

## Annual Report on Research Integrity

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**Purpose of Report:** To confirm to the RVC Council that the College complies with the Concordat to support Research Integrity.

**Recommendation:** Council notes the Report

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### Background

The Concordat to support Research Integrity was introduced in December 2012. All UUK members are signatories of the Concordat and as part of our annual monitoring statement to UKRI/OfS we are required to confirm that we comply with the principles of the Concordat.

Institutional responsibility for ensuring the integrity of RVC's research lies with the VPRI and the Research & Innovation Committee (RIC), which reports to Academic Board. RIC is supported by two working groups, the Research Working Group (RWG) and the Innovation Working group, chaired by the Associate Deans for Research and Innovation, respectively.

The RVC has a number of policies and codes of practice to guide its staff and students in research integrity, namely: Policy on Good Research Practice; Guidance on Research with Integrity; Policy and Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct. These documents are owned by the RIC and RWG, and have been placed on a triennial cycle of review and revision.

The RVC's "Policy and procedure for dealing with allegations of research misconduct" was reviewed and updated last year, and approved by Academic Board on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

The RVC's "Policy and Guidance on Good Research Practice" was reviewed earlier this year by RWG. This resulted in a largely new document, as the previous policy had not been updated since 2017 and did not meet RVC's current needs. The new policy was approved by RIC on 30<sup>th</sup> Sep 2024 and will be submitted to Academic Board for approval in Dec 2024.

Policies and guidance documents outlining our approach to compliance with the Concordat on Research Integrity are publicly available (<https://www.rvc.ac.uk/research/about/research-integrity>). The VPRI is the senior member of the RVC responsible for this area and the contact for anyone wishing to raise concerns about the integrity of research being conducted at RVC. We provide an anonymous comments box for feedback to the VPRI's office on issues affecting research integrity.

As part of our strategy to improve the research we undertake, the RVC is a member of the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN), a peer-led consortium that aims to ensure the UK retains its place as a centre for world-leading research, by investigating the factors that contribute to robust research, promoting training activities, disseminating best practice, and working with stakeholders to ensure coordination across the sector. Through UKRN we have received financial support for a fixed term “Open Science Administrator” post at the RVC to support enhanced training activities relating to Open Research and research integrity. Interviews for this post have been conducted and an appointment is imminent. The administrator will coordinate with the Research and Innovation Office and the Library to support training and access to open research and reproducibility. Over the next year funds from UKRN will also support an open research and reproducibility prize, and summer undergraduate internships focused on open research and reproducibility in veterinary research.

Professor Patrick Lewis has taken over from Professor Nic Wells as the RVC’s senior academic with responsibility for research improvement and research integrity and, in this role, reports to the VPRI and acts as our UKRN Institutional Lead. In addition, Prof Ken Smith has taken over from Prof Dirk Werling as the chair of the Research Concordat Working Group. In April 2023, we were pleased to announce that the Research Concordat Working Group’s application to retain RVC’s HR Excellence in Research Award was successful (<https://www.rvc.ac.uk/research/news/general/10-years-running-the-rvc-retains-its-hr-excellence-in-research-award>). Dr Andrew Crump has been appointed the RVC’s “Local Reproducibility Network Lead” and has continued to organise ReproducibiliTea meetings and events.

All new staff and PhD students are expected to undertake “Research with Integrity” training (and the associated quiz) within 3 months of joining. This is supported by materials detailing current best practice that are tailored to the types of research our staff and students undertake and have been reviewed by the UK Research Integrity Office. Established staff are expected to refresh their training every 4 years. Staff and students’ refresher training status is monitored and they are not eligible to apply for internal travel grants to present their research at meetings, or submit applications for ethical approval, if they are not up to date. All PhD students are asked at their annual appraisal in the absence of their supervisors whether they have any concerns about research integrity relating to their work and their response is noted on the appraisal document. Any issues are referred to the Head of Academic Department and appropriate action taken.

In terms of our commitment to openness and transparency in the ethical use of animals in research and investigating their replacement, RVC applied for and was granted a Leadership in Openness Award (2019-2022) and were also successful in its renomination for 2022-2025. A sub-group of AWERB will be convened to develop a future application for our continuation of this award in 2025. These awards are granted to organisations in recognition of their commitment of resource and energy to following best practice, embedding openness within their organisations, and making the aims of the Concordat on Openness in Research a reality. Oversight and governance of the College’s Ethical Review process for Research continues to be provided by the College’s Ethics and Welfare Committee and since July 2020 has been chaired by Suzy Lishman, who is independent and reports to RVC Council.

We are pleased that UKRI have drafted an initial policy on the use of artificial intelligence in research grant applications, and shared that policy with researchers in October 2024.

**Investigations into allegations of Research Misconduct**

Since last year's report, no investigations into allegations of research misconduct have been conducted under RVC's Policy for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct. We received one request for information from another institution about one of their current employees, who previously worked for RVC more than 10 years ago. We provided the information that we had on record.

Professor Oliver Pybus

Vice Principal for Research and Innovation

October 2024