

## Annual statement on research integrity 2024-2025

### Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	University of Sussex
1B. Type of organisation:	Higher education
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	28.11.25
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	<a href="#">Research Integrity Policy Statement : Our research integrity : ... : Research at Sussex : University of Sussex</a>
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Prof Maria Fasli
	Email address: rgoffice@sussex.ac.uk
1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Name: Dr Caroline Gordon
	Email address: rgoffice@sussex.ac.uk

### Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture.

#### Description of actions and activities undertaken

<p>2A. Description of current systems and culture</p> <p>Please describe how the organisation maintains high standards of research integrity and promotes positive research culture. It should include information on the support provided to researchers to understand standards, values and behaviours, such as training, support and guidance for researchers at different career stages/ disciplines. You may find it helpful to consider the following broad headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies and systems</li> <li>• Communications and engagement</li> <li>• Culture, development and leadership</li> <li>• Monitoring and reporting</li> </ul>
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The University of Sussex is committed to the five principles and commitments of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity<sup>1</sup> and the annual research integrity statement outlines the University's activities and initiatives in support of these commitments.

The annual statement is based on the template that was developed by the UK Research Integrity Office with the Research Integrity Concordat Signatories Group.

#### Policies and systems

The University has 3 main governing documents relating to research ethics, integrity and governance.

The [Code of Practice for Research](#) sets out the standards of conduct expected of all staff and students engaged in research and is complemented by the [University of Sussex Research Ethics Policy](#), a high-level statement of ethical principles and requirements that reflect our institutional values. The Research Governance Standard Operating Procedure details the University's current review procedures and processes.

Breaches of the above are dealt with through the [Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research](#), the Undergraduate Progression and Award Regulations, and Postgraduate Progressions and Award Regulations, together with the staff and student disciplinary procedures where appropriate.

Related policies and process include the academic misconduct policy, freedom of speech code of practice, donations policy, sanctions policy, export controls policy, public interest disclosure policy and raising concerns.

The University has five Faculty Research Ethics Committees (F-RECs) that undertake the review of staff and postgraduate research. There are two F-RECs for the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine: Science, Engineering and Technology (F-REC SEM: SET) and Brighton and Sussex Medical School (F-REC SEM: BSMS) and 1 each for the Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Media, Arts and Humanities and the Faculty of the University of Sussex Business School. During the 2024-25 period there were 872 staff and PGR applications submitted for review through these committees.

School Research Ethics Officers review taught student research alongside the supervisor, plus one member of the F-REC if the research is considered high risk, plus any specialist reviewers who might be needed e.g., health and safety, insurance, data protection. During the 2024-25 period there were 1539 applications submitted by taught students – undergraduate and taught postgraduate students.

Ethics applications are managed via the Research Management Software Infonetica.

The University's Health and Social Care Sponsorship Sub-Committee (HSC SSC) meets regularly to oversee institutional compliance with the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care research and ensures all research sponsored by the University in line with this framework is appropriately conducted.

The University is a signatory to the [Concordat on Openness in Animal Research](#) and as part of the Concordat develops annual action plans to continue its commitment to openness and transparency.

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<sup>1</sup> [The-Concordat-to-Support-Research-Integrity-2025.pdf](#)

The Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) and the Application Review Group meet regularly to ensure the ethical and humane treatment of animals used in scientific research, whilst also promoting the application of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement).

#### Communications and engagement

Ethics, integrity and governance information is provided on the University's webpages with contact information of relevant support staff and links to relevant external organisations and information. Updates and news articles are published in internal communications channels such as the Pro<sup>7</sup> Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) newsletter, Professional Services Essentials, Academic Update and the weekly Broadcast.

The Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance (REIG team) are regularly invited to attend university welcome/induction sessions to talk about ethics and governance and offer regular inductions for colleagues within Research and Innovation Services.

