

## Nottingham Trent University

### Annual Statement on Research Integrity, 2014/15

#### Context

The *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* was published by Universities UK in July 2012 to provide a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance. Signatories include 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 will be asked to confirm compliance with the *Concordat* in their HEFCE annual assurance statement, which will be subject to routine audit. HEFCE has stipulated that compliance with the *Concordat* will be a condition of the HEFCE grant from 2014/15. In addition, for all Research Organisations in receipt of RCUK research funding, RCUK will be monitoring compliance with the *Concordat* via their own standard Assurance Programme and therefore NTU will also be subject to regular audit of compliance through this route.

A requirement of the *Concordat* is that each University should present a short annual report to its 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 it is the intention that NTU's Statement will be made public on its webpages relating to research integrity.

#### 2014/15 Statement to Academic Board and Board of Governors

1. *Summary of actions and activities undertaken to support and strengthen the understanding and application of research integrity issues:*
  - a. An internal University-wide audit to consider its compliance with the *Research Integrity Concordat (RIC)* was undertaken during October and November 2014. Outcomes from the audit provided evidence to demonstrate NTU's compliance with the RIC. In addition, there were two recommendations arising from the audit:
    - i. 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;

- ii. 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.

Work to implement both audit recommendations is underway, with the first tranche of data relating to staff positive annual confirmation of awareness/understanding of NTU ethical policies and mandatory ethics training being collected over the course of 2015/16.

- b. A University-wide *Annual Document Review Cycle for Research Integrity* was implemented from 2014/15 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 2014/15 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 students<sup>1</sup>;
- c. Follow-up briefings to alert staff employed on research contracts at NTU to the RIC were held during May 2015.

2. *Assurances relating to processes in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct*: Annual review and revision of the University-wide policies and procedures for dealing with allegations of research misconduct in relation of 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.

3. *Statement on formal investigations of research misconduct*:

- a. Research students: There have been two reported cases of alleged research misconduct during 2014/15. Both cases concerned allegations of plagiarism in an early piece of student-generated coursework. Since these allegations related to coursework submitted prior to final thesis stage submission, they were dealt with outside of the formal research misconduct processes. In both cases, the allegations were upheld and the students were each awarded a 'fail' and were required to resubmit the relevant document.
- b. Staff: There have been no reported cases of alleged research misconduct during 2014/15 and therefore no formal investigations of research misconduct have been undertaken.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.