

Annual research integrity report to Council 2023-24

Section 1. Key Contact Information

1A Key Contact information	
Name of organisation	University of Cambridge
Type of organisation	Higher education institution
Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	25/11/2024
Web address of University's research integrity page	https://www.research-integrity.admin.cam.ac.uk/
Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Professor Sir John Aston, PVC-Research
	Email address: researchintegrity@admin.cam.ac.uk
Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Name: Professor Sir John Aston, PVC-Research
	Email address: researchintegrity@admin.cam.ac.uk

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

2A. Description of current systems and culture

Drawing on Commitment 1 and 3 of the Concordat, this section summarises how the University maintains and fosters high standards of research integrity in all aspects of research and embeds a research environment underpinned by a culture of integrity, good governance and support for the development of researchers

2.1.1 The mission of the University of Cambridge is to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence. The University recognises that the pursuit of excellent research and the fulfilment of our responsibilities to participants in research, research users and the wider community require the maintenance of the highest standards of integrity and ethics.

2.1. Policies and Systems

2.1.2 The following structure has been put in place to facilitate and maintain a research environment that develops good research practice and nurture a culture of research integrity:

- a) The **Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research (PVC-R)** is the senior academic lead on research integrity matters within the University and Chair of the Research Policy Committee.
- b) **University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)** is the overarching Committee at the University for the consideration of ethical issues arising from research that involves human participants and personal data. It also advises the PVC-R on the development and implementation of policy and procedures relating to research integrity.
- c) The **Head of Policy, Governance and Integrity (HPGI)** is the University Research Governance and Integrity Officer. The HPGI, who is supported by a Senior Research Governance and Ethics Coordinator (SRGEC), is responsible for fostering a culture of research integrity across the institution, including:
 - o supporting the PVC-R, Head of the Research Office and UREC to oversee the University's research ethics and governance systems,
 - o supporting the implementation of the University's [Procedure for the Investigation of an Allegation of Research Misconduct](#).
 - o working with stakeholders from across the University and outside Cambridge to support research integrity and good research practice
- d) The **Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)** oversees the management of governance and develops and implements policies relating to animal welfare at the University.
- e) **Heads of Department and Faculty** are responsible for research integrity and ethics matters in their institution, including the implementation of the University's research ethics and integrity policies and procedures at a local level and taking initial responsibility for actions under the Misconduct in Research policy.
- f) The **Head of Research Culture** is responsible for driving the research culture agenda in the University, including supporting Research Culture Steering Committee in setting the strategy and establishing institutional priorities for research culture.

2.1.3 In addition, under Commitments 2 and 3 of the Concordat, the University is required to have clear policies and procedures to ensure that research is conducted to the highest levels of ethics and integrity. This includes:

- a) [Statement on Research Integrity](#)
- b) [Guidelines on Good Research Practice & Checklist](#)
- c) [Research Ethics Policies](#)
- d) [Procedure for the Investigation of an Allegation of Research Misconduct](#) (see section 3)
- e) [Research Data Management Policy Framework](#):

2.1.4 The University’s [Statement on Research Integrity](#), which sets out the high-level standards and principles of research integrity that all those engaged in research at the University are expected to follow, serves as an over-arching framework that guides the research integrity at the University.

2.1.5 The University’s [Guidelines on Good Research Practice](#) provides a detailed introduction to good research practice at Cambridge and highlights links to further guidance on key issues. It supports researchers to determine how to apply the baseline standards set by ordinances and regulations of the University, the Research Integrity Statement and wider legal and contractual requirements and ethical norms, to the concrete situations which face them in everyday practice of research.

2.1.6 The purpose of the accompanying [Research Integrity and Good Research Practice Checklist](#) is to help supervisors provide research students with an introduction to issues of research integrity and encourage broader dialogue about good research practice

2.1.7 The University policies on research ethics provide a framework to ensure that all research involving i) [human participants and personal data](#) or ii) [animals](#) is conducted in accordance with fundamental ethical principles.

