

# Code of Conduct for Research and Research Integrity

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## 1.0 Introduction to the Code of Conduct for Research and Research Integrity

- 1.1. The Code of Conduct for Research and Research Integrity (hereafter the 'Code of Conduct' or the 'Code') sets out the principles and expectations for University of Staffordshire to conduct research of the highest quality and standards. These principles underpin the University's commitment to effective research governance and the pursuit of the highest quality research. While the Code refers specifically to 'research' and 'researchers', these terms should be understood broadly and inclusively, and it is expected that the Code of Conduct will apply equally to activities which might be termed innovation, enterprise, or knowledge exchange, where these meet the definitions outlined in section 2. 'Researchers' is used inclusively to refer to anyone who undertakes original investigation in order to gain knowledge and understanding.
- 1.2. Before undertaking any research (or innovation, enterprise, or knowledge exchange activities, as outlined above), researchers should read and familiarise themselves with the Code of Conduct. All research undertaken at the University or conducted in its name must be carried out to the highest standards of integrity, and in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
- 1.3. The Code of Conduct reflects best practice outlined in international frameworks and standards for research integrity as described in the [Singapore Statement on Research Integrity](#) (2010), the [European Code for Research Integrity](#) (2015, updated 2017) and the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) (2011, updated 2019).

### **How to use this document**

- 1.4. The Code of Conduct outlines broad principles that apply to research activities. The Code includes Annex 1: '[Framework for Good Research Practice](#)'. This framework provides more detailed guidance for researchers on how to conduct their work, and apply the principals outlined in the Code of Conduct.
- 1.5. The Code of Conduct, together with the Framework for Good Research Practice, aims to facilitate good conduct in research by clearly outlining the expectations and commitments of its researchers. They must be followed when undertaking any research at the University or in its name. Similarly, they aim to help prevent poor research practice, and potential research misconduct. The Code sets out (in section 7) what constitutes research misconduct, and how individuals can raise concerns about research practice at the institution. Failure to comply with the Code will be grounds for investigations into research misconduct, and potentially the instigation of disciplinary proceedings by the University. The process for investigating research misconduct is outlined in the [Procedure for Investigation of Research Misconduct](#).

## 2.0 Applicability and definitions

- 2.1 The Code of Conduct applies to anyone undertaking research being carried out at University of Staffordshire, or in its name. As outlined in section 1, the terms 'researcher' and 'researchers' are understood in a broad and inclusive sense. For the avoidance of doubt, this includes, but is not necessarily limited to:
  - University employees: including academic and professional support staff, regardless of their contract type (e.g., fixed term, part-time hourly, postdoctoral researchers)
  - University students: including undergraduate, postgraduate taught, and postgraduate researchers, regardless of study mode or place of study (e.g., distance learning or partner based)
  - Individuals holding visiting, honorary and emeritus titles
  - External partners and sub-contractors

- 2.2 The Code of Conduct is applicable to all subject areas, academic disciplines, and types of research, and to all parts of University of Staffordshire and its campuses. It applies through every phase of research from conception to project design, to publication, dissemination, and impact.
- 2.3 While the nomenclature of research integrity may sometimes refer to ‘good science’, ‘scientific knowledge’ or ‘scientific methods’, research integrity and research ethics apply to all areas of research and should not be considered as principally the domain of human participant research, or the clinical or biomedical sciences. Instead, the principles outlined in the Code of Conduct apply to all disciplines, including social sciences, arts and humanities, and to research where human participation is minimal, indirect, or absent.
- 2.4 The Code covers all forms of research undertaken by University of Staffordshire, including research commissioned by - or undertaken in conjunction with - industry, commerce and the voluntary sector. It includes funded and non-funded research.
- 2.5 For the purposes of the Code of Conduct, ‘research’ refers to the definition adopted by the UK Research Integrity Office (UK Research Integrity Office, Code of Practice for Research, section 1.8 of the online version) [1.0 Introduction - UK Research Integrity Office \(ukrio.org\)](https://www.ukrio.org/publications/1.0-Introduction-to-the-Code-of-Practice-for-Research/)

*“Research is to be understood as original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship<sup>1</sup>; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction.*

*It excludes routine testing and routine analysis of materials, components and processes such as for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also excludes the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research.”*

- 2.6 In the context of the Code of Conduct, the definition of research excludes the production of student assessments which do not require original research (e.g., the critical analysis and evaluation of existing published material including textbooks and academic journals). It further excludes routine audit and evaluation, within the established management procedures of organisations.
- 2.7 For the purposes of the Code of Conduct, ‘knowledge exchange’ is understood as the definition used by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, 93(4):

*“Knowledge exchange”, in relation to science, technology, humanities or new ideas, means a process or other activity by which knowledge is exchanged where:*

- a) the knowledge is in, or in connection with, science, technology, humanities or new ideas (as the case may be)*

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<sup>1</sup> “Scholarship... is defined as the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases.”