The University runs annual summer of research engagement events with this year's programme coming from collaborations between professional services staff and academics. These included events such as '*Exploring Ethics in Research*', '*Openness and Intellectual Property: Finding Balance Between Sharing and Protecting Ideas*' and '*AI and the future of Research: Transformations and tensions*'.

The Senior International Governance Officer (SIGO) supports awareness raising around international research governance, the Trusted Research Campaign and the Nagoya Protocol.

The University continues to have membership or representation of the following external organisations and groups:

- UK Research Integrity Office, an advisory body providing confidential and impartial advice on issues of research conduct<sup>2</sup>
- Association of Research Managers and Administrators, the professional association for research management in the UK<sup>3</sup>
- Association of University Research Sponsors, an association of research-intensive institutions (with medical schools) who operate within the NHS research environment

Members of the REIG team continue to provide representation on the following internal committees and groups.

- Pre-Sponsorship Review Panel, a cross-organisational committee that benefits from multidisciplinary experience
- Research Culture Steering Group, to connect the work of the REIG team with research culture initiatives and ensure an understanding of ethics and integrity is embedded into the group's work
- Open research group, to promote, support and foster engagement with open research
- Safeguarding panel
- Trusted Research Advisory Group

#### Culture, development and leadership

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) is responsible for ensuring that the highest standards of ethics and integrity are met. The PVC is supported by four Associate Deans (Research and Innovation), one in each of the Faculties.

<sup>2</sup> [Home - UK Research Integrity Office \(ukrio.org\)](https://ukrio.org/)

<sup>3</sup> [The Association – ARMA](#)

The Head of Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance (REIG) is the Professional Services lead, sitting within Research and Innovation, and is supported by a team of Senior Manager, Manager and Officers.

The Research Culture Steering Group (RCSG), which reports to the University Research and Innovation Committee, supports the development and implementation of a long-term research culture strategy. The group, chaired by the Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Knowledge Exchange), includes academic and professional services colleagues from across campus with key areas of expertise, including the Head of REIG and the Associate Director of the Library who leads on open research and chairs the Open Research Group (ORG, which reports to the RCSG). ORG brings together a community of practice from across the University, enabling the sharing of best practice and providing a network of champions across Faculties and Divisions.

The [Sussex Research Culture Enabling Plan](#), was designed by the RCSG in 2023 through consultation with the research community. The Plan sets out four priority areas: Maximising potential, belonging, collaboration and open research. Integrity is built into this plan across all areas.

Training and development opportunities are offered by the Senior Research Ethics and Integrity Officers (SREIOs) who provide training on research ethics to students and staff, including Early Career Researchers, Junior Research Assistants and REC members.

SREIOs run regular drop-in sessions to support staff with queries and regularly engage with other teams who are seeking to incorporate ethical practice into their work.

#### Monitoring and reporting

The REISC receives quarterly and annual reports from the University's RECs with number of applications submitted broken down by numbers approved or rejected, applicant status e.g., staff, PGR, taught student, high or low risk and subject area.

The SREOs report to the F-RECs and the F-RECs report to the Research Ethics, and Integrity Sub-Committee (REISC), a sub-committee of Senate that ensures that the University upholds the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.

The University's Research Governance and Quality Assurance Sub-Committee (RGQASC), a further sub-committee of Senate ensures that University research is conducted to appropriate ethical and legal frameworks based on good research governance, best practice and support for the development and training of researchers.

The Chairs of both the REISC and RGQASC report committee activity to the University Senate through the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), and the University Research and Innovation Committee.

The HSC SSC and the AWERB report to the RGQASC.

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

Please provide an update on any changes made during the period, such as new initiatives, training, developments, also ongoing changes that are still underway. Drawing on Commitment 3 of the Concordat, please note any new or revised policies, practices and procedures to support researchers; training on research ethics and research integrity; training and mentoring opportunities to support the development of researchers' skills throughout their careers.

Recommendations from the 2024 ethics and governance framework review saw the University Research Ethics Committees (RECs) align with the new Faculty structure, with academic membership resourced by the newly appointed Executive Deans and chair roles advertised for increased fairness and transparency.

