



Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2021

Cranfield University continues to uphold the principles of The Concordat to Support Research Integrity 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 policies 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) has an external Chair as well as external lay members. The appointed lay members term of office came to an end at the end of 2021.

Advertising the positions had been delayed due to a review of current CUREC membership to reflect the University's EDI ambitions.

3. CUREC held two meetings during 2021 with members of staff and external members in attendance. Due to the ongoing Covid restrictions both meetings were held by video conference.
4. Elected research student representatives have attended meetings of CUREC to offer feedback from the student perspective.
5. Following the announcement at the end of 2019 that the MOD had re-issued JSP 536 - Governance of Research Involving Human Participants which requires all MOD-funded student projects and research programmes to be reviewed through MODREC (the MOD research ethics system), a new process for Cranfield was launched in February 2021. This included establishing a Defence Academy Scientific Advisory Committee (DefAcSAC) who review applications and decide whether full MODREC approval is required.
6. Following the publication of guidance on Research Ethics Support and Review in Research Organisations by UKRIO in 2020, a self-assessment and audit of CURECs current practices, processes and policies was undertaken which involved engaging with Internal Audit. The audit identified 9 recommendations which have subsequently all been addressed. A number of the recommendations related to additional clarity within CUREC's Terms of Reference.
7. A redesign of the University's intranet pages relating to research ethics was undertaken to enhance guidance and support as well as providing an improved user experience.
8. All supervisors now receive an email notification confirming ethical approval for their students' research.
9. A new infographic (Appendix 1) was produced and published to help raise awareness amongst staff and students regarding the process of gaining ethical approval.
10. Three ethics training sessions were held as part of the new research students' induction programme.
11. Training sessions for taught students at the start of their group and/or individual thesis projects were delivered by members of the Research Governance team.
12. A new training module on research integrity was released to staff and students on the University's Virtual Learning Environment.
13. Updates were made to the online research ethics training module for staff and students.
14. A review of the Academic Misconduct Handbook was undertaken with an updated version published in autumn 2021.

Plans for 2022

1. CURES support will be implementing an auditing process that will include all risk levels (carried over from 2021).
2. Introduce a process enabling Masters' students to submit evidence of ethical approval with their thesis submission (carried over from 2021)
3. Develop more online video tutorials, particularly for Masters' students undertaking group and individual research projects (carried over from 2021).
4. Create new web content to better communicate Cranfield's approach to research ethics and integrity externally (ongoing).
5. Develop more detailed training for ethics reviewers (carried over from 2021).
6. Undertake a review of current CUREC membership to reflect the University's EDI ambitions which will involve consultation with the various staff networks at Cranfield.
7. A review of the process relating to MODREC will be undertaken to determine if any changes are required.
8. Using the UKRIO Self-assessment tool for the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, CUREC have agreed to establish a working group to undertake an assessment which is designed to help institutions identify areas of research practices, policies and culture that may need revision in order to comply with the Concordat.
9. Introduce a process to enable researchers to make amendments to applications where research projects may have changed following ethical approval.
10. Implement a robust process to ensure that when changes to supervision teams happen, that all relevant documentation relating to a researchers progress is shared with the new team, which will include evidence of ethical approval.

Formal investigations

In 2021 the Research and Innovation Office received an allegation of academic misconduct regarding “questionable research practice” which had taken place in proceeding with human participant research without having proper ethical approval in place by the student/and or their supervisors. In line with the Process for Implementing and Monitoring the Research Integrity Policy the Research and Innovation Office convened a Research Misconduct Review Group (RMRG) to investigate the allegation. Following a detailed investigation, the final recommendation by the RMRG was that the student be allowed to continue with the completion of the thesis and submission with two requirements:

- a. All aspects of the human participation research be removed from the thesis (currently only held within an appendix).
- b. The hard copy survey documents be appropriately disposed of or stored in accordance with Cranfield’s protocols.

On completion of the investigation, the RMRG also recommended that the University should conduct a review of the current policy and procedures related to ethics and its approval within research activities to enhance the resilience of delivery of the University’s Ethics Policy including specific reference to:

- a. Communication strategies to ensure all staff and students are aware of the importance and are engaged with the role of ethics within research.
- b. The potential to provide mandatory training on ethics to all staff and students.
- c. Review the processes that provide QA associated to ensuring the approved ethics are appropriate for the research project including consideration for multiple time points for ethics approval to reflect potential changes in projects as they progress.
- d. Strengthen wording on research student progress review forms regarding ethical approval.



