



# Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2023

## Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
<b>1A. Name of organisation</b>	Cranfield University
<b>1B. Type of organisation:</b>  higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)	Higher Education
<b>1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)</b>	24 April 2024
<b>1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)</b>	<a href="https://cranfield.ac.uk/research-ethics-and-integrity">Research ethics and integrity (cranfield.ac.uk)</a>
<b>1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity</b>	Name: Professor Leon Terry
	Email address: researchoffice@cranfield.ac.uk
<b>1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity</b>	Name: Alicen Nickson
	Email address: alicen.nickson@cranfield.ac.uk

## **Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken**

### **2A. Description of current systems and culture**

Please describe how the organisation maintains high standards of research integrity and promotes positive research culture. It should include information on the support provided to researchers to understand standards, values and behaviours, such as training, support and guidance for researchers at different career stages/ disciplines. You may find it helpful to consider the following broad headings:

- Policies and systems

The University has specific policies regarding ethics and integrity as well as a Process for implementing and monitoring research integrity, which sets out specific responsibilities for the University, researchers, supervisors and students. It includes details on how to raise concerns in relation to scientific misconduct or breaches of research integrity and the process for investigation. Ethics and integrity related policies are reviewed on an annual basis. The University has a single online ethics system which is used across the University by staff and students undertaking research. Students are required to provide evidence of ethical approval as part of their thesis submission.

- Communications and engagement

Regular communications via the University's ebulletins, research student inductions and presentations are undertaken reminding staff and students of the University's policy that all research must be submitted for ethical review prior to commencement of data collection. Online training courses on ethics and integrity and research data management are available for all staff and students.

- Culture, development and leadership

The University aims to promote a positive research culture where all research is undertaken with integrity including the planning and conduct of research, the recording and reporting of results and the dissemination, application and exploitation of findings. Through the University's Ethics Committee and Research Committee policies are reviewed annually to ensure they remain current and fit for purpose. Under the University's Excellence in Scholarship programme, we provide 1-2-1 formative review of outputs which includes feedback on integrity related matters such as data accessibility statements.

The University's Research and Innovation Strategy encourages a research culture that promotes the articulation of intellectual contribution for useful application. This

includes prioritising the integrity of our research and associated data and will be addressed through the ongoing implementation of the new Strategy for 2022-2027.

- **Monitoring and reporting**

The University's Research Ethics and Integrity Committee (CUREIC) meet three times per year. They report annually to Senate and provide an interim report in September each year. The annual report is shared with Council who approve and sign of the University's Annual Statement on Research Integrity following Senate approval.

10% of ethics applications at all risk levels are audited each month to check they have been assigned the appropriate risk level and have been completed correctly. Where any concerns are picked up, applicants are contacted where they may be asked to provide additional information.

## **2B. Changes and developments during the period under review**

Please provide an update on any changes made during the period, such as new initiatives, training, developments, also ongoing changes that are still underway. Drawing on Commitment 3 of the Concordat, please note any new or revised policies, practices and procedures to support researchers; training on research ethics and research integrity; training and mentoring opportunities to support the development of researchers' skills throughout their careers.

### **Cranfield University's Research Ethics and Integrity Committee**

In September 2023, the University's Senate approved a proposal to expand the remit of the Ethics Committee to specifically oversee our delivery of the concordat commitments and the wider support and development of research integrity at Cranfield. The changes provide an appropriate forum within which to facilitate considered and cross-University discussions on matters relating to research integrity.

In broadening the committee's remit, membership was expanded to include both Library and technical representation.

At the first meeting, under the new remit, it was agreed to establish a Research Integrity Working Group to undertake a detailed review of current policies relating to research integrity and the processes to support the level of integrity we wish to uphold including how we embed them into our culture.

A separate working group will also be established to review the University's current provision in relation to education and training with the aim to update existing training material as well as developing new methods of education for staff and students.

As part of the University's Research and Innovation Strategy, work has continued on defining a new revised Cranfield definition of research culture which will reinforce the

University's commitment to delivering research to the highest academic rigour. An action plan has been approved identifying specific activities for the year ahead. Actions include:

- Increasing variety of mechanism for dissemination of policies and processes for existing and new staff
- Cross-centre events to promote sharing of best practice
- Inclusive and representative evaluations of staff perceptions to improve research culture
- Review mentorship and leadership training processes

### **Research Ethics Policy**

Changes were made to the Research Ethics Policy which now provides additional guidance on:

- Clear advice on the process where a researcher has moved to Cranfield but has undertaken data collection at their previous institution.
- Clear statement that ethical approval is required where individuals are working with secondary data.
- Clearer guidance specifying that projects may require approval over several ethics applications, for example where there are significant changes to a projects requiring an updated review.
- New exemption where research projects based solely on literature reviews will no longer have to obtain ethical approval.

