

Annual Research Integrity Statement

1st August 2016 – 30th June 2017



As a signatory to the **Concordat to Support Research Integrity**, Aberystwyth University is firmly committed to the principles found within this framework. This annual statement sets out the University's position in relation to research integrity, including what actions are undertaken to achieve compliance, as well as full disclosure of any allegations of research misconduct.

This public statement concerns research undertaken by academic staff and postgraduate research students. Research undertaken by undergraduate and taught postgraduate students is administered by the Academic Quality and Records Office under the Unacceptable Academic Practice regulations.

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Research is an integral part of Aberystwyth University's mission and work. As a recipient of public funding, the University recognises the need to be innovative and ambitious yet responsible and professional.

95% of the research activity submitted to REF2014 by Aberystwyth University is of an internationally recognised standard. In order to maintain and build upon the university's successful research portfolio, it is important that we are committed to maintaining the highest standards in our research, from design through to dissemination, by demonstrating openness, rigour and integrity in all of our research activity.

We achieve this through underpinning our research with a number of quality processes and by providing relevant support, policies and guidance in a widely-accessible format. The **Concordat Action Plan** further guides our activities and enhances levels of awareness and compliance across the University.

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Governance

Embedded within its terms of reference, the **University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)** holds overall responsibility for overseeing and implementing the Concordat, as well as overall ethics, integrity and governance related policies, and procedures.

UREC is a joint sub-committee of Senate and Council, to which it reports. The Committee is chaired by an Independent member of the Council and its membership includes the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research, a member of the **University Executive Group**.

UREC also has oversight of and / or receives reports from the following committees:

- Research Ethics Panel (Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences)
- Research Ethics Panel (Science)
- Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Board (AWERB)

Operationally, the **Department of Research, Business & Innovation (RBI)** provides day-to-day support for all matters relating to ethics, integrity and research governance. This includes providing advice and delivery of a number of training and awareness raising events across all levels of the research community. In addition, RBI also supports UREC and the Research Ethics Panels.

The role of the University **Director of Ethics** is to oversee the work of developing, publicising and assuring the University's strategic direction in ethics more broadly. As the University's Ethics 'champion', the Director also works to ensure that research, both by academic members of staff and students, meets the highest ethical standards. The DoE is also member of UREC and is also Chair of the Research Ethics Panels.

Equally, academic Institutes and Departments play an important role in ensuring that the research conducted by its staff and PGR students is conducted appropriately and to the highest standard. Each Institute has a **Director of Research**, who is an academic member of staff, whose role includes overseeing and championing a range of research-related issues.

Tailored for PGR students, the **Graduate School** oversees and supports the further development of postgraduates through the provision of training, such as the *Researcher Development Programme* and a series of induction events throughout the academic year.

Policies and Procedures

The University has a number of [policies and procedures](#) to not only ensure that research is conducted appropriately, but to also ensure that effective mechanisms exist for the reporting of any concerns or queries. These policies are regularly reviewed and monitored by the appropriate [University Governance](#) committee:

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| - Research Ethics Framework | - Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy |
| - Sensitive Research Policy | - Professional Integrity Protocol |
| - Publication and Authorship Guidance | - Data Protection, Processing & Retention Policies |
| - Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research | - Research Data Management Policy |

Training

Training and awareness raising in the areas of ethics and integrity plays an important role in facilitating good research practice. Training and awareness raising events at Aberystwyth are aimed at all levels of researchers and are delivered in a variety of formats.

To date, there has been a drive to ensure that student and early career researchers are aware of their responsibilities towards maintaining the highest ethical standards when undertaking their research.

At an UG and PGT level, module co-ordinators and other departmental staff are encouraged to embed the appropriate University processes and procedures into the delivery of their teaching. In support of this, RBI proactively offers to deliver tailored seminars and tutorials, which have this year included *An Introduction to Research Ethics; Principles of Ethics in Psychology* and *Research Ethics in TFTS*.

At a PGR level, RBI delivers the 'Ethics, Plagiarism and Academic Practice' module, which is facilitated by the Graduate School. This module is compulsory for all new research students (PhD and MPhil). Furthermore, it is assessed and must be passed in order for the student to progress on to study year two.

Early career researchers and newly-appointed academic staff are invited and encouraged to attend a number of sessions which are tailored and delivered throughout the academic year. Existing research staff members are also able to attend any of the available sessions.

Specific to a number of research areas, a range of external training is provided to researchers. In the last 12 months, the University has made available a number of Home Office training modules for researchers who require a regulatory licence to work with animals. For those in the human health research field, a number of training opportunities, such as Good Clinical Practice (GCP), have been facilitated by Health and Care Research Wales.

Levels of engagement from the research community are positive and we will continue to develop and refine its training offering ready for the 2017-18 academic year.

External Memberships

RBI continues to actively participate in the [Association of Research Managers and Administrators](#) (ARMA). Since March 2017, the Research Ethics and Integrity Officer has co-led the Ethics, Governance and Best Practice group – supporting a collaborative peer network across of number of UK institutions.

As of July 2017, the University has become a member of the [UK Research Integrity Office](#) (UKRIO). This will enable the University to further embed and support good research practice in a manner which is consistent with the principles and expectations found within the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

Additionally, the University continues to contribute to the *Association for Research Ethics* and the *UK Research Ethics Committee Forum* to ensure that best practice is disseminated as widely and as effectively as possible.

All queries relating to this statement or any of the University's activities undertaken in relation to the Concordat should be direct to one of the following contacts:

[Gary Reed](#) – Director: Research, Business & Innovation

[Mitchell Parker](#) – Research Ethics and Integrity Officer

If anyone reading this document has concerns relating the conduct of an Aberystwyth University researcher, they should first consult the appropriate policy and procedure ([see page 3](#)). If you are unsure or if you are a participant in a research project, please contact the Research Ethics team:

✉ ethics@aber.ac.uk

☎ 01970 621694

Summary of Research Misconduct Investigations

Based on the [Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research](#), the University can report that for 2016-17 there have been no **high level (formal)** investigations in relation to research misconduct.

2016/17 (1/9/16 – 30/6/17)	Number of allegation for which an investigation has been undertaken		Number of allegation upheld (in whole or in part)	
	Staff	PGR	Staff	PGR
Fabrication				
Falsification				
Plagiarism				
Misrepresentation				
Breach of Duty of Care				
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct etc				

Nil Return

Research, Business & Innovation
July 2017