

**Concordat to Support Research Integrity**

The University is committed to supporting the highest standards of research integrity which are reflected in the 2019 [Concordat to Support Research Integrity.](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/the-concordat-to-support-research-integrity.pdf)

* Commitment 1: To uphold the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.
* Commitment 2: To ensure that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal, and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.
* Commitment 3: To 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.
* Commitment 4: To use transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.
* Commitment 5: To work together to strengthen the integrity of research and to review progress regularly and openly.

The University Research and Innovation Committee is responsible for ensuring adherence to these commitments which it discharges via the University Research Ethics Sub-committee (URESC). We have a range of policies, codes and processes to support researchers in maintaining these standards, including:

* Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research
* Code of Practice for the Reporting of Research Misconduct
* Research Ethics Policy (REP) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
  + URESC Ethical Guidance for Undertaking Research with Children and Young People
  + URESC Ethical Guidance for Undertaking Research with Vulnerable Adults
  + URESC Ethical Guidance for Undertaking Research with Edge Hill University Students
* Human Tissue Quality Manual
* Research Risk Assessment Guidance
* Open Access Policy
* Research Data Management Guidelines
* Policy on Researching and Handling Sensitive Material
* Health-related findings guidance
* Guidance when applying for sponsorship

All documents relating to research governance are all available on the University’s webpages. The Research Office oversees the review and updating of these codes and policies on behalf of Research Committee. A review of the Ethics Framework has been agreed by URESC to take place in 2022/23 and as part of the review a number of the above policies will also be considered.

Training for researchers is now being coordinated via the Graduate School and the range of training being offered is currently being reviewed. Newly enrolling PhD students have training sessions which cover the codes of practice, the ethics approval process, risk assessment and working with human tissue. All staff undertaking research involving Human Tissue are required to undertake specific training.

There is an additional policy on intellectual property that is owned by Regulation, Assurance and Governance Unit (RAGU) and is held on the central regulations pages.

# Research Governance Structures

Research and Innovation Committee (URIC) is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research. It has representatives from each faculty and ex-officio and appointed members from the Research Office, URESC, Learning Services and the Governing Body. The Committee delegates the responsibility for the ethical approval process to URESC which meets three times a year. Among its ex-officio members are the chairs of each Subject Research Ethics Committee (SREC) which, in turn, oversee the ethical approval processes of research conducted in their areas. The SRECs were new for the academic year 2020/21, there are five in total: Arts & Humanities, Education, Health-related, Science and Social Sciences. Departmental review is encouraged but not mandatory. All applications must be endorsed by the head of department with post graduate researcher (PGR) applications requiring the endorsement of the supervisor before the head of department. Where a SREC does not feel able to grant ethical approval, it may ask URESC to review the application. It is the nature of the project not the applicant’s department that determines which REC reviews the project.

In addition to the ethics committees, there is a Human Tissue Management Sub-committee (HTMSC), which has oversight of the work carried out under the licence. All projects carried out under the licence must receive ethical approval from the Science Research Ethics Committee. The ‘Designated Individual’ under the terms of the HTA licence is a member of the HTMSC and an ex-officio member of URESC. The Biological Safety Officer is a member of the Science REC and is also an ex-officio member of HTMSC.

All governance policies are reviewed by both URESC and URIC before being taken to Academic Board for final approval and adoption.

The Director of the Research Office is the named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity and ensure that this information is kept up to date and publicly available on the institution’s website. The secretary to URESC is named staff member who acts as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity, and contact details are publicly available on our website.

# Activities and developments in 2021-212

(The relevant Concordat commitment is indicated in parenthesis.)

The five Subject Research Ethics Committees were launched in November 2020 and their activity is monitored via URESC, via regular reports and shared membership. This is allowing best practice is shared, representatives from different committees are members. URESC has two lay members and we will be inviting applications to join the SRECs However, recruiting lay members is proving more challenging. (#1, #3, #5).

The online ethics system (Haplo) was launched in November 2020, which also acts are a register for all research projects. Additional policy and guidance documents was created and the central team based in the Research Office is developing further guidance. (#1; #2; #3; #5

However, the introduction of the new system has not been without some issues, particularly regarding the user experience and the excessive volume of paperwork that is generated. It has therefore been agreed that a review of the ethics process, the wider ethics framework and ethics system will be undertaken in 2022/23. This will include a review of the misconduct policy (#3, #4, #5)

Training sessions on the GDPR and research are now delivered on line. In order to access NHS related data, the University is required to undertake a NHS Data Security Protection Toolkit. The key area was ensuring that all staff had recently undertaken GDPR and data management training and stricter protocols regarding the storage of data. It is planned that the Health Research Institute (where all NHS data related research is undertaken) will be able to register that they are compliant with the DSTP by December (#1, #2, #3, #5)

Anna Grey

Director, Research Office October 2022