Annual Statement on Research Integrity

2020

The Concordat to Support Research Integrity requests that employers of researchers should present a short annual statement to their own governing body and subsequently make publicly available through the institution's website. The annual statement must include:

- a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and the application of research integrity issues (for example postgraduate and researcher training, or process reviews)
- a statement to provide assurance that the processes the institution has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, timely, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation
- a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, which will include data on the number of investigations. If no formal investigation has been undertaken, this should also be noted
- a statement on what the institution has learned from any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, including what lessons have been learned to prevent the same type of incident re-occurring
- a statement on how the institution creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct

The Annual Statement on Research Integrity is included at Annex 1.

Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2020

In 2014, Cranfield University adopted the Universities UK's policy "The Concordat to Support Research Integrity". The Concordat was updated and published at the end of October 2019 and as a result Cranfield reviewed its policies relating to research ethics and integrity to bring them in line with the revised Concordat.

Cranfield University continues to uphold the principles of the revised Concordat and expects members of the research community to:

- Uphold the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research
- Ensure that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards
- Support a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice, and support for the development of researchers
- Use transparent, timely, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise
- Work together to strengthen the integrity of research and to review progress regularly and openly

The University annually reviews its policies and procedures regarding ethics and integrity including:

- Research Integrity Policy
- Research Ethics Policy
- Process for Implementing and Monitoring Research Integrity Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

These polices and processes are reviewed on an annual basis and Research Committee is responsible for reporting the outcomes into Senate, including providing assurance that the processes the University has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, timely, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to Cranfield's needs. The process includes the opportunity for staff and students to make allegations through different channels to ensure they feel as comfortable as possible in speaking out. They are informed of the action taken to address their concerns and the outcome of that action to ensure they feel that their allegation has been taken seriously and dealt with.

The following activities were undertaken in the last 12 months to support our staff and students and raise awareness of research ethics and integrity:

1. The University continues to be a member of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO)
2. The Cranfield University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) appointed a new external Chair in May 2020, Karen Stoddart, Chief Compliance Officer for the Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre (VMIC), Oxfordshire.
3. CUREC held two meetings during 2020 with members of staff and external members in attendance to review current practices and suggest improvements as required.
4. Elected research student representatives have attended meetings of CUREC to offer feedback from the student community.
5. Internal information and guidance for staff and students on ethics and integrity has undergone major updates including a new process and guidance for staff and students who require ethical approval through the Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee (MODREC).
6. Regular communications to both staff and students have been sent out to remind the research community of the requirements for ethical approval for all research projects.
7. Regular communications have been made to all students reminding them of the requirement to complete online ethics and integrity training prior to submitting their research for ethical approval.
8. A new training module on research integrity has been developed and will be released in early 2021. Alongside this updates have been made to the current research ethics training material which will be re-released at the same time.
9. Following the publication of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) guidance on Research Ethics Support and Review in Research Organisations, a self-assessment of processes, practices and policies was undertaken in late 2020 with Internal Audit. A number of low priority recommendations have been made which will be addressed in early 2021.
10. The user guide for the University's Research Ethics System (CURES) was updated to reflect changes made to the ethics application process.

Plans for 2021

1. CURES support will be extending the auditing remit of applications to include all risk levels.
2. Introduce a process enabling Masters' students to submit evidence of ethical approval with their thesis submission.
3. Develop more online video tutorials, particularly for Masters' students undertaking group and individual research projects.
4. Create new web content to better communicate Cranfield's approach to research ethics and integrity externally.
5. Develop more detailed training for ethics reviewers.
6. Review the Academic Misconduct Handbook in line with current policies.

One matter of potential research misconduct was reported to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Research and Innovation at the end of 2019. The complaint was investigated in line with the Process for Implementing and Monitoring Research Integrity Policy and the conclusion of the investigation was there was no case of research misconduct.