2.1.8 Information about University research-related policies and procedures is publicly available on the University [research integrity webpage](#) and also disseminated to research staff and students through Departments and Faculties as detailed in 2.2.

2.1.9 These are policies reviewed on a regular basis in light of experience and sectoral updates to ensure they are aligned to evolving expectations of best practice. The periodic review of relevant policies is detailed in the table below:

Policy	Date of last approval/ review	Next review
Statement on Research Integrity	2020-21	Every 5 years
Guidelines on Good Research Practice & Checklist	Ongoing	2026-27
Research Data Management Policy Framework	2021	Pending
Research Ethics Policy [Human Participants & Personal data]	2020-21	2023-24
Research Ethics Policy [Animal Welfare]	Ongoing	Every 3 years
Procedure for the Investigation of an Allegation of Research Misconduct	2023-2024	2026-27
Conflict of Interest Policy	2021	Every 5 years

2.1.10 The University is committed to the continuing and ongoing improvement of its processes for supporting and strengthening the understanding of research integrity at Cambridge. Key actions taken during 2023-2024 to support research integrity are reported in section 2B below.

2.2. Communications and Engagement

2.2.1 Effective communication and engagement underpin the University's efforts to foster an environment where research is conducted in accordance with good research practice and to ensure that all those involved in research are made aware of these guidelines and related policies and guidelines.

2.2.2 Research-related policies are made available to staff through the University research integrity website. The [research integrity website](#), which is regularly updated by the RGI team, serves as communications and engagement hub for anyone seeking information on research integrity matters at Cambridge:

- a) Providing details of the training programme on [research integrity](#) to research staff and students, including introductory self-paced courses and workshops for researchers at different career stages.
- b) [sharing guidance](#) relating to good research practice and research integrity
- c) setting out University policies and regulations that relate to research integrity and misconduct matters (listed in 2.1.3 and 3.1.5)
- d) offering sources of support, advice and guidance for researchers in need of assistance in relation to:
 - o conducting ethical research (see [research ethics webpages](#)),
 - o legal and professional obligations (see [research governance pages](#))
 - o Links to external sources of support and guidance on [research ethics](#) and [integrity](#)
 - o the best practice in research, particularly
 - Research [integrity guidance webpages](#),
 - [Guidelines on Good Research Practice and checklist](#),
 - [Research integrity advisory panel](#)
- e) signposting to key internal [contact points](#) for matters relating to research integrity, ethics and governance including:
 - o The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, Professor John Aston, who is the first point of contact for anyone with comments, concerns or questions regarding research integrity at Cambridge
 - o Research Integrity Advisory Panel
 - o Data Champions programme
 - o School and Departmental Ethics committees
 - o The Central research Office research governance and integrity team and Clinical School's Research Governance Team who support researchers to understand and meet expected standards of research ethics and integrity, as well as legal, professional, regulatory and funder obligations
 - o The research data management facility

2.2.3 In addition, information about the University's research-related policies and procedures is disseminated to research staff and students through several other mechanisms to target researchers at all career stages and various contracts:

- a) Research students – the Code of Practice sets out the responsibility of the research supervisor to make the student aware of the University's expectations in respect of research integrity and good practice university guidance and links to the RI website
- b) Postdocs – all expected to attend a central induction Central induction run by the University's Postdoc Academy. Since 2024, new postdoctoral researchers are provided with a [new starter guide](#) that highlights supports, services and policies
- c) Visiting Staff and students – the Standard Terms and Conditions and Visitor's letter links to the good research practice guidelines that details University's expectations and links to the relevant guidance and policies
- d) Academics – [Online self-directed academic induction resources](#) and [PI Development Programme](#) set out the university policies and links to the RI website

2.2.4 Since 2015, departments and faculties have been expected to integrate the Concordat and all relevant University statements and policies, into faculty or department inductions for new academic staff and PhD students.