### **Human Tissue Committee**

The University's Human Tissue Committee, reporting into CUREIC, main purpose is to examine, advise and implement norms and any changes in regulatory, training, health and safety, administrative and level matters to do with the engagement with human tissue samples at Cranfield University. In 2023, the Committee developed and published new guidance to support researchers, including:

- Human Tissue Policy
- Human Tissue Quality Manual
- Working with Human Tissue at Cranfield University – Guidance
- Sample Handling and Storage Standard Operating Procedure

### **UKRIO Self-assessment for Research Integrity**

The Research Governance Team used the UKRIO self-assessment tool in order to identify gaps in policy and processes. In 2024 an Research Integrity working group will be established to build on the findings from the self-assessment.

### **University's Research Ethics System updates**

During 2023, several updates were made to the University's Research Ethics System (CURES). Some improvements were designed to tackle recurring issues picked up during the auditing of applications, others to improve supervisor's awareness of how student projects were progressing through the ethical approval system.

A new sub-form was also introduced to enable applicants, whose project title had changed after they had secured ethical approval, allowing them to generate a new approval letter to reflect a change in title. Any changes to the project, including methodology still require a new application to be completed. Updates were made to the University's thesis template which now includes a placeholder for both taught and research students to include confirmation of ethical approval in their thesis.

**2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments**

This should include a reflection on the previous year's activity including a review of progress and impact of initiatives if known relating to activities referenced in the previous year's statement. Note any issues that have hindered progress, e.g. resourcing or other issues.

Cranfield made good progress against the plans for future developments detailed in the previous year's report, some of which are detailed in section 2b above.

In September 2023, the University held a week long series of events under the heading of Good Research Practice. The events were held online and open to all staff and students. Topics included Good Practice in Research – How and why it matters; Responsible impact and innovation; What is Trusted Research; Security in Research; AI in Research; Open Access Research; Understanding your IP; Research Ethics; Data and Reproducibility; Managing your data; Diversity and inclusion in research.

**2D. Case study on good practice (optional)**

Please describe an anonymised brief, exemplar case study that can be shared as good practice with other organisations. A wide range of case studies are valuable, including small, local implementations. Case studies may also include the impact of implementations or lessons learned.

## Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

### 3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

Please provide:

- a brief summary of relevant organisation policies/ processes (e.g. research misconduct procedure, whistle-blowing policy, bullying/harassment policy; appointment of a third party to act as confidential liaison for persons wishing to raise concerns) and brief information on the periodic review of research misconduct processes (e.g. date of last review; any major changes during the period under review; date when processes will next be reviewed).
- information on how the organisation creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct (e.g. code of practice for research, whistleblowing, research misconduct procedure, informal liaison process, website signposting for reporting systems, training, mentoring, reflection and evaluation of policies, practices and procedures).
- anonymised key lessons learned from any investigations into allegations of misconduct which either identified opportunities for improvements in the organisation's investigation procedure and/or related policies / processes/ culture or which showed that they were working well.

The University has in place a number of policies and procedures to deal with allegations of misconduct which are subject to annual review. During 2023, policies were reviewed and updated where necessary.

In 2024, the Research Integrity Working Group will be undertaking a detailed review of the University's Research Integrity Policy and the Process for Implementing this Policy which details the procedure for dealing with allegations of academic misconduct.

Following a previous recommendation to make research integrity and ethics training mandatory for all staff and students undertaking research, the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Committee have established an Education and Training Working Group to review the current training provision. Once this group have completed their review a recommendation will be taken to the University Executive to request ethics and integrity training becomes mandatory for all individuals undertaking or involved in research at Cranfield.

Following completion of academic misconduct investigations during 2023, the following improvements have been made:

The University has rolled out new training on export control. It has also put in place a new self-assessment tool on Trusted Research for International Collaborations to support staff in making informed decisions around international research collaborations.

The Authorship Policy was reviewed extensively during 2023 with an update published at the end of the year. Plans to communicate the updated policy and raise awareness are being developed and will continue to be highlighted as part of the ongoing work on Excellence in Scholarship.

More generally it has become apparent that there is a general lack of understanding of the University's policies which is resulting in some of them not being actively "lived".

During 2024 a review of how policies are presented internally will be undertaken including how we can simplify key messages and make them easy to both understand and follow as well as providing clear guidance on how staff can ask for additional support and guidance.

### 3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken

Please complete the table on the number of **formal investigations completed during the period under review** (including investigations which completed during this period but started in a previous academic year). Information from ongoing investigations should not be submitted.

An organisation's procedure may include an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. These allegations should be included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column.

Type of allegation	Number of allegations			
	Number of allegations reported to the organisation	Number of formal investigations	Number upheld in part after formal investigation	Number upheld in full after formal investigation
Fabrication				
Falsification				
Plagiarism				
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations				
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)	1	1		0
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)				
<i>Other*</i>				
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**\*If you listed any allegations under the 'Other' category, please give a brief, high-level summary of their type here. Do not give any identifying or confidential information when responding.**

*[Please insert response if applicable]*