the policies were linked to the new online system for ethical approval.

Guidance on Export Control: To assist researchers get the most out of their international scientific collaborations whilst complying with the regulatory requirements of the National Security Act (NSI), protecting the intellectual property of their research and personal information, the University produced and published on the Research Integrity webpages, a guidance on Trusted Research and the Export Control requirements.

➢ **Systems to support research Integrity:**

- **Online Ethical Review System:** In 2022-23, the University successfully procured from Infonetica Ethics Research Management and implemented across all its Faculties and Schools, an online system for the ethical review of research applications. The Project Board responsible for the procurement and implementation, met regularly to review the requirements of the system. The project was completed successfully on time and within the allocated budget.

- **Research Integrity webpages**: The [University Research Integrity webpages](#) were kept up to date with relevant information on new and revised policies, processes, contacts and systems. Access to the research policies was made easier through the staff pages by listing them as individually. The Annual Research Integrity statements in English & Welsh continue to be published on the RI webpages.

2. Supporting the development of Researchers.

➢ **Training/Awareness & Development:**

- Research Integrity Online Training for staff: The University continued its subscription to the Research Integrity online training from Epigeum (SAGE publishing). As the subscription came to an end, the current license for the training was extended for a further period of one year. Members of the Research Integrity: Ethics & Governance

committee reviewed a further training package for 'Experienced Researchers' from Epigeum. This training, with modules more relevant for senior researchers is an option for consideration in 2023-24. The University Senior Leadership Team (SLT) have approved the research integrity training as 'mandatory' for all research active staff. The monitoring of this 'mandatory' training would be implemented in 2023-24 through the annual Professional Development Review (PDR) process.

Researcher skills online training for Postgraduate Research students: In 2022-23, an online training (Research Skills Toolkit) was procured from Epigeum for training postgraduate research students.

- Safeguarding & Prevent: Prior to the approval of a project application of working with Children and Vulnerable Adults, the requirement to undertake the online training on Safeguarding was advised to the researchers and the training records monitored by the research governance team. The University also reviewed its training on 'Prevent' and made provision for a new online training for the area.

- Training sessions on Trusted Research and Export Control: To raise awareness of the risks in undertaking international research and innovation, and Trusted Research , external trainers (Settica Ltd) and staff from the UK Governments Research Collaboration Advice Team (RCAT) delivered sessions on Trusted Research (*What foreign interference looks like) and Export Control. To bring themselves up to speed with the UK Govt's requirements on Export Control, professional services staff from the Research Integrity and Legal team attended webinars and participated in pilot projects of the online Export Control training provided by the Higher Education Export Control Association (HEECA)

- UKRIO Webinar Series: Members continued to receive information on the monthly UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) webinar series on good conduct in research and found the webinar sessions informative and useful.

3. Dealing with allegations of research misconduct transparently, fairly & robustly

> **Research Misconduct:**
> The Policy on receiving Allegation of Research Misconduct and details of how to raise a concern are displayed on the University webpages and can be accessed by an individual wishing to raise a concern (Research Misconduct - Swansea University). A confidential email service (researchmisconduct@swansea.ac.uk) is set up for those wishing to raise a concern in writing. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & Innovation) is the 'named contact' for the University. The Research Integrity Manager is the designated third party coordinating this confidential processes. All research misconduct screening and investigations are undertaken in accordance with the University Policy and the investigation panels always consist of an external member from another UK Higher Education Institution.

In 2022/23, the University received and processed the following allegations in accordance with its policy:

Month/Year	Allegation	Nature of alleged misconduct	Outcome
Feb 2023	Fabrication & Falsification	Image manipulation	Honest error. Paper corrected and resubmitted.
June 2023	Falsification	Image manipulation.	Screening process did not find any evidence of research misconduct.

4. Reviewing processes regularly and openly – Lessons learnt

The University has not had any formal investigations in 2022-2023 as described within the [UKRI guidelines](#). Secondary to the complaints received, the University is reviewing the requirements and the possibility of procuring an institutional software to cross check data manipulation. The University is aiming to hold awareness raising sessions on research misconduct using case studies and real-life examples.

5. Challenges for 2023/24:

- Embedding a research culture where research is conducted in line with ethical and the regulatory requirements and where staff have the confidence to raise issues of bad research practices without fear of reprisal.
- To ensure that the University has policies, systems, and processes in place to meet the UK Government's requirements of Trusted Research and Due diligence of research.
- To ensure that a University policy and guideline for research on artificial intelligence is developed and researchers are aware of the requirements.

Further information: *This statement has been prepared by the Research Integrity Manager in coordination with colleagues in the research culture, research governance and the AWERB team. The report is approved by the University Governing body: Council and approved by other governing committees like the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), University Research Integrity: Ethics & Governance Committee (URIEGC), University's Research Impact & Innovation Committee (RIIC) and Senate. A copy of the report is submitted to the Higher Education Funding Council of Wales (HEFCW) and published on the University Research pages according to the requirements of the UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) and Concordat to Support Research Integrity.*

For any queries on the report and for information on research integrity matters, please contact researchintegrity@swansea.ac.uk