



Research Integrity Annual Statement 2015 – 2016

University Research Integrity Committee

Background

The Concordat to Support Research Integrity was published in July 2012 and is a national framework for good research conduct and governance. The Concordat's fifth commitment requires a Research Integrity Annual Statement that:

1. Provides a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues;
2. Provides assurances that the processes they have in place for dealing allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation;
3. Provides a high level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken.

Introduction

The University Research Integrity Committee met four times in the academic year 2015/16; 22nd September 2015, 3rd November 2015, 26th January 2016 and 3rd May 2016.

The University Research Integrity Committee reports to the University Research and Innovation Committee and helps develop university-wide practices and policies.

Each school have their designated Research Integrity Committee and Convenor to deal with research ethics at local level and approve ethical applications. The work of each committee is reported to the University Research Integrity Committee where number of applications submitted, how many were approved, rejected or referred are recorded. There is also a cross-university ethical approval process that deals with applications where research is conducted across the University or where the researchers are from two or more schools, this is discussed further below.

Each school also reports number of cases of misconduct. During this academic year there were no cases to be reported.

Major Initiatives and Developments

In the academic year 2015/16, the following initiatives were addressed and completed:

1. Cross – University Ethical Approval Form and Procedure

Previously ethical approval procedures were dealt with at faculty level. The move to the school structure therefore provided an opportunity to review the ethical approval procedure

for cross-university/cross-disciplinary research and for applications from professional services staff.

Over the course of the summer 2015 a working group from the Research Integrity Committee membership met to develop a new cross-university approval form and procedure and was piloted in October 2015.

The University ethical approval procedure has been in place for eleven months and the process has now been fully implemented. To date it has been successful and dealing well with applications

2. Research Misconduct Policy

The Concordat to Support Research Integrity was published in 2012 and with that there was an institutional commitment to comply with maintaining the highest standards and a culture of research integrity. As outlined in the concordat suitable procedures need to be in place to ensure that allegations of research misconduct are dealt with effectively and fairly. The University Research Integrity Committee therefore started to develop an Edinburgh Napier Research Misconduct Policy. The policy draws on guidance from guidance from the Research Councils UK policy and guidelines and Governance of Good Research and UKRIO Procedure for Investigating Misconduct in research.

The policy outlines the following:

- General principles of research good practice and the expectation that academic and research staff should uphold research professional standards expected by funding bodies, their profession and their institution.
- The spectrum of unacceptable research conduct, differentiating from poor research practice.
- Allegations of research misconduct involving staff, visiting staff or research students will be investigated according to procedures outlined in the policy to establish if there is a case to answer.
- Where allegations involves undergraduate or taught masters students, the allegation will be referred to the appropriate school academic conduct officer to determine how to proceed according to the University's student conduct regulations and procedures.
- The procedure for handling allegations of research misconduct is separated into two stages, an initial assessment (informal enquiries) to determine whether there is a prima facie case for an investigation; a formal investigation to examine and evaluate all the relevant facts and determine whether research misconduct has been committed.
- Where there is evidence found that there is a case to answer then Edinburgh Napier University's Human resources disciplinary procedure would be followed.

3. Code of Practice for Research Integrity

Due to the University restructuring during the last academic year, there was a need to revise the University Code of Practice on Research Integrity to reflect structural and governance changes since the removal of faculty structures. A number of papers had also been approved by the committee over academic year 2014/15 which required to be integrated as guidance notes into the Code of Practice.

Other Governance notes have been added as policies and are created to ensure good research practice:

- Evaluation Vs Research
- The Use of Social Media in conducting Research
- Reference to the Data Management Policy

4. Worktribe and Ethics

Alongside the implementation of the research information system, Worktribe, an ethics workflow was integrated into the process for applying for external funding. The Committee was instrumental in composing the ethical self-assessment questions to address the different types of research across the University and ensure that research projects are ethically sound.

The research integrity convenors have been trained on the system so that they can review and approve or reject applications.

Elaine Lambie
Clerk to the University Research Integrity Committee
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