

Nottingham Trent University *Annual Statement on Research Integrity, 2015/16*

Context

The Concordat to Support Research Integrity, published by Universities to provide a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance, has now been in effect for over four years. As a supporter of the Concordat NTU is committed to upholding the commitments of the Concordat, which is also endorsed by the four UK higher education funding councils (HEFCE, SFC, HEFCW, DELNI), Universities UK, Research Councils UK (RCUK), the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and the Wellcome Trust.

Higher Education Institutions are requested to confirm compliance with the Concordat in their HEFCE annual assurance statement, which will be subject to routine audit. In addition, compliance with the Concordat has been a condition of the HEFCE grant since 2014/15 while RCUK monitor all Research Organisations in receipt of RCUK research funding to ensure compliance with the Concordat via their own standard Assurance Programme. NTU will therefore also be subject to regular audit of compliance through this route.

University signatories of the Concordat are mandated to present a short annual report to their governing body, to provide:

1. A summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues;
2. 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;
3. A high level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken.

To improve accountability and provide assurances that measures being taken continue to support consistently high standards of research integrity, the annual statement should be made publicly available. To meet this requirement NTU has published its Annual Statement since 2013/14 and will continue to do so through its webpages relating to research integrity.

2015/16 Statement to Academic Board and Board of Governors

Summary of actions and activities undertaken to support and strengthen the understanding and application of research integrity issues:

1. An internal University-wide audit in 2014 provided evidence to demonstrate NTU's compliance with the RIC. In addition, there were two recommendations arising from the audit, and progress against each of these is outlined below:
 - a. The provision of an annual confirmation statement to be completed by all staff conducting research at NTU, stating that they are aware of and understand ethical policies in place. This initiative has been piloted with postgraduate research students and with academic staff in the School of Social Sciences. At the end of the pilot period engagement and effectiveness of this approach will be evaluated with a view to implementing a sustainable university-wide mechanism for annual confirmation.
 - b. The provision of a 3-yearly cycle of mandatory online ethics training modules, to be completed by all NTU staff undertaking scholarship and research, with monitoring of training

completion. An online resource linked to externally-provided ethics training resources has been created and will be piloted on a targeted group of research staff and first year postgraduate research students in the first term of the 2016/17 academic year with the aim of building up full coverage over the 2017/18 and 2018/19 academic years.

2. A University-wide *Annual Document Review Cycle for Research Integrity* was implemented from 2015/16 to ensure that documentation relating to research integrity continues to reflect current standards and expectations for good conduct and practice in research. Documents reviewed under the *Annual Document Review Cycle* for the 2015/16 academic year were:

- i. NTU Code of Practice for Research;
- ii. NTU Research Ethics Policy;
- iii. All documentation held at College level relating to ethical clearance for research projects and programmes;
- iv. Policies/procedures relating to allegations of research misconduct in relation research students¹;

3. Incorporation of a codified policy on research containing special risks into research ethics application forms and associated guidance documentation. A University-wide position on research containing special risks, by which is meant research into subjects where there is the potential to attract the attention of third party investigations, will be incorporated into research ethics forms and guidance documentation used by research ethics committees across the University from the start of the 2016/17 academic year. This codifies the extensive provision of advice from research ethics committees which is already available to researchers at the University.

4. Annual briefing sessions, designed to underscore the importance of the RIC to staff employed on research contracts, as well as the line managers of such staff, were held in May and June 2016.

5. Formal guidance on the retention of research ethics applications, on which there was found to be no broad UK-wide standard, is being formalised and will be issued to research ethics committees. A policy of indefinite retention is proposed, which is felt to provide the greatest level of assurance regarding integrity of University-sponsored research.

6. A working group was established in October 2015 to examine ethical issues around pedagogical research and learning analytics, and which is to report to the University Research Committee by the end of 2016. The three objectives of the Group are:

- a. to identify the key data protection and research ethics concerns that arise from pedagogic research and learning analytics;
- b. to provide simple, clear, practical guidelines as to how to address those concerns;
- c. where appropriate, to recommend changes to NTU policies to accommodate these activities.

The recommendations made by the Group will be considered by the University Research Committee and accepted recommendations incorporated into appropriate NTU policy or practice.

Assurances relating to processes in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

¹ Alleged cases of staff research misconduct are dealt with under the NTU *Disciplinary Policy and Procedure* which, in accordance with HR policy review practice, has a two-year cycle for review and amendment.

The annual review and revision of the University-wide policies and procedures for dealing with allegations of research misconduct in relation to staff (via the NTU Disciplinary Policy and Procedure) and research students (via the NTU Procedure for Investigating Alleged Research Misconduct) provides assurance that the University processes in place 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.

Statement on formal investigations of research misconduct:

1. Research students: There has been one reported case of alleged research misconduct during 2015/16. The case concerned an allegation of research misconduct in relation to a paper published in 2015 by an NTU PhD student. The allegation was investigated thoroughly and it was determined that it was sufficiently serious and had sufficient substance to warrant a Formal Investigation under the formal procedure for Investigating Research Misconduct.

The formal investigation upheld in part the allegation under the heading of – *the deliberate exploitation of ideas from others without proper acknowledgement, defined as ‘Piracy’ in the Procedure for Investigating Alleged Research Misconduct*. The investigation recommended that an ‘Erratum’ be submitted for publication to the journal, with a change to the *Acknowledgements* section of the paper to acknowledge the contribution of the complainant. The recommendation did not include a change of authorship to the original paper. The Panel also found no evidence to suggest that any research misconduct had occurred in the preparation or defence of the PhD thesis, and there should be no further hindrance in respect of the award of the PhD certificate and the graduation of the Respondent from NTU.

2. Staff: There have been no reported cases of alleged research misconduct during 2015/16 and therefore no formal investigations of research misconduct have been undertaken.