- b) the exchange contributes, or is likely to contribute, (whether directly or indirectly) to an economic or social benefit in the United Kingdom or elsewhere.*

While many definitions exist, an important element is that information and expertise is exchanged with businesses, society and/or the economy.

### 3.0 Research Integrity

- 3.1 University of Staffordshire expects all research undertaken at the University or conducted in its name to be carried out to the highest standards of integrity. Research integrity at University of Staffordshire is overseen by the Deputy Vice Chancellor.
- 3.2 In its role as a civic university, the University strives to make a substantial economic and social contribution to its city, its region, and beyond. The University endeavours to continuously increase national and international recognition and applicability of its research. Research integrity and good research conduct are fundamental to achieving this goal.
- 3.3 Research integrity in its simplest form means good research practice. It is the conducting of research in such a way that allows others to have confidence and trust in the methods and the findings of the research. It refers both to the integrity of the conducted research, and the professional integrity of the individual researchers. The highest standards of integrity are needed in all fields of research.
- 3.4 Good research practices are based on fundamental principles of research integrity. They guide researchers in their work as well as in their engagement with the practical, ethical and intellectual challenges inherent in research.<sup>2</sup> While closely related to research ethical review, research integrity is distinct from research ethics, which focusses primarily on the process of setting out criteria upon which proposed research projects will be reviewed and the process of reviewing proposed research according to those criteria. This is part of the wider concept of 'research integrity', which includes principles about the conduct of researchers, the practices of authorship, publication practices, peer review practices, the ways in which data are handled, analysed and interpreted, and 'outcomes' established and shared on the basis of data.<sup>3</sup> As such, this Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with [University of Staffordshire's Research Ethical Review Policy](#), and the [Framework for Good Research Practice](#) (annex 1).
- 3.5 University of Staffordshire has adopted the Universities UK (UUK) [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) (2011, updated 2019). The Concordat provides a national framework for high standards of research conduct and its governance. It sets out commitments that institutions, researchers and funders should abide by to ensure that research integrity is upheld in the UK research environment.
- 3.6 In its Code of Conduct, University of Staffordshire upholds the five commitments set out in the 2019 UK Concordat:
- Commitment 1 - upholding the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research

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<sup>2</sup> European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (revised 2017)

<sup>3</sup> Taken from Research Ethics Support and Review in Research Organisations, UKRIO and ARMA, (2020); <https://ukrio.org/wp-content/uploads/Research-Ethics-Support-and-Review-in-Research-Organisations-UKRIO-ARMA-2020.pdf>.

- Commitment 2 - ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards
- Commitment 3 - supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice, and support for the development of researchers
- Commitment 4- using transparent, timely, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise
- Commitment 5 – working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to review progress regularly and openly

#### 4.0 Principles of good research practice

4.1 Established ‘principles’ help define and guide good research practice. There are several sets of principle in current use. Many disciplines developed principles suited to their own concerns and contexts. While each have nuances, many of the core elements of these overlap. All aim to promote an honest, open, transparent, and supportive environment for research, where the results of research can be trusted to be accurate.

4.2 Research integrity principles apply to good research conduct broadly and not just to research with human participants. The University encourages its researchers to adopt the spirit and ethos of international standards such as the [Singapore Statement on Research Integrity](#) (2010), and the [European Code for Research Integrity](#) (2015, updated 2017)

4.3 As a signatory to the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#), the University mandates that researchers observe its core principles in the design of research projects, and throughout the research process. These are:

