University of the West of Scotland Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2025

Section 1: Key contact information

1A. Name of organisation	University of the West of Scotland
1B. Type of organisation:	Higher Education Institution
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	26 November 2025
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	Academic Integrity & Ethics (uws.ac.uk)
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Prof Robert MacIntosh
	Email address: robert.macintosh@uws.ac.uk
1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Name: Helen Kennedy
	Email address: integrity@uws.ac.uk

Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken

2A. Description of current systems and culture
The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) is committed to maintaining the highest standards of research excellence and integrity. We uphold the principles of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (April 2025), which are: • Honesty in all aspects of research • Rigour in the design, conduct, and reporting of research • Transparency and open communication, including open research practices • Care and respect for all participants, animals, and the environment • Accountability for research from inception to dissemination These principles underpin our approach to fostering a positive research culture and ensuring compliance with legal, ethical, and professional standards.

Governance and Policy Framework

The University's research integrity framework is overseen by the University Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee (U-AIEC), which reports to Senate and provides strategic oversight of all matters relating to research integrity and ethics. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) leads continuous improvement of policy, procedures, and practice in this area and chairs the U-AIEC.

Our policy framework includes the Research and Innovation Policy Statement, which sets out UWS's commitment to research integrity, academic freedom, and a positive research culture. This is supported by a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures, including:

- Academic Freedom Statement
- Anti-bribery Protocol
- Research Policy Statement (pdf)
- Code of Research Practice and Research Ethics
- Conflict of Interest Procedure 2023 (uws.ac.uk)
- Consultancy Procedure (pdf)
- Corporate Governance Policy Statement December 2021 (uws.ac.uk)
- Equality Diversity and Human Rights Code Feb 2023
- Data Handling and Classification Protocol - 2024
- Exploitation of IP Property Procedure (pdf)
- Export Control & Sanctions Procedure (pdf)
- Guidelines for Ethical Practice in Research and Scholarship (pdf)
- Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Misconduct in Research
- Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Procedure
- Research Data Management Procedure (pdf)
- Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Procedure
- Student Academic Integrity Procedure

Communications and Engagement

To promote awareness and understanding of research integrity:
- Online research integrity training is available to all staff and postgraduate researchers.
- Each School has an Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee, which provides bespoke ethics training, guidance, and signposting for ethical approval processes.
- Integrity and ethics resources are accessible via the UWS Academic Portal, including guidance on reporting concerns confidentially.

Culture, Development and Leadership

UWS recognises that a positive research culture is integral to research integrity.
The People, Culture and Environment Sub-group leads initiatives to enhance research culture, including:
- Facilitating research culture conversations across Schools
- Supporting mentoring and leadership development for researchers at all career stages
- Embedding open research practices and responsible use of emerging technologies

Further developments in this area are detailed in Section 2B of this statement.

Monitoring and Reporting
- The U-AIEC monitors policy compliance, ethics review processes, and integrity-related issues, reporting annually to Senate.
- School-level committees oversee ethics review for staff and student projects and report breaches and training activity to the U-AIEC.

- Internal peer review is embedded in the research grant approval process, managed by Research Services.
- The University uses PURE as its central research information management system, ensuring transparency in research outputs and open access compliance.

Continuous Improvement
In line with the 2025 Concordat, UWS is strengthening its approach to:
- Addressing questionable research practices as well as misconduct
- Enhancing open research and data transparency
- Supporting responsible use of AI and digital tools in research
- Regularly reviewing policies and integrity and ethics training to reflect evolving standards
- Annual review of the web pages to support research integrity:
  - Academic Integrity & Ethics (uws.ac.uk)
  - Trusted Research (uws.ac.uk)

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

During 2024–25, UWS has taken significant steps to strengthen its research culture and integrity framework, building on previous initiatives and responding to sector expectations under the recently revised **Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2025)**.

