



Nottingham Trent  
University

# Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2023/24

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## Introduction

This is the eleventh Annual Statement on Research Integrity produced by Nottingham Trent University (NTU). It covers the academic year of 2023/24.

NTU maintains its strong advocacy of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and the commitments that underpin it. The University requires that all staff, visiting staff and doctoral candidates 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.

The Annual Statement for 2023/24 is based on the template developed by the UK Research Integrity Office with the Research Integrity Concordat Signatories Group.

## 1. Commitment 1: Key contact information

<b>Name of organisation</b>	Nottingham Trent University
<b>Type of organisation</b>	Higher Education Institution
<b>Date statement approved by governing body</b>	University Open Research and Research Integrity Committee (18/09/2024)  University Research and Innovation Committee (16/01/2025)
<b>Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)</b>	<a href="https://www.ntu.ac.uk/research/research-and-impact/research-integrity">https://www.ntu.ac.uk/research/research-and-impact/research-integrity</a>
<b>Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity</b>	Professor Richard Emes, Pro Vice-Chancellor – Research & International
	Email address: <a href="mailto:richard.emes@ntu.ac.uk">richard.emes@ntu.ac.uk</a>
<b>Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for</b>	Anton Muszanskyj, Head of Research Governance & Policy

**anyone wanting more information  
on matters of research integrity**

Email address:  
[anton.muszanskyj@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:anton.muszanskyj@ntu.ac.uk)

## **2. Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken**

### **2A. Description of current systems and culture**

- Policies and systems

Two key documents underpin NTU's system and culture of research integrity and ethics. These are:

1. The Code of Practice for Research, available on [NTU's website](#). The Code is applicable to all staff, visiting staff and doctoral candidates involved in research in the name of the University, with the exception of undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, irrespective of the discipline or field of research. It set out the principles of practice and conduct by which the University expects research to be carried out either at or in the name of NTU and covers a range of subjects including personal and professional research integrity, research funding, research data, research authorship, training and development and research misconduct. The Code is highlighted in the researcher induction programme for new researchers at NTU. It is subject to regular review and update and was last updated in January 2023.
2. Research Ethics Policy and Procedure, also available on [NTU's website](#). The Policy and Procedure applies to all individuals conducting research within or on behalf of the University. The intention of the Policy and Procedure is to provide an overarching framework of principles designed to promote a quality research culture, clarify internal procedures and structures relating to research ethics, and mandate that all research projects carried out within or in the name of NTU involving primary research with human beings should be subject to ethical review. As with the Code of Practice for Research, it is highlighted in the researcher induction programme for new researchers at NTU. It is subject to regular review and update and was last updated in January 2025.

The University has robust procedures in place to investigate instances of unacceptable behaviour in the conduct of research, and also operates a Whistle-Blowing Policy. Please see section 3 for further details.

The University operates a Research Data Management Policy that sets out expectations around, and support for, research data management throughout the data lifecycle. It is an expectation that every research project has a data management plan. The Library-based team led by the Academic Engagement

Manager – Open Research, provides extensive and bespoke support to researchers in completing data management plans. Data management plans must be included as part of research ethics applications submitted to all research ethics committees (RECs).

The University conducts research with animals and is a signatory of the Concordat for Openness in Animal Research. The Concordat informs the University's standard and governance and is NTU's pledge of working towards a more transparent and engaged approach to animal research. The University also promote the use of the [Animal Research: Reporting in Vivo Experiments \(ARRIVE\)](#) guidelines. This is a checklist for researchers designed to improve the quality, reliability and reproducibility of their published research.

- Communications and engagement

The Doctoral School runs workshops in the Project Approval series for new starters; the first of these provides guidance to doctoral candidates on what ethical research looks like, how to consider ethical dimensions of research in projects and data management including how to produce a data management plan, while the second focuses on completing project approval and a further review of research ethics and data management. Ethical issues are also raised and considered in various workshops in the Research Methods and Analysis series, linked to different methodological approaches for example in relation to participatory research, ethnographic research or research with vulnerable people. Plagiarism, falsification and fabrication are also covered in training and development sessions provided to doctoral candidates.