- **honesty** in all aspects of research, including in the presentation of research goals, intentions and findings<sup>4</sup>; in reporting on research methods and procedures; in gathering data; in using and acknowledging the work of other researchers; and in conveying valid interpretations and making justifiable claims based on research findings
- **rigour**, in line with prevailing disciplinary norms and standards, and in performing research and using appropriate methods; in adhering to an agreed protocol where appropriate; in drawing interpretations and conclusions from the research; and in communicating the results
- **transparency and open communication** in declaring potential competing interests; in the reporting of research data collection methods; in the analysis and interpretation of data; in making research findings widely available, which includes publishing or otherwise sharing negative or null results to recognise their value as part of the research process; and in presenting the work to other researchers and to the public
- **care and respect** for all participants in research, and for the subjects, users and beneficiaries of research, including humans, animals, the environment and cultural objects. Those

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<sup>4</sup> It is recognised that some aspects of a research project, for instance in psychology, may require participants to be naïve to the full purpose of the research, or indeed incorporate an element of deception. In these instances, appropriate ethical approval must always be sought, and the rationale and necessity of the proposed approach clearly explained. Researchers should refer to the ‘human participants’ section of the Framework for Good Research Practice and the University’s Research Ethical Review Policy.

engaged with research must also show care and respect for the integrity of the research record

- **accountability** of funders, employers and researchers to collectively create a research environment in which individuals and organisations are empowered and enabled to own the research process. Those engaged with research must also ensure that individuals and organisations are held to account when behaviour falls short of the standards set by this concordat

4.4 These core elements of research integrity apply to all aspects of research undertaken under the auspices of University of Staffordshire, including the design of research projects, the preparation and submission of grant and project proposals, the publication and dissemination of findings, and the provision of expert review on the proposals or publications of others (peer review).

## 5.0 Expectations and responsibilities of researchers

5.1 All those undertaking research at University of Staffordshire, or under its auspices, have the following responsibilities. Researchers should also refer to the [Framework for Good Research Practice](#), for more detailed guidance on their research conduct:

- Understand the expected standards of rigour and integrity relevant to their research
- Maintain the highest standards of rigour and integrity in their work at all times; including observing and upholding honesty, integrity and professionalism and maintain professional standards
- Comply with ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards as required by statutory and regulatory authorities, and by employers, funders and other relevant stakeholders; including financial requirements stipulated by the University and other relevant organisations involved in the research, meet all ethical and legal requirements including those of the country they are undertaking research in, if outside of the UK
- Ensure that all of their research is subject to active and appropriate consideration of ethical issues, consider the ethical requirements of their work and seek the appropriate level of ethical approval, prepare research proposal(s) that are ethical and comply with the University's Research Code of Conduct and other statements of good national and international practice,
- Take responsibility for keeping their knowledge up to date on the frameworks, standards and obligations that apply to their work; including undertaking relevant and appropriate professional development and ensure that other individuals involved in the research receive appropriate and relevant training, development and support. Staff should ensure that their students are aware of and understand the University's Code of Conduct for Research, together with the University's research ethics policies and procedures.
- Collaborate to maintain a research environment that encourages research integrity including attributing and acknowledging the direct and indirect contribution of colleagues and collaborators
- Design, conduct and report research in ways that embed integrity and ethical practice throughout; including conducting research with due diligence, ensuring the rights, safety and wellbeing of all individuals associated with or involved in the research, maintaining effective project management to agreed project plans, recording the progress of the research, maintaining accurate records, questioning findings and preserving the security and

confidentiality of primary data associated with the research, achieving a timely and wide dissemination of research findings, ensuring as far as possible, that the results of research are reproducible by other researchers, showing probity in the use of finance and other resources

- When acting as ethical reviewers of research projects of others, ensure that research proposals meet required ethical standards and comply with university policies and procedures that have been put in place to uphold good ethical practice.
- Act in good faith with regard to allegations of research misconduct, whether in making allegations or in being required to participate in an investigation, and take reasonable steps, working with employers as appropriate, to ensure the recommendations made by formal research misconduct investigation panels are implemented
- Handle potential instances of research misconduct in an appropriate manner; this includes reporting concerns about potential misconduct to employers, funders and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies as circumstances require
- Declare and act accordingly to manage conflicts of interest that may arise as a result of the research
- Ensure their own integrity and help to develop a culture of integrity in their groups, departments, and institutions, being aware of the process for reporting and investigating allegations of research misconduct

5.2 The primary responsibility to act in accordance with the principles described in Section 4 and the responsibilities in section 5, rests with individual researchers.

5.3 Disciplinary customs and practice differ in terms of the role of specific roles in research teams, such as Chief-investigator, principal-investigator, co-investigator. These may also be defined in contractual and/ or grant agreements.