Key Developments

1. Introduction of a Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct
   - A formal procedure was implemented to ensure a clear, fair, and transparent process for investigating allegations of research misconduct.
   - This aligns with sector best practice and provides confidence to staff, students, and external partners that concerns will be addressed appropriately.
2. Launch of the UWS Code of Research Practice and Research Ethics
   - This comprehensive Code sets out the standards and expectations for all research conducted under the auspices of UWS.
   - It consolidates guidance on responsible research conduct, ethical review, data management, and open research practices.
   - The Code is embedded in induction, and research governance processes.
3. Enhanced Training and Awareness
   - Online research integrity training has been updated.
   - School-AIEC chairs took on the role of school-level integrity champions to support local engagement and provide advice on integrity and ethics.
4. Strengthening Research Culture
   - The Research Group Leaders, Staff Forum for Research and the People, Culture and Environment Sub-group has continued to lead initiatives to foster a positive research culture, including:
     - Hosting research culture conversations and share fairs.
     - Developing mentoring opportunities for early career researchers.
     - Promoting open research and responsible use of digital tools and AI in research.
5. Improved Transparency and Reporting
   - Annual reporting on research integrity and ethics has been enhanced, with clearer data on training uptake, ethics review activity, and integrity-related cases.
   - Updates are shared with Senate and published in the University's Annual Statement on Research Integrity.

- Commitment 4 of the Concordat now explicitly covers questionable research practices (QRPs) as well as misconduct. In line with our obligation to have processes to identify, manage, and learn from QRPs, not just formal misconduct cases, this report will be reviewed alongside a discussion in relation to all measures taken to create a supportive reporting environment at the U-AIEC.
- Both the new Code and Procedure place a stronger emphasis on creating a supportive environment for reporting concerns, including clear signposting, confidential advice routes, and our policies and procedures detail protection for whistleblowers.
- Commitment to continuous improvement: UWS will evaluate and refine misconduct procedures regularly and report lessons learned and in line with the revised Concordat work has commenced to ensure that our annual statements will include anonymised summaries of cases and improvements made.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

Reflection on Previous Year
In 2023–24, UWS committed to strengthening its research integrity framework through sector best practice and enhanced governance. Key progress includes:
- Introduction of the Code of Research Practice and Research Ethics and a Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct, aligned with UKRIO guidance.
- Increased visibility of research integrity through consultation sessions, awareness campaigns, and structured communications.
- Continued engagement with UKRIO and ARMA's Research Ethics and Integrity SIG, ensuring alignment with national expectations.

Impact:
- Clearer standards for responsible research conduct and transparent reporting routes.
- Improved staff and student awareness of integrity expectations.

Challenges:
- Securing buy-in and Senate approval for new frameworks was resource-intensive due to our commitment to multiple consultation points and awareness sessions. This extended timelines but ensured strong ownership and understanding.

Current Position
- UWS remains an active member of **UKRIO** and participates in sector networks to share best practice.
- Governance structures, including the University Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee (U-AIEC), are in place to oversee policy and practice.

Planned Actions to Achieve Full Compliance by April 2026
- **Policy and Governance**
  - Complete a policy alignment review to ensure all research-related policies reflect the 2025 Concordat.
  - Schedule formal reviews: Code (annual), Misconduct Procedure (2026).
- **Self-Assessment and Benchmarking**
- Report to U-AIEC on a reflective self-assessment against the16 UKCORI indicators.
  - Use findings to develop an evidence-based improvement plan.
- **Training and Awareness**

- Enact a communication plan via research groups, units of assessment and schools to raise awareness of open and trusted research issues
- Expand integrity and ethics training provision to cover open research, responsible AI, and data transparency.
- Require completion of appropriate training before ethics application submission or supervision of student projects.
- **Culture and Leadership**
  - Continue research culture conversations and mentoring initiatives.
  - Embed research integrity into promotion and recognition frameworks.
- **Monitoring and Transparency**
  - Enhance annual reporting with metrics on training uptake, ethics review turnaround, and integrity cases.
  - Publish anonymised summaries of misconduct cases and lessons learned.
- **Open Research and Infrastructure**
  - Strengthen support for open access compliance and research data management.
  - Promote responsible sharing of data and outputs in line with FAIR principles.

2D. Case study on good practice

Case Study: Embedding Research Integrity Through Digital Access and Targeted Support

Within the University's framework for academic integrity and ethics, the School Academic Integrity & Ethics Committee (SAIEC) for the School of Business and Creative Industries has taken a proactive, digital first approach to ensure that students and staff understand the importance of integrity, ethics, and safeguarding, and know how to access the right approval routes and raise concerns appropriately. Operating under the University Academic Integrity & Ethics Committee, the SAIEC set out to embed good practice at every stage of the research lifecycle—spanning undergraduate and postgraduate projects, postgraduate research programmes, and staff research activity.