Researcher Induction and the Research Induction Checklist, overseen by the Researcher Development Team, establish researcher responsibilities for research conducted at NTU. The Individual Research Plan and Research Development Roadmap reinforce researcher responsibilities. Together, they ensure researchers are familiar with specific NTU policy and procedure: the Code of Practice for Research, Research Ethics Policy and Procedure, Annual Statements and the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. This provides a foundation for NTU research that fosters research integrity and promotes a positive research culture in practice.

The Research Support SharePoint site acts as a home and signpost for research integrity-related guidance and resources, including the Code of Practice for Research Ethics Policy and Procedure. All NTU staff and doctoral candidates have access to the SharePoint site. New content has been added to the site throughout this academic year (see Section 2B) and the site itself will be subject to further enhancement in the 2024/25 academic year as part of an institutional project focused on improving support for researchers.

The Research Newsletter, which is distributed on a monthly basis, provides a mechanism to directly research researchers at the University and share updates on research integrity-related matters. The development of position notes, guidance on authorship and changes to the question set used by RECs receiving applications

from staff and doctoral candidates were all communicated to researchers through the newsletter.

The Thrive professional development platform is used to house training and development resource. The Researcher Development Team are responsible for creating and commissioning research-focused content for Thrive. All NTU members of staff have access to the platform.

Training on specific matters of research ethics and integrity are provided as and when required at local level, often orchestrated by research ethics committees (RECs).

The NTU Researcher Network is an inclusive network for researchers and is now in its third year of operation. It includes researchers across the full range of career stages, from Recognised Researcher to Established Researcher and Leading Researcher. Workshops on a range of areas were held in 2023/24, including on authorship in the context of collaboration. Outcomes from this session led to the development of guidance to address some misconceptions concerning authorship of research outputs.

- Culture, development and leadership

The University Research & Innovation Committee (UR&IC) has overall responsibility for research integrity at NTU. It has delegated powers to the University Open Research and Research Integrity Committee (UORRIC) to provide strategic oversight and leadership of research integrity and the ecosystem which supports it. Further details on the terms of reference and membership of UR&IC are available on the University's [Research Governance web pages](#). Corresponding information on UORRIC is available on the University's [Research Integrity web pages](#).

The post of Director of Research Culture and Environment was established in the 2023/24 academic year, and this post holder is overseeing on a range of activities designed to enhance the institutional research environment and culture, including aspects of research integrity. Much of this work is funnelled through the Valuing Idea Board, which is the body charged with delivering on the research-focused aspects of the University's Strategic Plan. A complementary role of Director of Research Strategy and Operations was appointed in January 2024, with this post holder leading on more compliance and regulatory matters relating to research integrity.

- Monitoring and reporting

The University requires that each REC reporting into UORRIC generates an annual report based on a standardised template. The reports contain details on the number of applications received and the outcome of reviews undertaken, as well as summary information on key developments in the REC relating to training, guidance and processes. Through the reports, institutional monitoring of research ethics is undertaken, and allows for points of challenge or query to be raised.

## **2B. Changes and developments during the period under review**

One of the key mechanisms through which the University provides guidance to researchers on matters of integrity is through the issuance of Position Notes. Position Notes on the following topics were produced or updated in the 2023/24 academic year:

- **Self-Experimentation and Autoethnography:** This existing Note was updated following feedback from researchers in the Nottingham School of Art and Design, the School of Arts and Humanities, and the School of Architecture, Design, and the Built Environment, that it required greater granularity on types of autoethnography in order to be relevant to their disciplinary areas.
- **Consent in Specific Cultural Contexts:** This Note was created following an application that had been submitted to one of the University's RECs. The application challenged that way consent is typically viewed and secured in research, and resulted in guidance on securing consent in the context of societal structures that are markedly different from those in the UK and other 'western' societies. See section 2D for more details.
- **Questionable Research Practices:** This Note provides a summary of practices that fall short of misconduct but which have adverse effects on research and are to be discouraged. It also includes mitigations to some of the practices, in particular through the use of Open Research (OR) practices.
- **Projects Requiring External REC Review:** This Note provides clarification on the procedural matter of when applications require review by both an internal and external REC.

