**ANNUAL RESEARCH INTEGRITY POLICY STATEMENT
2022-23**

PREAMBLE

This statement provides the University's response to the UK *Concordat for Research Integrity* ('The Concordat') and is intended to inform UK Research and Innovation, Research England, the academic community, other funders of our research, and the public more broadly, how the University of Exeter addresses matters of Research Integrity and seeks to foster a culture of professional integrity.

The Concordat seeks to provide a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance. As signatories to, and supporters of, the *Concordat to support Research Integrity*, the University of Exeter is committed to the following principles:

- maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research
- ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards
- supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers
- using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise
- working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly

The 'Named Person' for oversight of research integrity and the investigation of allegations of misconduct in research at the University is Prof Krasi Tsaneva (Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact).

The identified first point of contact for institutional research integrity matters is Dr Antony Walsh (Head of Research Ethics, Governance and Compliance) – a.walsh3@exeter.ac.uk. Tel. 01392 726621

Overview of activities 2022-2023

The following activities and initiatives supported the University's commitment to research integrity in 2022-23:

- Initiation of a detailed review of the current 'Code of Good Practice in Research and Misconduct in Research Process' in response to the findings of a UK Research and Innovation funding assurance programme audit.
- Investment to strengthen the Research Ethics and Governance team.
- The full implementation of the Worktribe online ethics review module.
- Implementation and refinement of the Research Ethics and Governance team SharePoint communications site to permit researchers to access key institutional information and guidance.
- Successful application for and award of a Human Tissue Authority Public Display Licence.
- Initiatives and projects relating to Open Research, Reproducibility and the Responsible use of Research Metrics.
- Ongoing activities of the cross-institutional 'Exeter Academic Review' to review the promotion and progression structures for academic colleagues, to create a reward, recognition and promotion scheme that values and recognises excellence across all academic career paths.

- **Specific actions and initiatives evidencing commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity**
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- **Commitment 1:** *Maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research*

The University has established and continues to articulate its key standards for research integrity in two main documents:
1. The *Code of Good Practice in Research and Misconduct in Research Process*[1]
2. *Research Ethics Framework*[2]

Initiatives and actions in the 2022-23 academic year
Throughout the 2022-23 academic year, the Research Ethics and Governance Team in Compliance and Risk (University Corporate Services) have given expert support and advice to Exeter's nine internal research ethics committees and the Animal Welfare and Ethics Review Body (AWERB) to facilitate high quality research in support of institutional objectives. The University has invested in three additional posts in the academic year. These were a Partnership and International Research Compliance Manager, a second Research Governance Advisor (Health and Social Care) and a fixed term Ethics Research Officer. A second Research Governance Advisor has been appointed to join the research sponsorship team to support the growing number of research studies within the NHS and provide expert advice on external research governance and quality assurance processes. The Ethics Research Officer (on a fixed term contract) has joined to provide expert ethics and research governance guidance to research ethics committees. Details of the purpose of the Partnership and International Research Compliance Manager are provided under Commitment 2 below. **Worktribe online ethics application module implementation** Since January 2023, all university research ethics committees have adopted the Worktribe online ethics review system as a means of requesting ethics review. The system which is accessible for staff and students ensures visibility and secure record keeping of all studies that are submitted for ethics review to allow consideration by reviewers and expert review of applications by the Research Ethics and Governance Team. The module is part of the pre-existing Worktribe Research Management system which allows joined up access to key administrative parts of the research lifecycle including costing, contracting, peer review, risk assessment and project deliverables.

Commitment 2: *Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.*

Initiatives and actions in the 2022-23 academic year
Partnership and International Research Compliance Manager appointment To supplement the work of the existing team, in November 2022, the university appointed a Partnership and International Research Compliance Manager to give leadership and oversight to processes relating to export control, security related issues, UK and overseas government sanction lists, the Advanced Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS), Nagoya Protocol, NSIA and other regulatory issues and international collaboration risks relating to the Trusted Research agenda. Since starting in post, a programme of training and engagement for academic and professional services has been pursued in parallel with developing a detailed Trusted Research Framework that includes the creation of a risk heatmap, a gap analysis and processes for logging and recording specific queries. The university works closely with the Research Collaboration and Advice Team (RCAT) to understand the international research landscape.

[1] https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/codesandpolicies/#collapseThree
[2] https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/codesandpolicies/#collapseTwo

Public Display HTA licence

In May 2023, the University was awarded its second Human Tissue licence by the Human Tissue Authority (HTA), a Public Display licence for the St. Luke's campus to permit the display of human tissue and human remains for educational and outreach purposes within the Medical School. A full inspection of the facilities, university quality systems relating to human tissue and interviews with key members of staff was undertaken by an HTA inspector who sought assurance that standards were understood and could be met to fulfil legal requirements.

Compliance Committee

Assessments of Compliance with research related compliance fields are scheduled to report to the Compliance Committee annually. The Compliance Committee, with senior representation from the Academic and Research areas, are reviewed and considered as part of the activities of the Compliance Committee which maintains oversight of the University Compliance Framework and Corporate risk register. The University Ethics Framework is an explicit part of this oversight and the pursuit of assurance that stakeholder expectations are being met to ensure that all research undertaken under the responsibility of the University of Exeter meets appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.

Commitment 3: *Supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers.*

Initiatives and actions in the 2022-23 academic year

The University is committed to a range of activities that contribute to the overall integrity of research through policies and support for Open Research, Reproducibility and support for the career development of Early Careers Researchers (ECRs).