The Committee leads a comprehensive training offer calibrated to the differing needs of disciplines and roles. Bespoke synchronous online sessions are delivered for individual programmes, ensuring content is tailored to methodological norms and regulatory expectations. Complementing this, general online training is offered for PGR students and staff and is built into induction and other peak research periods so that guidance is both timely and practical. To provide continuity of support, the S-AIEC also curates asynchronous learning resources that can be accessed on demand, enabling researchers to revisit key topics at the moment of need—whether drafting an application, managing data, or finalising dissemination plans.

To improve accessibility and online safety, the school migrated its SAIEC website to the University learning management system and used this transition to strengthen the quality and clarity of its materials. New and updated content includes step by step "how to" videos, templates developed in consultation with legal colleagues, expanded guidance on data control, and specific advice on considering equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) when preparing ethics applications. Together, these resources provide a clear, consistent pathway through approval processes while reinforcing safeguarding and responsible data management.

Recognising that early dialogue can reduce delays and improve the quality of submissions, the Committee expanded one to one ethics consultations for all PhD students and their supervisors prior to formal application. This personalised support helps researchers anticipate issues, select proportionate mitigations, and align protocols with

legal and institutional requirements. Supervisors report increased confidence guiding students, and applicants benefit from clearer, more robust proposals.

Taken together, these measures have strengthened the school's culture of integrity and ethical awareness. By combining targeted training, accessible self-service resources, and personalised advice, the SAIEC ensures that researchers at every level receive the right support at the right time. The approach also promotes consistency, reduces rework, and fosters trusted, transparent practices aligned with the University's Codes and sector expectations. It offers a scalable model for sustaining research integrity across the institution.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

Policies and Processes
UWS has a comprehensive framework for addressing allegations of misconduct, including:
- Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct (review scheduled for 2026)
- Code of Research Practice and Research Ethics (reviewed annually)
- Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Procedure
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Conflict of Interest Procedure (2023)
- Student Academic Integrity Procedure
- Complaints Handling Procedure and Disciplinary Procedure

The new Research Misconduct Procedure provides a clear, three-stage process:
1. Preliminary Screening to determine whether a formal investigation is required
2. Formal Investigation by an appointed panel
3. Appeal Process

Allegations involving students (including PGRs) are managed under the Student Academic Integrity Procedure and Student Discipline Procedure. Allegations involving staff follow the Research Misconduct Procedure and, where appropriate, the University's Disciplinary Procedure.

The Policies, Procedures & Guidance page on the UWS website provides access to all approved policies and reporting routes.

Creating a Supportive Reporting Environment
UWS is committed to ensuring that staff, students, and external stakeholders feel confident to raise concerns. Measures include:
- Clear signposting of reporting routes on the UWS Academic Portal
- Confidential reporting channels.
- Awareness-raising through consultation sessions, communications campaigns, and research integrity training
- Embedding expectations in the Code of Research Practice and Research Ethics including the use a promotion of the researcher checklists from initial design and application for funding stages.
- Informal advice and early resolution via Chair and members of the S-AIEC School Integrity Champions
- Mediation options for informal resolution where appropriate

Lessons Learned and Continuous Improvement

This is the first reporting year during with the Code of Research Practice and Research Ethics and the Procedure for investigating allegations of research misconduct has been available. Key observations to date:

- Positive outcome: The structured three-stage process provided clarity and confidence for all parties involved.
- Improvement opportunity: Additional guidance on managing conflicts of interest in collaborative projects has been incorporated into the Code of Research Practice.
- Cultural insight: Early engagement and informal advice channels helped resolve concerns before escalation, reinforcing the value of proactive support.

Case data:

- A total of 3 legations relating to an allegation of misconduct in research were reported in 2024–25.
- One case has proceeded to formal investigation at time of writing (2025/26) following preliminary screening

Planned actions:

- Expand the function of the Ethics system to capture information on staff applicants prior training in research integrity and ethics.
- Continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the new procedure and report annually to Senate.

3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken

Please complete the table on the number of formal investigations completed during the period under review (including investigations which completed during this period but started in a previous academic year). Information from ongoing investigations should not be submitted.

An organisation's procedure may include an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. These allegations should be included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column

Type of allegation	Number of allegations			
	Number of allegations reported to the organisation	Number of formal investigations	Number upheld in part after formal investigation*	Number upheld in full after formal investigation*
Fabrication				
Falsification				
Plagiarism				
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	*3*	*1*		
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)				
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)				
*Other**				
Total:	**3**	**1**	**0**	**0**

*If you listed any allegations under the 'Other' category, please give a brief, high-level summary of their type here. Do not give any identifying or confidential information when responding.

Not applicable

* For investigations carried over to AY25/26 this box remains blank