



ANNUAL STATEMENT TO COURT FOR 2015/16 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.

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. 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 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.

The University has launched an on-line training module on research ethics and governance which is available for self directed study and assessment by staff of all disciplines. All staff are strongly encouraged to complete the training module. A similar module has been developed and launched specifically for Postgraduate Research Students. Completion of the training module will be monitored by the Research Policy Committee and through the Graduate School for Postgraduate Research Students.

The University has also agreed to continue to undertake light touch governance and ethics 'health checks' of schools. These will ensure compliance with the Concordat at School level and identify weaknesses that need to be addressed and good practice that can be shared across the institution. The health checks will be carried out on a rolling basis.

The Research Governance Handbook, which details policy and processes relating to research conduct across the University is currently under review, following significant organisational change and in the light of additional regulatory and statutory requirements. It was last reviewed and benchmarked against the Concordat using the UKRIO Self-Assessment Toolkit in 2015, and the current review will consider whether the University continues to comply. It is expected that the review will be completed by March 2017.

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. The University is satisfied that the systems in place provide comprehensive mechanisms for dealing with research misconduct, and that staff are provided with an appropriate range of options for reporting allegations of research misconduct. 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 2015/16; no formal complaints were made. There have been several cases of minor infringements or potential near misses of governance arrangements. After investigation these have not warranted proceeding to formal disciplinary procedures. We remain alert to infringements and near misses so that we can engender a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

ENDS