

University of Brighton Statement on research integrity 2017/18

Introduction and overview

The University of Brighton is fully committed to ensuring the quality and integrity of the planning, conduct and management of research, in reporting and disseminating the results, and in the delivery and reporting of research impact. The University is also committed to acting in accordance with the principles and commitments outlined in the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2012), which recommends that institutions make an annual statement on the actions they have taken to sustain and further enhance integrity in their research. This statement summarises the activities undertaken during 2017/18 to support and strengthen research integrity within the University of Brighton.

Policies and guidance

During the early part of 2018, the University's policies and guidance relating to research ethics and integrity were revised and updated to ensure that they reflected the requirements and implications of the GDPR, which came into effect in May 2018. The University Research Ethics and Integrity Committee also undertook a review of the policies and guidance to support the wider ethical framework at the University, and made a number of recommendations in this area to the University Executive Board. As a result, a working group has been established to look further at these issues and to implement the recommendations from the review. The working group will hold initial meetings in September and October 2018, and it is expected that the work of the group will be completed by the end of the 2018/19 academic year.

It is expected that some further consideration of our Research Integrity Policy and Research Misconduct Procedure may be required during 2018/19, once Universities UK and the UK Research Integrity Office have published a revised version on the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

Research misconduct

During the year one allegation of research misconduct from the School of Media was received and considered at the preliminary investigation stage, but was dismissed. The case in question was regarding a research student and related to the area of ethics.

Systems and processes

In July 2017 the University had purchased Infonetica's ERM system for the management of research ethics applications, and during the autumn of 2017 work took place to configure the system to the requirements of the University's various research ethics committees and panels. A pilot took place with three of the panels and committees during the spring of 2018, and the system, known locally as BREAM (Brighton Research Ethics Application Manager) is now being rolled out across the rest of the University.

The Department of Research, Enterprise and Social Partnerships is in the process of developing a more comprehensive due diligence process, which it is hoped will enable the University to ensure a higher level of integrity with collaborative research and enterprise projects.

Dissemination, awareness raising, education and training

During 2017/18 we have continued to offer Induction days for new CREC members and to run sessions on research ethics and research integrity for PGR students and new PGR supervisors. We have also run workshops for staff on 'Introduction to research ethics' and 'Researching with vulnerable participants' as part of the RESP workshop programme. As part of the implementation of BREAM we have run training sessions for reviewers, and have produced user guides and video guides for applicants and supervisors using the system. As we roll out BREAM across the University we are also offering training to staff and students in individual Schools where they feel this would be useful. The introduction of BREAM has also resulted in some Schools identifying low levels of ethical awareness in some areas, and this has provided an opportunity to think about what additional training and awareness-raising in ethical issues might be required for students and supervisors in the future. Some Schools are developing examples of completed BREAM application forms tailored to their specific research area, which provide detailed guidance about what is expected in terms of addressing the ethical issues, with the aim of raising the quality of future applications. We have also received requests from a number of Schools to run a session on ethics and integrity in their next School Awayday or meeting. As we continue to roll out BREAM, we will be working closely with Schools to develop ways of promoting research ethics and engaging staff and students in the issues involved.

During 2018 we explored whether there might be other ways in which we could promote and raise awareness of research integrity, and looked at some other institutions' examples of good practice in this area. As a result, we are putting forward a proposal to the University Research Ethics and Integrity Committee to establish a Research Integrity Forum, to involve both internal and external speakers with the aim of engaging researchers and research students in debates about topical research integrity issues.

Over the summer of 2018 we updated and expanded the ethics and integrity SharePoint pages on StaffCentral to include some new links to external online training and resources, and created a new section that provides more detailed guidance on issues in research integrity.

External engagement

The University continued its membership of UKRIO during 2017/18. The Ethics and Integrity Manager attended a number of external events throughout the year including the Infonetica open day in November 2017, a research ethics workshop at the University of Sussex in March 2018, an ARMA workshop on systems for ethics review in May 2018, and the annual UKRIO conference in May 2018.

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