INTRODUCTION

This is the 3rd Annual Statement of Research Integrity for the University, covering the academic period of 2017/18

In July 2013, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) confirmed, that in order to remain eligible for receipt of HEFCW research funding, all Welsh Universities would have to comply with the UK *Concordat to Support Research Integrity.* The Concordat contains 5 commitments, each of which specify actions for Universities as employers, for individual researchers, and for research funders.

One of the commitments of the Concordat is for Research Organisations to:

- Provide a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen the understanding and application of research integrity issues
- Provide assurances that the processes they have in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation; and to
- Provide a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken.

In order to comply with the above mentioned commitments to the Concordat, the following activities have been undertaken and continue to be undertaken by Swansea University:

In 2014/15, the University developed a '*Policy Framework on Research Integrity: Ethics & Governance'* and established Institutional structures, policies and protocols to support and implement the policies within the framework.

In **2015/16** the University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee was constituted. The committee membership has representation from the 7 Colleges & Schools of the University, along with representation from relevant Professional Services Units, Clinical Trials Unit and the local NHS Trust. Six out of the seven Colleges also established College level Ethics & Governance committees that reported to the University Committee. The University committee meets once per term.

In **2016-17** research integrity governance structures were further established through the following:

1. Appointmentment of an Academic and a Deputy Academic Lead for Research Integrity to provide strategic direction to the area (June 2016)
2. Appointmentment of a dedicated Research Integrity Manager in the Vice Chancellor's Office to act as the first point of contact for research integrity queries and provide strategic oversight and policy direction for regulatory compliance (Oct 2016)
3. Appointmentment of a part time dedicated Research Governance Framework officer in the Research Engagement & Innovation Services (REIS) to help establish the University sponsorship processes and protocols for quality assurance
4. Purchasing of an online training package on research integrity (Epigeum) for staff and student training.

5. Providing support to the College of Human & Health Sciences for the purchase and piloting of an online system of ethical approval of applications (Infonetica) and supporting the development of an 'in-house' online system for the ethical approval of applications in the College of Science.
6. Developing an additional 'in house' training package on research integrity for staff and student training through the APECS Development & Training services and purchase of an online training system of Safeguarding in Higher Education.
7. Developing a dedicated research integrity website with policies, procedures and information for staff, students and external visitors
8. Production and dissemination of a research integrity leaflet with key information and contact details.
9. Review of research integrity policies and development and implementation of new policies of 'Working with Children & Vulnerable groups' and a 'Policy for Clinical research'.
10. Development of a draft policy on risk assessment of research projects and Policy on Authorship.
11. Receiveing 'substantial assurance' for the area from an audit conducted by the Joint Internal Audit Unit (JIAU).

Area progress report 2017-18:

- **University Research Ethics and Governance sub –committee**

The University Research Ethics & Governance sub-committee continued to meet during the year to provide strategic oversight to a number of University policies and processes and to provide support/advice/guidance to Colleges/Schools. Progress reports from College ethics committees and other sub committees (AWERB), Swansea Trials Unit, Human Tissue governance, Research Institute of Ethics & Law were received along with updates from Professional services sections in relation to 'Prevent' Compliance (security sensitive research), Safeguarding, Business Continuity and Resilience.

- **College Research Ethics and Governance Committees**

All Colleges/Schools continue to have functioning Research Ethics & Governance committees which meet regularly. The Chairs of College committees attend and provide regular reports and updates to the University Committee. Wherever required additional sub-committees continue to support the College/School committees.

- **Appointments and Updates**

1. During the course of the year, a Reseach Integrity Unit was set up in the Research Engagment & Innovation Services Department (REIS). An Academic Dean for Research Integrity was appointed, and the Research Integrity Manager, previously based at the Vice Chancellor's Office, was transferred to REIS to be part of the Unit. A **full time** dedicated Research Governance Offier was also appointed to the Unit to ensure that the University complies with its responsibility to deliver research governance objectives in line with the Health Research Authority requirements. The Research Governance officer is the first point of contact for queries relating to ethics, governance and sponsorship of projects aligned to the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research.

2. The Academic Dean and members of the research integrity unit attended College Ethics and Governance committees to discuss risk assessment and monitoring of projects and highlighted the requirement of a 'risk based' assessment approach for reviewing ethical applications.

3. The Academic Dean and the Research Integrity Manager continue to work with the Post-graduate Research office to explore options of the rolling out a research integrity training package for PGR students.

4. The University Data Protection Officer produced guidance for researchers, and a mandatory training on General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) supporting researchers meet their obligations in relation to GDPR.

5. Some further Policies within the policy framework were reviewed to reflect changes in legislation, regulatory requirements and research practices
    http://www.swansea.ac.uk/research/researchintegrity/research-integrity-policies/

6. The University became a formal signatory for the Concordat on Open Research Data.

7. An online system for ethical approval of applications in the department of Psychology was implemented to achieve greater efficiency, security and stadardisation of the ethical review process. Responding to the positive feedback received, the College of Human and Health Sciences now plans to roll out the system to the rest of the subject areas within the College.

8. The in-house ethical review system developed by the College of Science also received positive feedback from within the College and the University Research Ethics & Goverance committee members. The University is hoping to pilot this system to some other Colleges to assess its usefulness.

9. In March 2018, a **mandatory** online training package for research integrity ('Epigeum') was rolled out to all research intensive staff to further promote and develop a culture of integrity. The Training is available in five subject specific areas and culminates in a test at the end of the course.

