



Nottingham Trent
University

Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2019/20

1. Introduction.

1.1 This is the seventh Annual Statement on Research Integrity produced by Nottingham Trent University (NTU). It covers the academic year of 2019/20.

1.2 NTU continues to be a strong advocate of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and the commitments that underpin it. The University requires that all individuals involved in research either at or in the name of NTU, irrespective of the discipline/field of research, adhere at all times to the institutional Code of Practice for Research.

1.3 The Concordat commits universities, research institutes and individual researchers to ensuring research and related activities meet rigorous high standards. It coalesces around five commitments. This annual statement summarises steps taken in 2019/20 to enhance further NTU's support of each commitment.

2. Commitment 1: We are committed to upholding the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.

2.1 Guidance provided by individual research ethics committees has been updated throughout the year to maintain currency. Training sessions at a local level are held periodically to meet demand. Postgraduate research students are provided with relevant training upon enrolment at the University.

2.2 Members of the University Research Integrity Committee and other key staff within the institution benefited from an externally led workshop in June 2020. The session, delivered by David Carpenter, an independent adviser and trainer in research ethics working under the auspices of the UK Research Integrity Office, focused on different approaches and challenges faced by research ethics committees. The session was initially scheduled to be delivered in-person and for institutions across the East Midlands, but was moved to an online platform following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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

3.1 In light of the effects of the pandemic on research activities, assessments to mitigate any risks associated with Covid-19 were undertaken for research projects requiring face-to-face data collection. These assessments were especially rigorous for projects where social distancing was difficult to achieve, such as with studies of a more invasive nature. Their implementation allowed projects to recommence in a safe manner following the easing of lockdown measures in early summer 2020.

4. 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.

4.1 As part of NTU's commitment to upholding the highest standards of research, all staff with significant responsibility for research and Postgraduate Researcher Students are required to confirm that their research practice conforms to institutional expectations through the Annual Statement of Positive Confirmation. The statement requires researchers to affirm that they have read, understood and agreed to abide by the principles, values and terms of Nottingham Trent University's requirements for research practice. In line with its commitment to the SDG Accord, through which the University helps to deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals, researchers are also requested to reflect upon opportunities to undertake research in a sustainable manner.

4.2 Electronic resources designed to develop understanding of matters relating to research integrity have been acquired and are available to researchers at all career stages. The resources, which take a modular format, include a quiz for staff to check learnings they have gained through engagement with the resources.

4.3 Additional research ethics resources and an ethics quiz for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students in the in the Schools of Art and Design, Architecture, Design and the Build Environment and Arts and Humanities were rolled out in this academic year.

4.4 Training and support to promote high standards of research data management (RDM) throughout the research data lifecycle have been developed, with a particular emphasis on resources for Doctoral candidates. AS an example, in person and virtual essential training delivered for Doctoral candidates, as part of the Core Doctorate Plus Programme each term, and Doctoral Supervisors as part of NTU's Researcher Development Programme. Furthermore, asynchronous RDM guidance and support materials have been developed and made available to all researchers via NTU's Researcher Development Gateway.

5. Commitment 4: We are committed to using transparent, timely, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct when they arise.

5.1 NTU is committed to a policy of openness on research misconduct. On the rare occasions where those acting under the auspices of NTU, whether staff or students, are alleged to have committed research misconduct these allegations are rigorously investigated. Where such allegations have been upheld NTU will publish anonymised top-level information on these cases, in addition to any resulting policy or procedural enhancements.

5.2 *Postgraduate Research Student (PGR) Research Misconduct*

5.2.1 Allegations of research misconduct are investigated under the Procedure for Investigating Alleged Research Misconduct, as detailed in the NTU Quality Handbook. The procedure applies to all postgraduate research students undertaking a research degree (MPhil, MProf, PhD and Professional Doctorate courses).

5.2.1 While no complaints about PGR student research have been received, a complaint was made about an undergraduate research project. In this instance, participants solicited to complete a survey were not provided with an information sheet. Following investigation and discussion with the student, the survey was withdrawn.

5.3 *Staff Research Misconduct*

5.3.1 Allegations of staff misconduct are investigated under the NTU Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, which is maintained and subjected to annual review and update by Corporate HR.

5.3.2 One research ethics committee received a complaint regarding the appropriateness of validated scales used in a research project. The committee chair instigated a review of the approval of the project, the project's appropriateness, and recommendations for suitable options to address the issues raised. All stakeholders involved were communicated with throughout the review, which was conducted independently and transparently, and the matter was resolved to the satisfaction of all parties. The matter was investigated without the invocation of the NTU Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

5.3.3 An allegation of plagiarism was made against one NTU researcher. This was investigated thoroughly under the NTU Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and resolved within its parameters.

5.3.4 An allegation of falsification of results in a particular study was made against one NTU researcher. The allegation was also investigated thoroughly under the NTU Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and resolved within its parameters.

5.3.5 An allegation of a breach of the NTU Code of Practice for Research was investigated under the NTU Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. The allegation concerned the appropriateness of tasks assigned by a senior researcher to a Doctoral candidate. The investigation did not result in a formal sanction but the senior researcher was required to undertake additional training.

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

6.1 NTU established a Task and Finish Group to investigate further the key findings of the April 2020 report '*Research Ethics Support and Review in Research Organisations*' by the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA). The Group is charged with reviewing relevant internal processes, procedures and structures in light of the report and making recommendations for enhancements. The final report of the Group will be submitted for approval to the University Research Committee in May 2021, with its findings being implemented in the remainder of the 2020/21 academic year and into 2021/2022.