The 'Exeter Academic Review' (launched July 2022) to consider promotion and progression) structures for academic colleagues and to create a reward, recognition and promotion scheme that values and recognises excellence across all academic career paths has continued its work in partnership with the workload, Allocation and Equity group, Academic Workload Planning Steering group, Exeter Professional Steering group and Exeter Professional Review group. Led by the DVC (Strategy, Integration and Resource), completion of activities is expected in the autumn of 2023.

Research Culture initiatives

The University has pursued and promoted initiatives that support the University's commitment to supporting a positive research culture under the themes of Inclusively working together, Career development and wellbeing, Responsible research and Assessment and recognition. This has been underpinned by the creation of the first departmental Research Culture Action plans that arose from previous Research Culture Workshops. A Research Culture SharePoint site, a Research Culture in Grants toolkit and the creation of new Research Culture Yammer Community have all been launched to embed actions and projects intended to promote good practice and an institutional culture of integrity.

Under 'Responsible research and Assessment and recognition' the university has undertaken:

- An assessment of the benefits and risks of formal endorsement of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA);
- The creation of guidance on responsible use of metrics
- A scoping project to understand current levels of awareness;
- A communications campaign to raise awareness and (start to) change behaviour;

Reproducibility activities

The University is a member of the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN) and has appointed Prof Mark Kelson as the Institutional network lead. In the last 12 months, the following activities have occurred:

- rolling out of a comprehensive training programme in reproducible coding (second year of initiative).
- contribution to the Exeter Academic review to ensure reproducible research is rewarded.
- hosting a UKRN symposium to discuss future plans.
- arranging for a 13-month institution-wide pilot of 'scite' (Smart Citations tool) access (starting July 2023).
- planning for an open research award (by July 2023).
- running a reproducibility 'away day' for the Exeter reproducibility team in July 2023.
- developing a proposal to conduct 'spot checks' for reproducibility criteria.
- setting out a future aspiration to create a network of reproducibility champions with representations from each university academic department.

Open Research activities

The Open Research team in the Library has provided on-going training, advocacy, and support for open access compliance to promote transparency and openness in research, contributing to a culture of research integrity. This has involved:

- The team revising eligibility criteria for accessing open access funds prioritizing support for current students, staff, and alumni for a period of time after they leave, promoting equal access to resources and upholding fairness and integrity in research.
- Increasing open access training for postgraduate students and early career researchers improving awareness about the responsible practices related to research data management and open access publishing.
- As one of the co-networks leads, actively engaging with the UK Reproducibility Network and leading the GW4 pilot "Train the Trainer" of the Open Research programme to create a network of Trainers composed by academics, including PhD students, and professional services. Trainers are now preparing the delivery of their own workshops for the Exeter community about open access, open code/software, sharing data, preprints and pre-registration.
- Involvement in Exeter's Responsible Metrics Champions group to align with ethical evaluation and assessment in research.

Supporting the career development of Early Careers Researchers

The Doctoral College has led on activities in support of the maintenance of the standards expected through the HR Excellence in Research Award. This has included:

- Continuing to provide opportunities for ECRs and PGRs to be active members of the Impact and Engaged Research Network
- Engagement in the 'Exeter Academic' review with the inclusion of ECR representative and appropriate provisions (from consultation at ECR Liaison Forums), including refinement of the promotion/progression criteria.
- Continuing to develop leadership and people management induction and development programmes for existing and aspiring academic leaders.
- Ensuring that the wellbeing of researchers is central to the development of action flowing from the new University Mental Health and Wellbeing Board as well as the Academic Workload Allocation Group.
- Promoting and encouraging researcher participation in Positive Working Environment activities (including staff festival).

Commitment 4: *Using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise*

Initiatives and actions in the 2022-23 academic year

In Spring 2023 work commenced on reviewing 'The Code of Good Practice in Research and Misconduct in Research Process' leading to a reworking to ensure closer alignment with sector leading standards, notably those of the UK Research Integrity Office model 'Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research' which was comprehensively updated in the spring of 2023.

The current policy has ensured that misconduct cases described at the end of this report have been investigated through the year.

Commitment 5: *Working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly*

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Initiatives and actions in the 2022-23 academic year

- The University of Exeter is supported in its pursuit of good institutional governance by the Dual Assurance mechanism which, for research ethics, is led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Impact in partnership with a member of University Council to provide assurance to Council that this activity is well-managed and that decisions have been reached following due process and appropriate consultation.
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- The Research Impact and Executive Committee (RIEC) oversees policy and processes and serves to 'provide leadership and oversight of research ethics and integrity related strategy, policies and governance structures'.

- A full review of the current processes and structures relating to research ethics, research governance and research integrity, led by the Head of Research Ethics, Governance and Compliance is underway and will report to RIEC in November 2023.

Allegations of Misconduct in Research investigated in the 2022-23 academic year

Since the last Research Integrity Statement was issued, one case (Medical Sciences) has been completed. A preliminary assessment into an allegation of fabrication of data was conducted which was raised as a result of a separate grievance case. Following a preliminary assessment, the allegation was dismissed as unfounded, and no formal investigation was conducted.

[The Code of Good Practice in Research and Misconduct in Research Process](#) can be found on the University website[3]

Approved by Council 12 December 2023

Further information about research ethics, research integrity and governance can be obtained from the university's website : https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/
or by contacting the Research Ethics, Governance and Compliance team by email: **cgr-reg@exeter.ac.uk**

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[3] https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/integrity/