The F-REC ways of working were reviewed to encourage harmonisation across Faculties and parity for applicants. Professional Services staff now have a clear path for obtaining ethical review.

The F-REC terms of reference were established and role descriptors for the Chairs and members were revised. There have been new Chair appointments to all of the F-RECs and there have been 3 new committee members appointed.

Ethics training and support for supervisors and SREOs have been increased to improve the quality of applications submitted from taught students and to support a revised approval route for high-risk undergraduate and taught student research which, is now reviewed by the supervisor, SREO and one member of the F-REC.

The role description for SREOs has been revised and there have been 3 newly appointed SREOs.

A new online application management system, Infonetica, has been introduced and provides a tailored user experience, improved consistency across all committees through a shared form, increased guidance for applicants and advanced reporting capability.

A University of Sussex Research Ethics Policy has been introduced, to offer transparency in the University's principles of ethical review and ensure that those conducting research or research-related activities under the auspices of the University are doing so ethically and in compliance with governance and legislative requirements.

Guidance on the use of secondary data in research has been published as well as revised guidance on conducting research with children in schools. The University has also reviewed its Sanctions and Export Controls Policies.

The REIG team has undertaken training in medical devices, authorship in research publications, safeguarding, export controls, sanctions and the National Security and Investment Act, Understanding Animal Research: Culture of Care and Openness, and several ethics and integrity-based training and webinars on offer from the UK Research Integrity Office.

The University introduced mandatory research integrity training for all staff engaged in research and have developed a training package for PGRs. Furthermore, the University introduced mandatory PGR supervisor training for all staff which features research integrity and Open Research.

Training offered by the REIG team during the 2024 period included international research governance, introduction to research ethics, online ethics applications using the ethics RM system.

Engagement sessions included events with the Research Quality and Impact team, Health and Safety, Research and Innovation Services Division, School of Global Studies AI away day, Digital Humanities Lab Centre of Excellence and the GDPR team.

Work has been undertaken to share best practice in ethical participatory research (through training by the Sussex Participatory Research Network) and in ethical partnership working (by the Sussex Sustainability Research Programme which published their report in early 2025 entitled, *Positive Futures: Fostering Sustainability Research Through Equitable Partnerships*).

23 staff from 7 Schools/Divisions have so far taken part in the UKRN Open Research Train-the-trainer modules and have delivered 2 training sessions to colleagues at Sussex so far (with more to follow). Learning has also informed a refreshed Library-led Open Research training Programme, to be launched in 2025-26.

The University has reviewed its HSC SSC processes and implemented changes to make the handover from the Pre-Sponsorship Review Panel and review of amendments more efficient.

The University has created a 3Rs Working Group to oversee and promote further implementation of the 3Rs in animal research (replacement, reduction, and refinement). The Group will work with academic and professional services staff to identify best practice and support the University's vision for a culture of care. In addition, the Group will identify potential 3Rs opportunities, share these internally, and follow the development of the 3Rs beyond the University. The Group reports to AWERB.

The University has created a Culture of Care Vision Statement which aligns with Sussex's values. This is available on the University webpages.

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

This should include a reflection on the previous year's activity including a review of progress and impact of initiatives if known relating to activities referenced in the previous year's statement. Note any issues that have hindered progress, e.g. resourcing or other issues.

Mandatory research integrity training for research staff was introduced in October 2024 and work has been underway to develop a research integrity training module for postgraduate researchers (PGRs) to be implemented as mandatory from the start of the forthcoming academic year. In the meantime, PGRs have been offered online research integrity training from the UK Research Integrity Office, available to the University as a subscribing institution.

The new online ethics application management system Infonetica has been configured and implemented. This will be in over the forthcoming year with efficiency savings for both reviewers and applicants. There are plans to add applications for sponsorship to the system over the forthcoming year.