10. Since the initial roll out of Epigeum in August 2017, 551 members of staff have enrolled into on the course, and 359 have passed. Epigeum has been added to the induction checklist for new employees of the University. The course has also been offered to postgraduate research students. Further promotion of the course is planned for 2018/19.

11. In addition to the online training, a separate ***in-house training*** package on research integrity continues to be offered to researce active staff through the staff development and training services. This 'lunch and learn' programme introduces researchers to the University research integrity polices, provides information and guidance on ethical review of research, sponsorship of research, working with human tissue and safeguarding in higher education.

12. The site license for the online training package for 'Safeguarding Awareness' was renewed in 2017/18 to provide researchers working with children or vulnerable adults a useful guidance and information tool.

13. During 2017/18 a review of the current research integrity web pages was conducted, and content developed for a new University Website to go-live in the 2018/19 academic year. The aim was to make information more readily accessible, and to tailor content to internal and external audiences.

14. The University continues to subscribe to the the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO). A University representative attended the 2018 annual research integrity conference of UKRIO and gathered useful information that was disseminated to staff. The attendance offered the opportunity to network with colleauges from other institutions in the area and learn about best practice.

15. In March 2018 the Unviversity became members of 'Understanding Animal Research' (UAR) and signatories to the Concordat on Openness in Animal Research. This concordat is a set of commitments of UK based life science organisations to enhance their animal research communications and to be more open about the ways in which animals are used in scientific, medical and veterinary research in the UK.

RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

16. The University has well established confidential reporting mechanisms for reporting allegations of research misconduct via a dedicated and restricted access research misconduct email address.

17. The University has sought expert guidance from UKRIO in the development of policy and processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct, to ensure that processes for investigation are robust, transparent and fair.

18. The misconduct investigation processes are broadly divided into three stages: a preliminary stage; screening stage and if necessary, formal investigation. The allegation may be dismissed at any of these stages if it is considered that there is insufficient information; or that it does not fall within the definition of research misconduct or the allegation was not upheld due to being mistaken, frivolous, vexatious or malicious. If the allegation is minor in nature it may be addressed at the screening stage through competency, training, education or other non-disciplinary processes rather than formal investigation.

19. The Registrar & Chief Operating Officer is the named person in the University with responsibility for receiving and responding to allegations of research misconduct.

20. Details of the misconduct reporting process are publicly available on the website at http://www.swansea.ac.uk/research/researchintegrity/researchmisconduct/

21. During the 2017/18 academic year, no new allegations were received under the University's Research Misconduct procedures. One investigation was conducted following receipt of an allegation at the end of the 2016/17 academic year:

Allegation	Nature of alleged misconduct	Outcome
1	Conduct of research (informed consent)	Originated in 2016/17 academic year, carried forward into 2017/18 Dismissed at screening stage- no grounds to proceed.

Challenges for 2018/19:

- **Training**

The contract for the online training on research integrity (Epigeum), purchased in September 2016, is due to come to an end in August 2019. The University needs to assess quickly whether it should continue its subscription to this training or develop an inhouse training package. The Postgraduate Research committee comprising of College/School Directors of Postgraduate Resarch have expressed their wish to roll out the Epigeum 5 hour training to students. Training students on research integrity policies and procedures is a requirement of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and can be used as a measure for enhancing the research environment. The roll out of the student training would be a large project, again, with possible resource implications for monitoring uptake, and reporting. If this is approved, then it would be resource intensive both in terms of funding requirement and support. Monitoring the uptake of the training package and data collection in relation to them could prove a challenge once the training is implemented widely. This aspect therefore requires thinking through the business planning process for 2018/19.

- **Engagement and raising awareness of research integrity**

The past few years has seen a massive drive in relation to implementing and supporting the University's commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. As a result, the University is better placed, than it has ever been, in relation to policies, processes, protocols, training, and information for staff and students. There is however still, a lot to be done to ensure a 'cultural shift' to 'raise awareness' amongst researchers of the benefits of undertaking research with integrity.

The focus of research integrity activities in the forthcoming year would therefore be to conduct such activities that raise awareness of research integrity issues amongst staff and students. Working together with the Academic Services, REIS, ISS and the wider University, such proposals could include conducting frequent 'lunch & learn' or 'breakfast' sessions in both campuses, conducting half day workshops on research integrity and possibly an annual conference on research integrity with invited external guest speakers from the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and other UK Russell Group Universities who are at the forefront of implementation of the

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Concordat within their institutions. These activities will have resource implications in relation to budget and staffing and would therefore need to be built into the business planning process.

- **Raising awareness about reporting cases of Research Misconduct**

The past year has seen a couple of instances where staff within the Institution, and external individuals/bodies were unsure of the process of reporting a suspected allegation of research misconduct. Some staff sought guidance in order to understand whether a particular case would fit within the definition of research misconduct. The research integrity webpage now has a dedicated email address and a contact for reporting such allegations. It would be advisable however to ensure that this information is distributed as widely as possible within the University, and an option of setting up a dedicated group of 'research integrity' champions to provide confidential advice/direction to those wishing to report an allegation. A policy on 'Whistleblowing' for research could also be developed to provide protection and anonymity to complainants from reprisals for raising a concern.

- **Sponsorship**

Establishment of appropriate research governance sponsorship processes and protocols, Clinical research webpage with policies, processes, flowchart and information for staff, appropriate training on procedures, monitoring and quality assurance of projects that fall under the remit of the Health Research Authority and the Research Governance Framework are to be undertaken in 2018/19.

Further information:
This statement was prepared by the Research Integrity Manager and approved in Feburary 2019 by the University Research Ethics and Governance Sub-Committee. For any queries and information on research integrity matters, please contact researchintegrity@swansea.ac.uk