



Nottingham Trent
University

Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2020/21

1. Introduction.

1.1 This is the eighth Annual Statement on Research Integrity produced by Nottingham Trent University (NTU). It covers the academic year of 2020/21.

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 2020/21 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 (RECs) continues to be updated throughout the year to maintain currency. Training sessions at a local level are held periodically to meet demand. One REC strengthened its guidance on usage of online platforms for data collection and analysis. Postgraduate research students are provided with relevant training upon enrolment at the University.

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 Requirements governing the provenance of research funding were strengthened in the institutional Code of Practice for Research. The additional guidance emphasised that research funding should neither be sought nor accepted where doing so may lead to undue influence on decision-making at the University, including interference with its charitable objectives, or where it may cause substantial reputational damage to the University or place pressure on any of its employees to act in an illegal, improper, or unethical manner.

3.2 To strengthen the relevance of the Code of Practice for Research to doctoral candidates, reference to the PGR Code of Behaviour was included within it and examples of breaches of the Code indicated.

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 Training and support to promote high standards of research data management (RDM) has been further enhanced to offer updates on best practice and guidance in relation to ethical and legal research data management. For example, new webinars, 'Managing personal, sensitive and confidential data' have been delivered as part of the Researcher Development Programme for NTU staff and doctoral candidates. Asynchronous materials have also been produced to explain to undergraduates and taught post-graduates how research data should be managed during individual projects or dissertations.

4.3 Steps have begun to be taken to further enhance the research environment through enacting the recommendations made by the Research Ethics Task and Finish Group. These recommendations focus on processes, policies, structures, and resources. Further detail is provided in Section 6.

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 No allegations of research misconduct were made against PGR students in the 2020/21 academic year. In the previous none were also made.

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 No allegations of research misconduct were made against staff in the 2020/21 academic year. In the previous year four were made.

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

6.1 The NTU Task and Finish Group established 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) submitted its report to the University Research Committee in May 2021. The Task and Finish Group's report included recommendations to enhance relevant internal processes, procedures, resources, and structures in light of the UKRIO/ARMA report.

6.2 The key recommendations from the report have begun to be rolled out in this academic year but will continue through into 2021/22. Key areas of focus are:

- a) Procuring and operationalising an online system for the management of research ethics applications.

- b) Producing a principles-based research ethics learning resource to be made available to researchers at all career stages.
- c) Refreshing the Terms of Reference and Constitution of RECs reviewing applications submitted by staff and doctoral students.
- d) Producing a new set of Standard Operating Procedures for RECs at NTU.
- e) Incorporating breaches of research ethics policies, and associated penalties, explicitly into both staff and student codes of conduct.