

ANNUAL STATEMENT TO COURT FOR 2014/15 ON ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN TO STRENGTHEN THE UNIVERSITY'S RESEARCH GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The University of Aberdeen seeks to achieve the highest standards in its research governance arrangements, recognising both the importance and centrality of rigour and integrity to high quality research performance. The University recognises that research integrity is a primary concern of all those involved with research, and that it is vital to have in place robust and effective processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct.

As part of this recognition, the University is committed to full compliance with all areas of the UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity, which was first published in July 2012. It is an expectation of the SFC, RCUK and the Wellcome Trust, and therefore a requirement of funding, that all Universities comply with the guidance and commitments outlined in the Concordat. As part of meeting its obligations, the University is required, under Commitment 5 of the Concordat, to submit an annual statement to its governing body (University Court) which summarises the actions and activities undertaken by the University to support and strengthen its research governance arrangements. The statement should also provide high level comment on any formal research misconduct investigations which may have been undertaken over the course of the previous year.

Statement of Compliance

This statement therefore outlines steps the University has taken, and measures it has put in place, for compliance with the UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity, as outlined in the Concordat under Commitment 5:

- **Supporting and Strengthening Research Integrity:** the University has taken a number of steps this year to strengthen its research governance arrangements.

First, the University has rolled out face-to-face training on research governance for both research staff and PGR students. To supplement that, it has also started development of an online training module which will feature much of the same content, but which will be easier to administer and which will be far more accessible to staff and students.

Second, the University has also agreed, at institutional level, to undertake a light-touch review of the research governance arrangements it has in place at School level, on a School-by-School basis. This will take the form of a "Healthcheck" exercise, which will be designed to identify areas of relative strength and weakness in its research governance arrangements, and also examples good practice which could be used as a benchmark across the institution.

Third, the University has carried out a comprehensive review of its Research Governance Handbook; this is the overarching, high-level document which outlines the systems, processes and policies the University has in place for ensuring it meets the highest standards of research governance. The document was benchmarked against the Concordat using the UKRIO Self-Assessment Toolkit and a number of amendments and updates have been made accordingly. This gives the institution greater confidence that it has a strong framework in place for ensuring compliance with the UUK Concordat.

Forth, the University has put in place a range of measures to enhance its health and safety arrangements, thereby supporting the delivery of high quality research whilst ensuring the optimal safety of research participants and staff.

- **Research Misconduct – Systems and Incidents:** the University has in place a robust system for dealing with allegations or incidents of research misconduct. These are outlined in detail in Section 4 of the University Research Governance Handbook, and were recently reviewed as part of a wider review of the Handbook document. The University is satisfied that the systems in place not only provide comprehensive mechanisms for dealing with research misconduct, but that they provide staff with an appropriate range of options for reporting allegations of research misconduct; in short, there are a number of different parties to whom an allegation can be reported, and in each case, the allegation will be taken in complete confidence. The University did not undertake any formal research misconduct investigations, or consider any case, over academic year 2014/15; no formal complaints were made.

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