2.2.5 Mentoring plays a key role in building awareness and understanding of policies and procedures at Cambridge (addressed below)

2.3. Culture, Development and Leadership

2.3.1 The University offers many courses to enable students and new researchers to understand and adopt best practice in research as quickly as possible. Lists of courses are available on the [Personal and Professional Development](#) web site and relevant courses are increasingly available as part of the University's teaching.

2.3.2 In addition, there are specific researcher development programmes including:

- a) [Postgraduate researcher development](#)
- b) [Postdoctoral Academy RD Programme](#)
- c) [Technicians' development](#)

2.3.3 A bespoke Cambridge [online introductory research integrity module](#), which is provided in three variations to account for disciplinary variations, provides an overview of the principles, responsibilities and importance of research integrity. The training is not intended to cover every aspect of Research Integrity or replace discipline-specific training and development.

2.3.4 As a follow up offering from this module, the RGI team delivers several central in-person or live online workshops each academic year to facilitate further discussion of the topics introduced in the online course.

2.3.5 In addition, there is a complementary University online training module on Responsible Research and Innovation. The course has been made available to all researchers on the Research Integrity website.

2.3.6 In addition to central research integrity training, many of the University's departments and Schools offer subject-specific training in research integrity issues. The approach taken to this varies locally: it includes training that has been integrated into Departmental research skills courses; stand-alone lectures or workshops; School-level support, such as research ethics training offered by the Social Sciences' Research Methods Centre; and courses arranged with external providers.

2.3.7 Centrally, the University offers a range of support, training provisions and initiatives to support awareness and good practice in relation to equality, and inclusion including:

- a) [Online training modules](#) for staff:
 - o Equality and Diversity Essentials
 - o Understanding Unconscious / Implicit Bias
- b) Bespoke Training provided by ED&I team upon request
- c) [Staff and student Diversity Networks](#) supported the University Equality Champions
- d) the ED&I team co-ordinate a range of diversity events to celebrate Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+ (LGBTQ+) History Month, Black History Month, International Women's Day etc.

2.3.8 The identification of training and development requirements are important components of the Staff Review and Development (SRD) scheme for staff, including research staff at all career stage and contracts. Postgraduate research students are expected to complete a self-evaluation report and receive advice from their supervisor on planning personal skills development.

2.3.9 The University formally requires that all its institutions make arrangements for the mentoring of newly appointed staff and runs schemes for peer and developmental mentoring.

2.3.10 The University provides the following resources to support the appropriate training and direction and supervision of researchers:

- a) Training in supervisory skills as part of the [University's overall staff development programme](#)
- b) [guidance for supervisors](#) and
- c) the [Code of Practice for Research Students](#) clearly sets out supervisor responsibilities

2.3.11 Supervisors are expected to encourage students and colleagues to attend relevant courses as part of their overall career development.

2.4 Monitoring and reporting

2.4.1 The HPGI is tasked with ensuring that systems, practices and processes across the University are periodically reviewed so that they remain fit for purpose and reflect best practice in research integrity and advises the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research on any changes that are needed. From 2024-2025, this process will be formalised using the Self-Assessment Tool for the Concordat developed by UK Research Integrity Office.

Research Ethics

2.4.2 The University Research Ethics Committee, which oversees the University's ethical review system (excluding animal research), undertakes periodic review, monitoring and processes

improvement of the research ethics framework in order to maintain and strengthen the research ethics policies, guidance and systems.

2.4.3 The UREC reviews the University-wide Ethics Policy every three years in light of experience, taking into consideration evolving ethical practice, sectoral updates and annual reports submitted by the local ethics committees.

2.4.4 Local ethics committees submit an annual report to the UREC, which include summary data on the projects reviewed (number, discipline/ type, outcome of review process) and information on any strengths, issues or trends identified), to facilitate the UREC to identify and highlight good practice in research ethics to departments and Schools.

2.4.5 Following ongoing discussion regarding the ethical consideration of research projects involving harm to the environment and cultural objects requirement set out in the 2019 Concordat, the UREC agreed to establish a sub-committee to review and advise the UREC on the existing mechanism and guidance in place across the University in order facilitate UREC to further consider its remit and this will be established in 2024-2025.

