

# University of Staffordshire Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2024-2025

## Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
<b>1A. Name of organisation</b>	University of Staffordshire
<b>1B. Type of organisation:</b>	Higher Education
<b>1C. Date statement approved by governing body</b>	25/11/2025
<b>1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page</b>	<a href="https://www.staffs.ac.uk/research/research-governance">https://www.staffs.ac.uk/research/research-governance</a>
<b>1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity</b>	Name: Professor Raheel Nawaz, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and Research  Email address: <a href="mailto:raheel.nawaz@staffs.ac.uk">raheel.nawaz@staffs.ac.uk</a>
<b>1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity</b>	Name: Dr Jane Wellens, Director of Research and Postgraduate Research  Email address: <a href="mailto:jane.wellens@staffs.ac.uk">jane.wellens@staffs.ac.uk</a>

## Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken

### 2A. Description of current systems and culture

#### Policies and Systems

The University of Staffordshire has a [Code of Conduct for Research and Research Integrity](#), which is aligned to the UK's Concordat to Support Research Integrity and the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) guidance. The Code of Conduct:

- Defines research integrity and outlines the core principles that underpin this definition
- Sets out the expectations and responsibilities of researchers and the university. in terms of upholding research integrity
- Identifies what constitutes research misconduct and details the procedures to be followed to investigate suspected or alleged cases.

The University's Research Innovation and Enterprise Committee has responsibility for the governance of research at Staffordshire including the development and review of Code of Conduct.

#### The University of Staffordshire [Ethical Review Policy](#):

- Outlines the university's principles of ethical research
- Requires that all research should have ethical approval and sets out the level of approval required according to the nature of the research to be undertaken.
- Establishes the routes to be used to follow to gain ethical approval.
- Sets out the expectations and responsibilities of researchers and the university. in relation to research ethics.
- Identifies the procedures to be followed where a breach of the policy is suspected or alleged.

The University's Research Ethics Committee oversees the process of research ethics approval at Staffordshire and reports to Research, Innovation and Enterprise Committee.

Approval for the commencement of new research takes place at School and Department level and the processes used embed consideration of responsible research, export control and ethical review, ensuring compliance with these frameworks from project inception onwards.

### **Communications and Engagement**

Research Integrity is promoted through communications routes including Workvivo updates and website and SharePoint resources, as well as during inductions for new PGR students and staff. Interdisciplinary and cross-functional workshops and webinars are held to engage researchers and foster discussions and sharing of practice in relation to responsible research practices.

### **Culture, Development and Leadership**

The University recognises the importance of upholding research integrity across all disciplines and activities. Research leaders are committed to fostering a culture of integrity through awareness raising, staff engagement, and alignment with national frameworks and guidance. We are committed to strengthening our processes and support structures to ensure that the university's research remains trustworthy, impactful and inclusive. The university actively engages with training and resources produced by organisations such as UKRIO and the Higher Education Export Control Association (HEECA).

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

The Annual Statement on Research Integrity is reviewed by Research Innovation and Enterprise Committee, Academic Board and Board of Governors. It is then made publicly available on the university website. Research Innovation and Enterprise Committee receives summary data on misconduct cases, audits of ethical review, training uptake and policy updates. Integrity-related risks are included in the university's risk register, with reporting to governance bodies.

## **2B. Changes and developments during the period under review**

The University of Staffordshire continues to strengthen its commitment to research integrity and the development of a positive research culture. During the reporting period, several key changes and initiatives were introduced.

### **Policies and Systems**

Between February and May 2025, all research-related policies were refreshed and updated to reflect changes in institutional organisational structures. These updates identified areas where guidance and processes could be improved to better support researchers and uphold integrity standards. Work to address these enhancements is ongoing and will continue throughout the 2025-26 academic year, ensuring that our policies remain responsive and aligned with sector expectations.

### **Ethics Review Process**

As part of the above work, a full review was conducted of the guidance, application and processes for ethical approval of research. This included an analysis of the numbers and types of applications received, and the timeframes involved from submission to final approval. As a result:

- Significant updates have been made to the application and review documentation to improved clarity and consistency.
- From the start of the 2025-26 academic year the university has transitioned from a rolling application process to a scheduled programme of ethics review panels and application deadlines. This change was introduced to:
  - Foster greater discussion of ethical issues within and across disciplines.
  - Ensure consistency in decision-making and feedback to applicants.
  - Support the training and development of ethics panel members through increased engagement and shared learning.

The outcomes of these changes will be monitored and evaluated, with findings reported to Research, Innovation and Enterprise Committee in 2025-26.

### **2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments**

Building on the priorities outlined in the previous sections, the university has made progress in raising awareness and understanding of research ethics by harnessing the changes that have been made to the review process as a key conduit for communication and engagement. We intend to build on and repeat this approach for other aspects of research governance and integrity. However, limited resourcing has constrained our ability to implement change as rapidly as we would wish. Nevertheless, feedback from researchers indicates growing recognition of the importance of research integrity and a desire for a more structured support. We aim to build on this momentum by embedding integrity more visibly within institutional research leadership and strategy.

## Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

University of Staffordshire is committed to fostering a research environment where integrity is upheld and individuals feel safe and supported in raising concerns.

This is achieved through a combination of policy frameworks, communication and training and culture-led initiatives.

#### Research Misconduct Procedure

- The University's Procedure for the Investigation of Research Misconduct is based on UKRIO's guidance and aligned with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.
- It applies to all individuals conducting research under the auspices of the University, including staff, postgraduate researchers and honorary titleholders.
- Allegations relating to research undertaken by undergraduate or taught postgraduate students are investigated following the Student Conduct Procedure.
- All other allegations are investigated through a multi-stage process:
- Initial Investigation led by the Pro-Vice Chancellor Education and Research
  - Screening Panel (if needed) to assess complexity and evidence
  - Full investigation by a formal panel including senior staff and potentially external members.
  - The possible outcomes range from informal resolution to formal disciplinary action.
- The procedure allows for anonymous and confidential reporting with protections for both whistle-blowers and respondents.
- The policy is fully reviewed by Research, Innovation and Enterprise Committee every three years. It was last updated in April 2025 to reflect changes in organisational structures.

#### Whistle-Blowing and Confidential Liaison

The University provides named confidential contacts for individuals wishing to raise concerns including a route for whistle-blowers via its Public Interest Disclosure Policy.

#### Bullying and Harassment

Allegations which do not meet the definition of research misconduct may be

redirected.

- For staff to HR procedures including those for bullying and harassment and staff disciplinary matters.
- For students including postgraduate researchers, to the [Student Conduct Procedure](#).

### **Communication and Training**

Research Integrity is promoted through regular communications via internal research focussed SharePoint and Workvivo sites. These include details of training opportunities such as those offered internally and by UKRIO and HEECA.

### **Culture**

Senior Research Leaders champion research integrity and research culture through active support and strategic planning. Integrity is embedded in culture initiatives and integrated within a broader institutional approach to people, culture and environment that extends beyond research.

**3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken**

Type of allegation	Number of allegations			
	Number of allegations reported to the organisation	Number of formal investigations	Number upheld in part after formal investigation	Number upheld in full after formal investigation
Fabrication				
Falsification	1	1		1
Plagiarism	5	5	0	3
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations				
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)				
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)				
<i>Other*</i>	1			
<b>Total:</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>*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.</b></p> <p>University of Staffordshire notified another institution about plagiarism involving individuals affiliated with that institution. This related to a conference paper which reported, but did not acknowledge, the published work of a University of Staffordshire researcher.</p>				