Many of the recommendations from the 2024 framework review were implemented. The most significant changes being the transition to F-RECs and move towards harmonised ways of working, a change in review process for taught student research and the introduction of a University of Sussex Ethics Policy. Further work is still needed to introduce mandatory ethics training for taught student supervisors and explore the introduction of ethics training to relevant modules and handbooks where it is not currently included. This will be taken forwards over the coming year.

Over the forthcoming year there are plans to review the Code of Practice for Research, the Research Governance Standard Operating Procedures and The Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Misconduct in Research. The University will also be looking to introduce some guidance on the use of AI in research as a follow-on to work in the Education and Learning space, and the Sussex Researcher School's development of a Statement on the Use of GenAI by PGRs.

Following publication of the revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity, the University will undertake revisions to ensure alignment with the refreshed principles and commitments within.

#### 2D. Case study on good practice (optional)

Please describe an anonymised brief, exemplar case study that can be shared as good practice with other organisations. A wide range of case studies are valuable, including small, local implementations. Case studies may also include the impact of implementations or lessons learned.

The REIG Senior International Governance Officer (SIGO) has established a regular programme of Trusted Research awareness raising and as a result this has led to closer collaboration with academics and the production of a department-specific support document.

A research security checklist for Physics which is now used during the induction of new starters and to regulate access to the labs. The checklist itself covers the main security considerations that new Physics students and staff need to be aware of when working in areas at higher risk of being impacted by export controls and other research security-related issues including when accessing sensitive lab spaces. Examples include making sure that the staff member has read the University's Trusted Research webpage and completed the HEECA export control training course and advising them to contact the export control team if there are any concerns relating to dual-use technologies or end-user concerns surrounding their research or if their research might involve working with an embargoed country or include transferring items found on Goods Checker to destinations outside the UK. The checklist also advises the staff member to contact the SIGO if they plan to work with or travel to a sanctioned country.

### Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

- a brief summary of relevant organisation policies/ processes (e.g. research misconduct procedure, whistle-blowing policy, bullying/harassment policy; appointment of a third party to act as confidential liaison for persons wishing to raise concerns) and brief information on the periodic review of research misconduct processes (e.g. date of last review; any major changes during the period under review; date when processes will next be reviewed).
- information on how the organisation creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct (e.g. code of practice for research, whistle-blowing, research misconduct procedure, informal liaison process, website signposting for reporting systems, training, mentoring, reflection and evaluation of policies, practices and procedures).
- anonymised key lessons learned from any investigations into allegations of misconduct which either identified opportunities for improvements in the organisation's investigation procedure and/or related policies / processes/ culture or which showed that they were working well.

Allegations of misconduct in research made against staff and PGR are dealt with by the University *Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Misconduct in Research* (The Procedure), with allegations being made formally to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), who is the Named Person under the Procedure. The Head of REIG supports the Named Person with implementing The Procedure.

The Procedure is available on the University's webpages and is due for review during the coming year.

The University publishes a Code of Practice for Research that outlines the standards expected of all staff and students engaged in research. The University provides mandatory research integrity training to researchers, who are supported by the REIG team when advice is needed regarding suspected research misconduct or questionable research practices.



Anonymous accounts of formal investigation outcomes are discussed at the REISC to ensure learning opportunity and to prevent recurrence.

The University has a Public Interest Disclosure ('Whistleblowing') Policy and online reporting system for any member of the University community to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals.

The University's online Report and Support tool offers support in relation to Bullying and Harassment and is accompanied by the Policy to Prevent Harassment and Bullying at Work.

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

Please complete the table on the number of formal investigations completed during the period under review (including investigations which completed during this period but started in a previous academic year). Information from ongoing investigations should not be submitted.

An organisation's procedure may include an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. These allegations should be included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column.

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				
Falsification				
Plagiarism	2			
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	4	1		0
Misrepresentation (e.g., data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)	3			
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)				
<i>Other*</i>				





Total:	9	1	0	0
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**\*If you listed any allegations under the 'Other' category, please give a brief, high-level summary of their type here. Do not give any identifying or confidential information when responding.**

*[Please insert response if applicable]*