Research Misconduct

2.4.6 As set out in 3.3, anonymised learning points from completed research misconduct investigations are made available to relevant institutional bodies (RPC, PVC-R) and, as appropriate, have been included in training for research staff and students.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

Drawing on Commitment 2, and 3 of the Concordat, this section provides an update on the changes that were made (or ongoing) since the previous annual report to ensure that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards and to embed and support a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity, good governance and best practice.

Policies, Practices and Procedures

2.5.1 During 2023-24 the University Research Ethics Committee has been undertaking comprehensive review of the University Research Ethics Policy.

2.5.2 The University's [Good Research Practice Guidelines and Checklist](#) was updated to add guidance on Trusted Research and Nagoya Protocol.

2.5.3 As recommended in the previous year's report, draft guidance for Departments on the informal handling of concerns relating to research practice have been developed and will be considered by the University's central committees in 2024-25.

Training, Communications and Engagement

2.5.4 The UREC encouraged the prioritisation of new online induction training course for new members of University research ethics committee. This is currently in preparation, with the intention of implementing this in the 2024-25 academic year.

2.5.5 The Research Governance and integrity team is currently developing advanced-level research integrity training for groups leaders and other individuals seeking more advanced training. This will be delivered in the 2024-2025 academic year.

2.5.6 In 2023-2024, the content and structure of research integrity website has been reviewed and partially updated in order to provide a better user experience and optimise website content. Further updates will be implemented in 2024-2025.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

In accordance with commitment 5 of the concordat to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly, this section reflects on the previous year's activity, including a review of progress and impact of initiatives relating to activities referenced in the previous year's statement.

Reflections on progress

2.6.1 On 23 February 2024, the University approved a new [Procedure for the Investigation of an Allegation of Research Misconduct](#), which applies where there is an allegation of Research Misconduct against any person undertaking research either as a member of or whilst connected to a University institution or using University facilities or funding. This Procedure replaces the University's [Misconduct in Research Policy](#) for all allegations received after 23 February 2024. The new procedure provides clearer guidance for all involved in the process and sets out timelines and a new appeals process.

2.6.2 In light of recommendations made by the Research Integrity Joint University and Colleges Working Group to improve training and support for college staff in research integrity and research ethics, further work is ongoing to deliver the remaining action to improve awareness of the ethical review process and how to access it among College staff

2.6.3 From 2024-2025, the monitoring and review of systems, practices and processes across the University to ensure they remain fit for purpose and reflect best practice in research integrity will be formalised using the Self-Assessment Tool for the Concordat developed by UK Research Integrity Office. This exercise will be used to identify initiatives or other activities to strengthen practices, processes and systems supporting the integrity of research.

2.6.4 The following new training is expected to be developed or implemented in 2024-2025:

- REC Member Induction Training (this training was intended to be completed in 2023-24 but has been delayed so that it can incorporate the planned revisions to the University research ethics policy).
- Research Integrity for group-leaders: cultivating a culture of good research practice (in-person face-to-face) was developed in 2023-24 and will be delivered for the first time in 2024-25.
- Training in how to investigate concerns raised under the new Procedure for the Investigation of an allegation of Research Misconduct (for committee members, independent investigators and responsible persons). This course is expected to be developed during 2024-25 and implemented in 2025-26.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

Drawing on Commitment 4 of the Concordat, this section provides a brief summary of the relevant University policies/ processes for handling allegations of research misconduct, information on how the University creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct and shares anonymised key lessons learned from investigations into allegations of misconduct.

3.1 Summary of relevant organisation policies/ processes

3.1.1 As required under Commitment 4 of the Concordat, the University [Procedure for the Investigation of an Allegation of Research Misconduct](#) sets out a transparent, robust, confidential and fair process for dealing with allegations of research misconduct. The procedure provides a clear definition of research misconduct and the responsibility of members to report incidents of misconduct, whether these have been witnessed or are suspected.