The University received a Human Tissue Authority (HTA) Licence in October 2022. The Licence is overseen by the University HTA Steering Group, which has a dotted line to the Human Invasive Research Ethics Committee based in NTU's School of Science and Technology. Licence information is displayed in all locations where human tissue is stored. Mandatory two hour training for those wishing to work under the License continues to be delivered, while a quarterly system of internal audit has been operationalised.

As of August 2024, over 200 researchers have received HTA training and refresher training for colleagues who completed the mandatory training in 2022 is currently being delivered. Training continues to be offered four times a year and sessions for small groups can be arranged outside of the quarterly scheduled sessions should the need arise.

Guidance was produced to address some misconceptions concerning authorship of research outputs. The guidance, which does not set or change NTU's position on authorship, draws on external resources and best practice to provide options for considering authorship and other forms of contributions.

In Autumn 2023, NTU formally joined the UK Reproducibility Network and is a case study member of the Network's Open and Responsible Researcher Reward and Recognition (OR4) project. Engagement with the latter resulted in the development of a Maturity Framework which is anticipated to lead to a series of actions to improve recognition and reward of researchers into 2024/5 and beyond.

In-person research ethics training sessions for researchers in Nottingham School of Art and Design and the School of Architecture, Design and the Built Environment was provided by the chairs of UORRIC and the Art, Architecture, Design and Humanities REC. Training was also provided by the chair of UORRIC to doctoral candidates on how to complete an ethics application. The University has benefited from access to the new UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) 'Introduction to Research Integrity' training resource, for which 145 NTU colleagues have registered.

Membership of UORRIC was expanded at the start of the academic year to include, for the first time, a colleague holding a research-only contract. The individual was drawn from the recently formed Researcher Policy Development Group with a view to enabling them to increase their understanding of research governance and processes, monitor, influence, and contribute to discussions with the intention of making outcomes more inclusive of diverse perspectives.

OR has been a particular focus of activity at the institution within the previous twelve months, and this is something that will continue into the ensuing year. While OR practices have multiple benefits, one of these is to help produce research that is more transparent and robust, thus supporting research integrity. This year, the University ran the inaugural Open Research Awards that recognised and rewarded researchers from across the disciplines for engaging in one or more OR practice. The winning entries will be shared as case studies on the NTU website to help inspire others to adopt OR practices in their own research. NTU also preceded with the procurement of a data repository, due for implementation in 2024/25, to allow researchers to more easily share their data and others to access it.

The question set used by all NTU RECs reviewing staff and doctoral projects was subject to review and revision by members of UORRIC. One area that received significant overhaul was research data management, with greater clarity and separation now incorporated, resulting in increased robustness in the review process.

## **2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments**

The University continues to develop the depth and breadth of support, guidance and activities that it offers to its research community. This perhaps most clearly manifests in the Position Notes that are produced throughout the year to cover areas identified as requiring additional support. In this academic year, the Position Note on which most time and energy was expended was the one focusing on consent in specific cultural contexts. This is because it presented the biggest challenge to the established way of securing consent in the UK context. The development of the Note – on which more detail is included in section 2D – demonstrates that the University is engaging with the changing dimensions of research integrity and acting in a facilitatory capacity to ensure divergent approaches and voices are incorporated into the research process, while also maintaining robustness in the integrity of research carried out in its name.

The recruitment to another senior research-supporting role (Director of Research Strategy and Operations) has already begun to allow the University to broaden the

areas of research integrity areas it can further support, and this is expected to continue and increase in pace in 2024/25.

