



# Annual statement on research integrity for 2022/2023

## University of the Highlands and Islands

*This statement utilises the standard national template for research integrity as developed by the UK Research Integrity Office in conjunction with the Research Integrity Concordat Signatories Group.*

### Section 1: Key contact information

<b>1A. Name of organisation</b>	University of the Highlands and Islands
<b>1B. Type of organisation:</b>	University
<b>1C. Date statement approved by governing body</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> December 2023
<b>1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)</b>	<u><a href="https://uhi.ac.uk/research-policy-and-ethics-research-integrity">Research Policy and Ethics - Research Integrity (uhi.ac.uk)</a></u>
<b>1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity</b>	Name: Professor Michael Rayner, Dean of Research and Innovation
	Email address: michael.rayner@uhi.ac.uk
<b>1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity</b>	Name: Professor Micheal Rayner
	Email address: michael.rayner@uhi.ac.uk

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

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

*How the organisation maintains high standards of research integrity and promotes positive research culture. It includes 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.*

### **Policies and systems**

The University's Research Resources Sharepoint page hosts the undernoted policies:

#### Research specific frameworks and policies

- UHI Research, Impact and KE Strategy 2022-2025
- Research Integrity
- Research Values Framework
- Ethics framework
- Researcher Development Concordat
- REF2021 Code of Practice
- Using research metrics responsibly - policy and guide
- Open Access Policy (research publishing)
- Research Data Management policy
- Fees policy
- UKRI UK Research and Innovation Trusted Research and Innovation Principles
- Research Governance Framework

#### Wider university policies

- Data Protection, including GDPR
- Due Diligence Policy and Process (UHI projects with overseas partners) which should be read in conjunction with the guidance document from UKRI for projects with overseas partners

Use of Generative AI - UHI guidance document  
Turnitin Policy and Guidance  
Equality, Diversity, and Inclusiveness  
Health and safety policies  
Anti-bribery policy  
University Values Framework  
The National Security and Investment Act: guidance for universities  
(universitiesuk.ac.uk)  
Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) Guidance

Further university policies (Freedom of Information, Academic Standards, Risk Management, Travel and Subsistence, adverse events) are available at '[University Policies and Regulations](#)'.

The University's Research Ethics webpage hosts the undernoted documents:

Online application for ethical approval  
The University Research Ethics Framework  
Faculty Information re HRA-IRAS-Student Research  
[Internet Mediated Research Guidelines](#)  
Online Survey Guidance 2022  
British Psychological Society Internet Mediated Research Guidelines document  
Consent Form Checklist  
Consent form template  
Data Protection Information  
General Data Protection Regulation presentation  
Professional Associations and Codes of Practice  
General Ethics Publications and Articles  
Arts and Humanities Business Ethics Publications  
Science Health Engineering Ethics Publications  
Animal and Environmental Research  
ESRC Points for Planning Research  
Safeguarding in International Development Research: Evidence Review  
The Research Integrity Concordat  
Adverse-Events-Policy  
University student research in NHS Scotland  
Ethics PIS checklist  
Ethics PIS template-personal data  
Ethics PIS template-no personal data  
Research with potentially vulnerable people  
Getting informed consent for user research

Guidance on researching emotionally sensitive subjects  
MRC ethics series Human Tissue and Biological Samples for Use in  
Research: Operational and Ethical Guidelines  
Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986  
Food standards agency  
Guidance on the operation of ASPA  
Research data management  
ICT and library support for research  
Research email template  
Risk assessment template  
UHI core technologies for research students  
Data protection policy

The Graduate School's Public (staff) access SharePoint pages host the  
undernoted document:

- Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees

### **Communications and engagement**

- The University produces quarterly research newsletters to inform their research community about opportunities for training, funding applications, research activity, calls for collaboration, publications, events, resources, job vacancies, lectures and grants.
- The Graduate School offer training to support good practice and regulatory knowledge relating to research student supervision.
- The Graduate School hosts a VC drop-in twice yearly (one in each semester) for postgraduate research students, to provide updates (UHI and sector-wide) and answer any general queries that arise. Notes from the drop ins are circulated to all research students and made available on their Postgraduate research intranet area, Brightspace.
- Announcements are made on the Postgraduate research Brightspace area, to notify research students of e.g., external training, funding or career opportunities.
- The University hosts an active Yammer Page entitled 'Research' to which regular posts are added to keep the University's research community informed about all relevant research news, opportunities and regulations.

### **Culture, development and leadership**

- The University joined a number of Scottish universities to form the Scottish hub of The British Academy Early Career Researcher Network.
- The University offer a biennial research staff/student conference and an annual postgraduate research student conference at which all students are invited to attend to share their experiences, communicate their work through

presentations and posters, learn new skills and spend time with University researchers and other research students and staff.

- **Monitoring and reporting**

The Graduate School's training sessions are reviewed continually, with consideration given to any new sessions required, based on feedback, direct requests and through Graduate School Committee work when reviewing progress monitoring reports.

- **Mentoring**

The University's mentoring scheme, which included bespoke strands for research and scholarship, is now in its fifth year of operation.

- **Training**

AWEC members gave an AWEC specific presentation on applying for ethical approval at the UHI biennial research staff/student conference.

- The development of transferable, employment-related and generic research skills is an important part of postgraduate research training. The University's research student training is aligned with the Vita Researcher Development Framework and supports the development of knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers. There is access to training and events run by the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities, the Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences and the Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland, and through the University of East Anglia's "live-taught" online format, delivering social science-focused training in a virtual classroom.
- Research students and their supervisors are encouraged to complete an annual Training Needs Analysis, and an online tool is available to do this within PGR Manager as part of their annual progress review.
- Completion of the Ethics Reflection and Practice training module continues to be a mandatory requirement for all PGR students and staff submitting an application for ethical approval and for all supervisors, line managers and research directors who endorse such applications. It is also a requirement that all members of REC and REC sub committees complete the module. Compliance continues to increase year on year.

