Annual statement on Research Integrity

The University is a signatory to [The Concordat to Research Integrity 2019.](#)

The following annual statement was been approved by UREC and Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee of Senate and presented to Council in November 2022. The statement will be published externally in line with our responsibilities under the Concordat.

1. *The following actions and activities have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and the application of research integrity issues.*

    Completion of review of Procedure for Investigation of Research Misconduct

    The revised Procedure for Investigation of Research Misconduct was approved by Council in March 2022, following consultation with various internal stakeholders and engagement with the UK Research Integrity Office. The revised Procedure is publicly accessible via the University webpages.

    Continuing enhancement of training for research ethics reviewers and academic supervisors

    Training for academic supervisors and research ethics reviewers is provided by the central Research Ethics team and facilitated by the Organisational Development team, which affords better visibility and recording of attendance across the University. Reviewers must attend at least one training session before undertaking review on behalf of a Brunel REC, and must attend refresher training every 12 months thereafter. It is recommended that supervisors with responsibility for supervision of student research projects be mandated to attend a training workshop, as we continue to see issues around supervisors' understanding of the importance of the process in some areas, and competing demands on supervisors' time which detract from their engagement with the process.

    New research webpages

    A number of new internal websites have been developed to increase access and visibility of research integrity matters to research staff, particularly to new starters. These contain links to research ethics pages and training and information on the Frameworks and Concordats. We have also included information on how the Research Ethics Committees operate, the standards of review and linkage to relevant University policies.

    Research during Covid-19

    In line with the easing of Covid-19 restrictions across the UK, the former policy on research during the pandemic has been withdrawn and replaced with guidance for researchers and reviewers. All applications involving in-person research with participants are required to include a detailed Risk Assessment setting out the proposed safety measures.

    Update to the Research Integrity Code

    A revision of the Research Integrity Code has been completed. Updates include amendment to reflect the revised research misconduct policy, addition of a statement and link to the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) guidance relating to public trust in research; a revised section on Open Access to reflect the changes made to funders' policy and an expanded training section to highlight training needs more clearly. Audit questions have been updated to reflect the requirements outlined in the latest version of the UUK Concordat.

    The code has been made easier to read through changes to the format including the removal of the appendix of hard copies of policies, as these are available on the University website.

2. *Processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct*

Any person engaging in research in the name of Brunel University London is expected to observe the highest standards of conduct. The general principles in relation to research are addressed in the Brunel University London Research Integrity Code and in the University Code of Research Ethics.

The University has established and maintains standard procedures for the investigation of misconduct in research, ensuring that such allegations are thorough, fair and conducted in a timely manner. These are outlined in Council Ordinance 18 Procedures for Investigation of Research Misconduct.

The University defines research misconduct as follows:

1. Fabrication: making up results, other outputs (for example, artefacts) or aspects of research, including documentation and participant consent, and presenting and/or recording them as if they were real

2. Falsification: inappropriately manipulating and/or selecting research processes, materials, equipment, data, imagery and/or consents

3. Financial misconduct

4. Plagiarism1 or deception in proposing, carrying out or reporting results of primary research

5. Deliberate, reckless or negligent deviations from accepted practice in conducting research

6. Conducting research with human participants without first obtaining research ethics approval

7. Failure to follow an agreed protocol, particularly if this failure results in unreasonable risk or harm to humans, other vertebrates or the environment

8. Failure to meet legal, ethical or professional obligations, including o not observing legal, ethical and other requirements for human research participants, animal subjects, or human organs or tissue used in research, or for the protection of the environment

   • breach of duty of care for humans involved in research whether deliberately, recklessly or by gross negligence, including failure to obtain appropriate informed consent
   • misuse of personal data, including inappropriate disclosures of the identity of research participants and other breaches of confidentiality
   • improper conduct in peer review of research proposals, results or manuscripts submitted for publication (including failure to disclose conflicts of interest; inadequate disclosure of clearly limited competence; misappropriation of the content of material; and breach of confidentiality or abuse of material provided in confidence for the purposes of peer review)

9. Misrepresentation of

   • data, including suppression of relevant results/data or knowingly, recklessly or by gross negligence presenting a flawed interpretation of data
   • involvement, including inappropriate claims to authorship or attribution of work and denial of authorship/attribution to persons who have made an appropriate contribution
   • interests, including failure to declare competing interests of researchers or funders of a study
   • qualifications, experience and/or credentials
   • publication history, through undisclosed duplication of publication, including undisclosed duplicate submission of manuscripts for publication

10. Facilitating misconduct in research by collusion in, or concealment of, such actions by others

11. Failure to maintain a duty of confidence where such confidentiality is expressly required or implied

12. Failure to ensure that any appropriate safeguards to protect human participants are embedded and followed.

Any allegation of research misconduct should be reported confidentially to the Secretary to Council or, in the event of a potential conflict of interest or absence, his/her nominated representative appointed by the Chair of Council. Any allegations of fiscal malfeasance or irregularity in relation to research activity should be reported confidentially to the Director of Finance.

3. *Formal investigations of research misconduct 2021/22*

The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) made 49 investigations into research misconduct in 2021/22 (48 of these were student cases, 1 involved a staff member). Of these, 39 cases were upheld.

Twenty-six investigations were resolved formally; none involved research funded by a Research Council.

The University intends to better understand the reasons behind the cases and identify suitable measures by adding standing items to all Research Ethics Committee agendas for reporting of figures and discussion of anonymised cases.

4. *What the University has learned from formal investigations of research misconduct and actions taken to prevent the same type of incident re-occurring*

All but one investigation undertaken during this period involved ethical approval for supervised student research projects; the University continues to provide improved research ethics training provision for academic supervisors, including mandatory training where required. Training for students continues to include lectures, clear course guidance, web-based learning and engagement with research integrity training where the proposed research involves human participants. The University is also reviewing its processes around ethical approval for taught students.

5. *How the University creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct*

Council Ordinance 18 Procedures for Investigation of Research Misconduct outlines a University central contact for cases of suspected misconduct and makes provision for individuals with concerns over research conduct to raise their issues in confidence and for confidentiality during the investigations.

This is clearly displayed on the University external research integrity webpage and the University internal research policy page and is clearly flagged on central staff research pages and linked to by each College research page. Contacts for reporting research misconduct are displayed on our webpages and colleagues are assured of the provisions for anonymity in our research misconduct policy.

Colleagues on Teaching and Research and Research only contracts are encouraged to complete the University Research integrity training unit, which is discipline specific and includes training relating to identifying and reporting misconduct. This training and the research Integrity code is highlighted in the welcome letter for new appointees and Senior research Administrators in Colleges include this in induction checklists.

For Post Graduate Research students, the University's code of practice for research degrees sets out the University's mandatory policies and procedures. This includes a link to the Research Integrity code and highlights specifically the code of research ethics.

Links to the code and online integrity are also shown on the Graduate school training development and support page.

A discussion of ethics and data management is specified in the Research degree code as part of the 4-week progression review and review points include discussions around research management skills. Details of the contact point for queries around research misconduct is on the 'my research' page of the e-vision portal for post graduate research students.

Students on taught programmes receive guidance from supervisors in relation to ethics and misconduct as part of teaching provision.