3.1.2 The investigation procedure sets out a thorough three stage process for the handling of allegation through which allegations are investigated by individuals with appropriate authority, qualifications and experience and no conflict of interest in the case. The procedure is clearly linked to disciplinary procedures to ensure that appropriate action can be taken when concerns are upheld. The procedure also ensures that allegations are investigated in an appropriately confidential manner.

3.1.3 Individuals seeking advice on the University's misconduct procedure are able to contact the PVC-R, the Academic Secretary, the central research governance and integrity team, their Head of Institution and/or the relevant HR Advisor for the institution concerned.

3.1.4 The [Procedure for the Investigation of an Allegation of Research Misconduct](#), which was implemented in February 2024 and replaced the previous Misconduct in Research Policy, will be periodically reviewed in line with sectoral developments to ensure that this continues to be fit for purpose.

3.2 Creating and embedding a research environment in which individuals feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct.

3.2.1 The University recognises that it can be difficult for staff and students to report instances of research misconduct and has established a number of mechanisms providing support to researchers in need of assistance via policies, practices and procedures to support researchers including:

- a) [Procedure for the Investigation of an Allegation of Research Misconduct](#)
- b) [Whistleblowing' Policy](#)
- c) [Animal Whistleblowing Policy](#)
- d) [Dignity at Work Policy](#) [Bullying and Harassment Policy and procedure]
- e) [Policy Against Bribery and Corruption](#)
- f) [Student Complaints Procedure](#)

3.2.2 The [Procedure for the Investigation of an Allegation of Research Misconduct](#), including details of the relevant contacts and procedures, is highlighted on the University research integrity

website, as part of research integrity training, within the [Good Research Practice Guidelines](#) and [accompanying checklist](#), and in the research integrity leaflet.

3.2.3 In addition, advice and guidance is available from the following:

- The Research Governance and Integrity Team offers confidential advice for those considering raising concerns.
- The Research Integrity Advisory Panel can provide confidential (in this case discipline specific) advice for those with questions regarding research integrity or considering raising concerns.
- The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, Professor Sir John Aston, is the first point of contact for anyone with comments, concerns or questions regarding research integrity at Cambridge and can be contacted through the research governance and integrity team using the following email address researchintegrity@admin.cam.ac.uk.

3.3. Lessons learned

3.3.1 The University recognises the value of using research misconduct investigations, particularly any recommendations highlighted in investigation reports, as important learning opportunities.

3.3.2 To facilitate this, the Research Office submits an annual report to the Research Policy Committee (RPC) that sets out lessons that have been learnt from research misconduct investigations and recommends actions to be taken to address the issues identified.

3.3.3 As reported in the University's 2022-2023 research integrity report, recent 'lessons learnt' reports to the RPC recommended:

- changes to the University's research misconduct procedure, which were implemented as part of the new procedure launched in February 2024.
- the development of guidance for Departments on the informal handling of concerns relating to research practice. This recommendation is in the process of being implemented, draft guidance has been prepared and approved by the Research Policy Committee, further approvals will be sought in 2024-25
- a review be undertaken to ensure that researchers have appropriate facilities and guidance to ensure appropriate and reliable long-term storage of research data to enable verification of image integrity. This review will take place during 2024-25.

3.3.4 The 2023-24 'lessons learnt' report did not make any additional recommendations for action.

3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken during 2023-2024

This section provides a high-level statement on any investigations of research misconduct undertaken during the period under review, including preliminary investigations.

Type of Allegation	Stage Reached	Investigation Result
Plagiarism	Formal Investigation	Ongoing (reported as ongoing in 2022-23)
Misrepresentation	Preliminary Investigation	Not Upheld (reported as ongoing in 2022-23)
Deviation from accepted practice	Preliminary Investigation	Not Upheld
Plagiarism	Preliminary Investigation	Ongoing
Plagiarism	Preliminary Investigation	Ongoing