5.4 Similarly, regarding PGR research projects, while the terms used in disciplines may differ, the University considers the principal supervisor of a PGR student to be the individual responsible for the overall leadership and management of the research project. The PGR student undertakes the research and seeks to make their own original contribution to knowledge. Ultimately, both are responsible for the proper conduct of the research project and are each responsible for their own individual conduct.

5.5 Regardless of terminologies of roles, the University expects all research activity undertaken by members of staff and other individuals as described in section 2 to be conducted according to the principles and expectations outlined in the Code of Conduct.

## 6.0 Expectations and responsibilities of the University

6.1 In turn, researchers can expect the University to uphold the highest standards of rigour and integrity including;

- maintaining a research environment that develops good research practice and embeds a culture of research integrity,
- supporting researchers to understand and act according to expected standards, values and behaviours,
- defending researchers when they live up to the expectations of this concordat in difficult circumstances
- demonstrating that they have procedures in place to ensure that research is conducted in accordance with standards of best practice; systems to promote research integrity; and transparent, robust and fair processes to investigate alleged research misconduct



6.2 The University will support a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity by;

- reflecting and embedding recognised best practice in their own systems, processes, and practices; including implementing the concordat within their research environment
- participating in an annual monitoring exercise to demonstrate that the institution has met the commitments of the concordat
- promoting training and development opportunities to research staff and students and encouraging their uptake; including development support for researchers on, and promoting awareness of, good ethical practice in the design, conduct and management of research.
- identifying a named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity and ensuring that this information is kept up to date and [publicly available on the institution's website](#)
- identifying a named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity, and ensuring that contact details for this person are kept up to date and [publicly available on the institution's website](#)
- Ensure there is an open, transparent, and supportive culture of research integrity where individuals feel able to report concerns. This includes acting with no detriment to whistle-blowers who have made allegations of research misconduct in good faith, or in the public interest, including taking reasonable steps to safeguard their reputation.

6.3 The University will work together with staff, students, and other members of the University community to strengthen the integrity of research by;

- taking steps to ensure that their environment promotes and embeds a commitment to research integrity, and that suitable processes are in place to deal with misconduct
- producing a short annual statement, presented to the Board of Governors, and subsequently be made [publicly available on the institution's website](#)
- periodically reviewing their processes to ensure that these remain fit for purpose

6.4 The University, through Academic Board, the Research and Innovation Committee, Research, is responsible for putting in place a research environment that supports research of high ethical standards, mutual co-operation, professionalism and the open and honest exchange of ideas. Final responsibility for ensuring that research is correctly managed and monitored rests with the University.

6.5 Members of Executive, Deans of Schools, Associate Deans, and Heads of Departments are expected by the University to ensure that the Code of Conduct is observed by staff, students and honorary, visiting and emeritus titleholders. This includes ensuring that new staff made aware of the Code of Conduct and the process for reporting allegations of research misconduct through the induction process.

## 7.0 Research Misconduct

7.1 Misconduct in research may arise if the Code of Conduct, including the [Framework for Good Research Practice](#), is not observed.

7.2 The University recognises and adopts the characterisation of research misconduct outlined in the Concordat to Support Research Integrity as “behaviours or actions that fall short of the standards of ethics, research and scholarship required to ensure that the integrity of research is upheld.” Research Misconduct can “cause harm to people and



the environment, wastes resources, undermines the research record and damages the credibility of research.”

The responsibility for ensuring that research misconduct does not occur rests primarily with individual researchers.

7.3 The University draws on the categories of research misconduct outlined in the Concordat, outlined below. Research misconduct can take many forms, including, but not limited to, the below categories and indicative examples:

Category	Indictive, non-exhaustive, list
<b>Fabrication:</b>	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• making up results, data, other outputs (for example, artefacts) or aspects of research, including documentation and participant consent, and presenting and/or recording them as if they were real;</li> <li>• the publication of data known to be false or misleading.</li> </ul>
<b>Falsification:</b>	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inappropriately manipulating and/or selecting research processes, materials, equipment, data, imagery and/or consents;</li> <li>• the corruption of data with the intention to deceive.</li> </ul>
<b>Plagiarism:</b>	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using other people’s ideas, intellectual property or work (written or otherwise) without acknowledgement or permission;</li> <li>• the dishonest misrepresentation of other authors.</li> </ul>
<b>Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations:</b>	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not observing legal, ethical and other requirements for human research participants, animal subjects, or human organs or tissue used in research, or for the protection of the environment;</li> <li>• Failure to meet University and external ethical approval procedures to conduct research, unethical behaviour in the conduct of research;</li> <li>• breach of any relevant duty of care for humans involved in research whether deliberately, recklessly or by gross negligence, including failure to obtain appropriate informed consent;</li> <li>• misuse of personal data, including inappropriate disclosures of the identity of research participants and other breaches of confidentiality, unauthorised use of material, data or other information acquired confidentially where permission was not given for disclosure or use;</li> <li>• improper conduct in peer review of research proposals, results or manuscripts submitted for publication. This includes failure to disclose conflicts of interest; inadequate disclosure of</li> </ul>

	<p>clearly limited competence; misappropriation of the content of material; and breach of confidentiality or abuse of material provided in confidence for the purposes of peer review;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to follow accepted procedures or to exercise due care in carrying out responsibilities. This includes failure to avoid unreasonable risk or harm to humans; animals used in research; and the environment;</li> <li>• Failure to follow accepted procedures or to exercise due care regarding the proper handling of privileged or private information on individuals collected during the research;</li> <li>• Fraud, including financial fraud and the misuse of funds and University equipment.</li> </ul>
<b>Misrepresentation:</b>	<p>Including misrepresentation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• data, including suppression of relevant results/data or knowingly, recklessly or by gross negligence presenting a flawed interpretation of data;</li> <li>• involvement, including inappropriate claims to authorship or attribution of work and denial of authorship/attribution to persons who have made an appropriate contribution;</li> <li>• Deliberate misquotation or dishonest misrepresentation of other authors;</li> <li>• interests, including failure to declare competing interests of researchers or funders of a study;</li> <li>• skills, qualifications, experience and/or credentials, including claiming or implying skills, qualifications or experience which are not held;</li> <li>• publication history, through undisclosed duplication of publication, including undisclosed duplicate submission of manuscripts for publication.</li> </ul>
<b>Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct:</b>	<p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• failing to address possible infringements, such as attempts to cover up misconduct and reprisals against whistle-blowers;</li> <li>• failing to adhere appropriately to agreed procedures in the investigation of alleged research misconduct accepted as a condition of funding;</li> <li>• Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct includes the inappropriate censoring of parties through the use of legal instruments, such as non-disclosure agreements;</li> <li>• Inciting others to commit research misconduct;</li> <li>• Collusion on, or concealment of, research misconduct committed by others.</li> </ul>

7.4 Although the University regards the following as serious, it has concluded that issues of this kind are more appropriately addressed through the University's Disciplinary Procedure, and are therefore excluded from the definition of research misconduct given under paragraph 7.2:

- Unsound Science or research practice, unless known to have been unsound before the start of the research work,
- Honest error or honest differences in the design, execution, interpretation or evaluation of research methods,
- Misconduct unrelated to a research project or study,
- Failure to maintain scientific rigour, or the acceptable norms for rigour in the discipline (unless repeated or serious).

7.5 Honest errors and differences in, for example, research methodology or interpretations do not constitute research misconduct

## 8.0 Investigation of Research Misconduct

8.1 Where research misconduct is suspected or alleged, the [Procedure for the Investigation of Research Misconduct](#) will be followed.

8.2 All members of the University have a responsibility to report any incidents of research misconduct, whether this has been witnessed, or for which there are reasonable grounds for concern or suspicion. Failure by a member of staff or student to report research misconduct may constitute the withholding of information and may, potentially, invoke relevant misconduct or disciplinary procedures.

8.3 If an individual is unsure whether a suspected incident constitutes misconduct, they should discuss this informally and in confidence with the named contact points [publicly available on the institution's website](#)

8.4 Anyone, internally or externally to the University, who believes that an act of research misconduct has taken place or is taking place, should notify, in writing, the Pro-Vice Chancellor Education and Research (or the [confidential whistle-blower contact](#)), and explain the nature of the allegation and the person or persons against whom the allegation of research misconduct has been made. The identity of a Complainant will not be disclosed during the investigation.

## 9.0 Review of Code of Conduct

9.1 Research, Enterprise and Innovation Committee will oversee a review of the Code of Conduct every three years. The review ensures that the Code continues to reflect best practice.