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

*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, noted are 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.*

- A. A Research Office survey (which was designed to gather staff views on the types of research training they felt would help advance their research career aims) was undertaken in the Autumn of 2022 and from that a UHI Researcher Training and Development Programme has been launched. This programme offers the university's research community a wide range of training opportunities.
- B. Face-to-face inductions take place twice yearly in Inverness and include as a standing item a session regarding research ethics. Students are strongly encouraged to attend in person, and funding is available for them to cover a level of travel and accommodation costs. Those unable to attend in person are able to attend by VC.
- C. A hybrid UHI Staff/Student Research Conference was held in January 2023 from UHI Moray.
- D. Regular communications are issued to the research community to encourage mentoring partnerships.
- E. Research ethics presentations were given to a mixed group of 82 staff and students, the new intake of PGR students, the new Associate Deans and the ACES students.
- F. Members of the Animal Welfare Environment Committee completed the University of Edinburgh's Ethics and National Legislation online module.
- G. The Research Ethics Officer continues to work closely with The University's Health Research Governance Officer to ensure good practice.
- H. The online application for ethical approval was amended to ensure that sufficient information on Internet Mediated Research for qualitative data and consideration of the Nagoya Protocol was captured.
- I. A new members' area was created in Sharepoint for Animal Welfare Environment Committee members; it is used to host national guidelines and information of interest in the area of animal and environment research.
- J. Two new external and one new internal member were welcomed to the AWEC. Two new internal members were welcomed to the REC.
- K. The Research Ethics Framework was updated in August 2023 to include the departure of the Subject Network Leaders and recruitment of the Associate Deans.
- L. Following identification that the process for securing ethical approval in advance of some low-risk undergraduate-based research had not been followed in a small number of cases, steps were taken to ensure that programme leaders and all relevant staff and students were apprised of the University's processes, protocols and training materials for this engagement with respect to future students. The University is confident that this action was proportionate and will lead to effective and full compliance in the future.

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

*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. Notes any issues that have hindered progress, e.g. resourcing or other issues.*

The University continue to work with their partners from The University of Crete, The University of Nantes and Radboud University to develop a memorandum of understanding in respect of research ethics to ensure the highest ethical standards in their collaborative research.

The Animal Welfare Environment Committee have created a training video to accompany the online application for ethical approval; it will be launched at the PGR student conference in Orkney in January.

The Clerk and Chair of the AWEC are, over the next few months, preparing new Associate Dean Audrey Decou to take over the role of Chair to the AWEC.

The Terms of Reference for the REC are being amended to amend the quorum and include ex officio members.

The REC are about to advertise for an additional lay member.

The HAPLO PGR Manager system was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021, delivering online workflows for key processes relating to student progress monitoring and programme management. Further development has taken place to include thesis submission and examination processes and it is anticipated that these new processes will be launched in March 2024.

The Graduate School's annual report forms part of the University's evidence in assuring internal and external stakeholders of the quality of postgraduate research provision across the University of the Highlands and Islands and provides an opportunity to reflect on our current provision and consider enhancements for the following year. The report is submitted to the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and forms the basis of discussion during the University's quality monitoring dialogue process, which the Graduate School attends biennially.

As part of the Graduate School's on-going process of continuous enhancement, a yearly review of the Postgraduate Research Degree Code of Practice and Research Degree Regulations, along with associated documents/resources, is undertaken. Any significant changes or updates are undertaken in consultation with relevant colleagues and identified within the annual report.

## Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

- *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.*

The University has in place a number of mechanisms to ensure that processes for dealing with research misconduct are transparent, robust and fair.

In terms of dealing with issues of staff academic misconduct in relation to research, there are two broad routes. By way of context, the University consists of a number of individual academic partners that are bound together constitutionally and financially to form the University of the Highlands and Islands. One partner (SAMS UHI) has a specific policy related to investigating concerns about the conduct of research and subsequent arrangements for progressing any incidences where research misconduct is proven. For other partners any cases relating to staff research misconduct are aligned with generic staff discipline arrangements, including investigations.

The University has continued to strengthen its arrangements relating to alleged misconduct involving research students and has specifically developed a procedure for investigating allegations of academic misconduct – bespoke to research students – including appropriate penalties. These procedures and penalties have been brought in line with the existing academic misconduct



processes for taught students and are now integrated within the Academic Regulations, 'Section 19 academic misconduct policy and procedure.' The Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees includes statements regarding non-academic and academic misconduct, with links provided to relevant policies. Links and references are made to relevant University-wide policies, i.e. Promoting a Positive Learning Environment (PPLC), the Student Code of Conduct and the Academic Regulations and Procedures.

The concordat refers to the need for institutions to have "clear, well-articulated and confidential mechanisms for reporting allegations of research misconduct" (UUK, 2019, p.15). The University has a public interest and disclosure policy and procedure and the scope for this includes all activities conducted under The University's name, which would include contracted research where the contract is with The University, and also the activities of all research students registered with The University. In relation to students, there is also a confidential students complaints procedure which provides an opportunity for students to raise formal complaints relating to their academic experience in The University. In addition, academic partners will also have whistleblowing policies.

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

*The table details 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 included.*

*The procedure includes an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. Any recorded allegations are included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column.*

**There were no formal investigations relating to alleged research misconduct at The University of the Highlands the academic year 2022-23**

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

**\*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.**