

## Introduction

- 1 The University of Bradford is a signatory to Universities UK (UUK) Concordat to support research integrity. This provides a national framework for good research conduct and its governance; it gives researchers and employers of researchers responsibilities within existing regulatory mechanisms, and aims to strengthen research integrity, whilst recognising that mistakes and honest errors can be made.
- 2 All signatories to the Concordat are committed to the continuous development of a culture that supports and nurtures research integrity, and mechanisms that provide assurances and ensure appropriate investigation and actions are undertaken when things go wrong. The Concordat also asserts that we must be able to account for our efforts openly and transparently.
- 3 It should be noted that readers external to the University of Bradford may not be able to access all of the web-links provided in this document. A general overview of institutional support for researchers is available at <https://www.bradford.ac.uk/research/research-support/>. If a copy of any of the documents to which the report refers is required, requests should be made via email to [rais@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:rais@bradford.ac.uk).

## University's commitments as a signatory to the Concordat

- 4 The Concordat contains five commitments to support and promote research integrity. These are quoted below and further details can be found at <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/field/downloads/2021-08/Updated%20FINAL-the-concordat-to-support-research-integrity.pdf>:

Commitment #1: We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research;

Commitment #2: We are committed to ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards;

Commitment #3: We are committed to 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: We are committed to using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise;

Commitment #5: We are committed to working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.



- 5 Within commitment #5, the Concordat recommends that employers of researchers should present a short annual statement to their own governing body that:
- summarises actions and activities undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues, e.g. training or process reviews;
  - gives assurances that their processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the organisation's needs;
  - provides a high-level statement of any formal investigations undertaken into research misconduct;
  - provides a statement on what the institution has learned from any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, including what lessons have been learned to prevent the same type of incident re-occurring;
  - provides a statement on how the institution creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct
- 6 Under the Terms and Conditions of UK Research and Innovation funding, HEIs in receipt of funding administered through Research England are obliged to comply with this concordat, particularly its recommendations for internal processes and guidance, and for staff training. Each HEI must confirm that it complies with the Concordat in its annual assurance to the Office for Students (OfS).

#### **University of Bradford's current activities to demonstrate compliance with the Concordat**

- 7 The University of Bradford commits to its responsibilities outlined in the Concordat in the following ways:
- The University supports and strengthens researchers' understanding and application of research integrity issues through the following training events:
    - i. Staff and student training – see:  
<https://unibradfordac.sharepoint.com/sites/research-and-knowledge-transfer-support-intranet/SitePages/Homepage-Training.aspx>



1. Training for Ethics Panel and Committee Members<sup>1</sup> (annually; available to Research Ethics Panel and Research Ethics Committee members);
  2. Training in Research Ethics and the University of Bradford, Research Ethics Approval Process (twice-yearly, available to staff and students);
  3. Integrated Research Approval System (IRAS) e-learning module (duration is approximately 1 hour; available to staff and students);
  4. Health Research Authority (HRA) Learning Management System eLearning modules (free for everyone to access);
  5. Ethical Approval Processes for Research (annually, available to Faculty of Health Studies and Faculty of Life Sciences (Pharmacy research group) staff, and all students); *ad hoc* training sessions provided to individual Departments or Schools as requested by them from the Research Ethics Panels.
  6. HRA, IRAS and Q&A session (annually, in partnership with colleagues at West Yorkshire Research & Development; available to staff and students);
  7. Regular HRA update meetings between Research and Innovation Services (RaIS) staff and colleagues at West Yorkshire Research & Development, disseminated to all panel members via circulation of HRA update sheets from these meetings and regular digests of items particularly relevant to staff on the Ethics Sharepoint site.
- ii. Research student ethics training within PGR Induction and the PGR Framework
1. Research ethics at Bradford – the basics (induction training);
  2. Ethical doctoral research;
  3. Data management for doctoral research;
  4. Ethics, professionalism and reflective practice;
  5. Ethics in digital research (external session free to attend for Bradford PGR).

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<sup>1</sup> This event has been impacted by the Covid pandemic and therefore postponed. In its place, 'new members training' sessions were held between September 2020 and November 2021. A meeting and discussion of all panel members will be held in January 2022, and the standard full training session will be recommenced in May 2022.



iii. Guidance and documentation in the following areas:

1. HRA Decision Tool for staff and students to ascertain whether their research needs IRAS approval;
  2. Public and patient involvement (PPI) in research (for staff)
- The University's processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair, and they are reviewed regularly to ensure that they continue to be appropriate to the organisation's needs. Further details are available at the following link: <https://unibradfordac.sharepoint.com/sites/research-and-knowledge-transfer-support-intranet/SitePages/Key-Policies-Research-Integrity.aspx>. The policy's operation and application are also reviewed throughout the academic year to assess what is and is not working.
  - The link above also hosts the University's Whistleblowing (i.e., public interest disclosure) Code of Practice.
  - Two cases of research misconduct were investigated in the academic year 2020/21. These were dealt with via formal internal procedures, one of which resulted in a formal sanction against a member of staff. The second matter was concluded to be an issue of poor academic practice by a former PGR.

### **University of Bradford's future activities in compliance with the Concordat**

- 8 The University will further support and strengthen researchers' understanding and application of research integrity issues through new, online ethics training. The development of this training package is underway but has been delayed by the impacts of the Covid pandemic. A link will be added to the RaIS ethics training web pages once it is available for staff and students to access.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

- 9 Council is invited to consider and approve this report.