Finally, the focus on OR has brought into sharper relief the dimensions of research integrity most closely aligned with OR practices: transparency and reproducibility. The procurement and implementation of the open data repository in the next academic year will further enhance the options for NTU researchers to adopt greater levels of openness in their research and therefore increase the levels of integrity in the research undertaken at the University.

Looking ahead to 2024/25, a number of activities are planned that are anticipated will lead to an enhanced research culture and environment underpinned by high levels of integrity. These are:

- Procurement and implementation of an open data repository.
- Implementation of an audit function for projects given favourable opinion by an NTU REC.
- Enhancements to the NTU SharePoint site as part of the internal 'Connect' projects, with the outcome being better, more accessible and easy to follow guidance for researchers, including resources focused on research integrity.
- Write up and sharing of OR case studies linked to the 2024 Open Research Awards.
- Running the second iteration of the Open Research Awards in 2025.

## **2D. Case study on good practice**

The University developed a Position Note (see Section 2B) on consent in specific cultural contexts. The University would like to recognise the support provided by the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) in better understanding this topic, particularly in light of the decolonising research agenda. The support offered by UKRIO helped with the creation of a Position Note on the topic to help guide researchers in securing consent in societal structures that are markedly different to those in the UK.

The Note was born of an application that had been received by an NTU REC, which was challenging to review in light of the methods it proposed to seek consent from the community being researched. The application spawned a wider review of what it means to take consent in research, and resulted in engagement with internal experts in decolonising research and external support via UKRIO. The outcome is a Position Note on securing consent in specific cultural contexts that has no intention of undermining existing approaches to securing consent, but instead offers some flexibility in appropriate circumstances. For example, community Elders might be empowered to speak on behalf of entire communities, and securing consent from the Elders may be considered to be adequate to cover the entire community depending on the nature of the information being relayed. Allowing for this flexibility is important because it facilitates research with communities that are structured quite differently to those in the UK and which, for a number of reasons, might not have previously been enfranchised in the research process.



While it is true that RECs have a duty to ensure that research is undertaken to high ethical standards, it is equally true that they have a responsibility to be facilitatory. Taking the opportunity this instance provided to pause and reflect on the issue of consent, seeking advice from others and working with the researcher to better understand the specifics of the application, allowed the REC to fulfil the second of these two obligations.

### 3. Addressing research misconduct

#### 3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

The University has robust procedures in place to investigate instances of unacceptable behaviour in the conduct of research. For staff undertaking research at, or in the name of the University, any allegations of research misconduct are dealt with through the University's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. For research students undertaking research in the name of University, allegations of misconduct are dealt with through the [University's Academic Standards and Quality Handbook](#) (Section 17D: University Procedure for Investigating Alleged Research Misconduct) while for taught students at the University, allegations relating to research misconduct are dealt through the [University's Academic Standards and Quality Handbook](#) (Section 17C: Academic Irregularities).

The University operates a Whistle-Blowing (Public Interest Policy) which provides a means for genuine concerns around possible wrongdoing to be raised and a transparent and confidential process for dealing with those concerns. The University advertises a contact name and address to whom any enquiries relating to research integrity, including those of confidential nature, can be addressed. The individual listed as the contact has received several communications over multiple years concerning allegations of questionable research practice and misconduct, providing assurance that the reporting route does function.

#### 3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken

There was one instance of potential research misconduct that was investigated in the 2023/24 academic year. The matter was investigated in line with the University's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, with the outcome being that there was no case to answer.

Type of allegation	Number of allegations			
	Number of allegations reported to the organisation	Number of formal investigations	Number upheld in part after formal investigation	Number upheld in full after formal investigation

Fabrication	1	0	0	0
Falsification	0	0	0	0
Plagiarism	0	0	0	0
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	0	0	0	0
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)	0	0	0	0
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	0	0	0	0
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)	0	0	0	0
<i>Other*</i>	0	0	0	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>