



Nottingham Trent
University

Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2021/22

1. Introduction.

1.1 This is the ninth Annual Statement on Research Integrity produced by Nottingham Trent University (NTU). It covers the academic year of 2021/22.

1.2 NTU maintains its strong advocacy 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 2021/22 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 The University Research Integrity Committee (URIC) has responsibility for providing strategic oversight and leadership of NTU research integrity and the ecosystem which supports it. Its membership is drawn from across the University, from both the academy and professional services, reflecting the diversity of matters considered by URIC. Membership is reviewed on an annual basis. URIC has developed and/or reviewed and provided comment on a number of initiatives, policies and procedures designed to upholding the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research. The below points summarise the developments which URIC have supported during the 2021/22 academic year.

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 The Code of Practice for Research, applicable to all individuals involved in research in the name of the University irrespective of the discipline or field of research, was reviewed to ensure currency and relevance. The Code was updated so that reference to Research Ethics Committees (RECs) providing 'approval' of

projects was removed and replaced with 'favourable opinion,' in line with a change in nomenclature across the University.

3.2 Guidance on the distinction between invasive and non-invasive research methods was enhanced by two RECs operating in the School of Science and Technology. The guidance was produced to assist applicants in submitting their applications to the appropriate committee, ensuring projects received scrutiny from committees with relevant expertise.

3.3 An institutional Export Controls Policy was developed to ensure the University meets its obligations under the UK Export Control regime. The policy applies to all employees of the University, and all persons or third parties working on behalf of the University in any capacity. A programme of advocacy and training was implemented in support of the policy and additional guidance to accompany the policy is available on the University's SharePoint site.

3.4 The University has formally submitted an application for a Human Tissue Authority (HTA) Licence, with the outcome expected to be known in Autumn 2022. Extensive and robust governance and operating arrangements have been developed to ensure human tissue is treated in strict accordance with the licence, should it be received.

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 A new training resource was developed and launched with a view to allowing researchers to gain a more fundamental understanding of research ethics. The resource, which takes a principles-based approach and uses both video and textual content, includes a short quiz to allow participants to test their knowledge of research ethics. The resource is available to staff, and there are plans to incorporate its content into resources for doctoral candidates. This results from one of the recommendations included in the NTU Research Ethics Task and Finish Group report produced in Spring 2021.

4.2 A learning and development piece under the banner of 'The Only Way Is Ethics' is in the process of being developed. The resource will be based on a series of NTU conversations about ethics and integrity, with the intention of allowing NTU colleagues the opportunity to plot their own routes to personal and professional development. It will begin to be rolled out in Autumn 2022.

4.3 A series of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for RECs were approved. The SOPs, which are based on the Belmont Principles of research ethics, set out which types of research require and ethics opinion, the various RECs in operation at NTU and details of how the review process works.

4.4 A SharePoint site was developed and launched with information on research integrity and ethics, accessible to all staff and doctoral candidates. The site contains guidance, training and on a range of integrity-related issues.

4.5 Additional guidance around the use of online platforms to conduct research was developed and issued by a REC for which this mechanism of undertaking research is popular.

4.6 Training and support to promote high standards of research data management (RDM) has been consolidated through the revision of guidance and webinars targeted at doctoral candidates and staff as they prepare applications for ethical review. RDM support materials have also been added to the SharePoint site (see 4.4.). The submission of a data management plan is now mandatory requirement as part of the ethical review process. Therefore, training, featuring an 'Ethical RDM checklist,' has been developed and offered to reviewers of ethics applications. Delivery of these sessions for RECs will continue to be rolled out throughout 2022/23.

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).

5.2.2 One allegation of misconduct was reported and investigated in the 2021/22 academic year. This allegation concerned plagiarism and was formally investigated under the Procedure noted in 5.2.1. The allegation was upheld, and proportionate steps were taken to address the misconduct.

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 allegation of research misconduct was made against a member of staff in the 2021/22 academic year. The allegation concerned adherence to ethical review procedures and was investigated under the informal part of the Policy. The matter was resolved without invocation of the formal element of the Policy.

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

6.1 Lay members have begun to be recruited to sit on RECs at NTU which receive applications from members of staff and doctoral candidates. The intention is to complete the recruitment for these posts during the 2022/23 academic year. The role of lay members is to provide an external, non-specialist view of committee business and to represent the interests of potential research participants.

6.2 A new web-based platform to facilitate the submission of staff and doctoral research ethics applications was operationalised in April 2022. The platform, which is a module within the Worktribe research information management system, was accompanied by extensive training for applicants, reviewers and committee administrators. Further resource in the form of extensive technical and submission guidance is also available to prospective applicants on one of the University's SharePoint sites.