

Wrexham University Annual Research Integrity Statement 2023-24

Section 1: Key contact information

Name of organisation: Wrexham University
Type of organisation: Higher Education Institution
Date statement approved by governing body: Research Committee: 25/09/2024 Academic Board: 23/10/2024 Board of Governor: 24/11/2024
Web address of organisation's research integrity page: https://wrexham.ac.uk/research/our-research/research-services/policies-procedures--guidelines/
Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity: Professor Richard Day, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research. Richard.day@wrexham.ac.uk
Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity: Frances Thomason, Head of Research Services. Frances.thomason@wrexham.ac.uk

Introduction

Wrexham University is committed to upholding the principles of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The University continues to use the concordat as a

framework to embed a culture and environment of best practice and responsible research. The principles and commitments include.

- 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 handle allegations of research misconduct when they arise
- work together to strengthen the integrity of research

In compliance with the final commitment of the 2019 Concordat, the University's Board of Governors publishes an annual report on research integrity, which has been considered and agreed upon by the University Research Committee and by the Academic Board before being published publicly on the University's external webpages.

Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture.

Description of current systems and culture

Policies and Systems

The University has invested in a Current Research Information System, Vidatum Academia, which includes an online module for the ethical review of research. All research projects requiring ethical approval, as defined in the University Research Ethics Policy, will be submitted through the online system for approval. The system was launched in October 2023 to all staff and Postgraduate Research Students and to all Taught Masters and Undergraduate students in October 2024. Having an online research ethics system has streamlined the processes of ethics assessment, categorises research risks, allows for independent review and brings transparency so that risks can be monitored and reported regularly.

Wrexham University has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that govern research integrity matters and ensure our commitment to the core values set out within the Concordat, including but not limited to the following.

- University Research Ethics Policy
- Regulations on Research Practice
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Protection of Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure
- Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Procedure

- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Research Data Management Policy

Communications and Engagement

The University Research Strategy and University Research Impact & Communication Strategy outline the University's vision of research that transforms and supports innovation, learning, and economic growth through being internationally excellent in originality, significance, and rigour.

All staff and Postgraduate Research Students receive a research induction when joining the University. As part of this, they are introduced to the University's commitments to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

It is the Research Office's responsibility to keep all staff and PGR students informed on policy and procedural updates, sector news, training & development events, and research success stories. This is done through a Research Monthly Email Bulletin, quarterly Research Newsletter, and internal weekly Campus Talks. In 2023-24, a new Policy Engagement and Communication Plan for all new research-related policies and procedures was developed and published on the Research Services webpages once approved, ensuring a clear communication process for all new research-related policies.

Both faculties have launched a Research Seminar Series, a platform open to all staff and students across the University. This inclusivity is a key part of our ongoing work to promote a positive and inclusive research culture at Wrexham University and create an open and transparent space for researchers to discuss ongoing research projects and ideas collectively.

Culture, development, and leadership

The University's Research Committee oversee the integrity of the University's research on behalf of the Academic Board.

The University's Named Person for Research Integrity is the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, Professor Richard Day. The University recognises that concerns relating to research integrity can be complex and highly sensitive which can impact the emotional and mental wellbeing of those involved. Any person wishing to raise, in confidence, concerns about the conduct or integrity of research conducted under the auspices of the University can do so by contacting the Named Person for research integrity, Professor Richard Day or the named contact point, Head of Research Services, Frances Thomason.

In 2023-24 Research Integrity Champions have been recruited to further embed research integrity across the faculties and act as a local contact point to raise any concerns.

Wrexham University believes all members of our research community have a role to play in developing and promoting a positive and inclusive research culture. The University became signatories of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers in 2021 and was awarded 10 years of HR Excellence in Research in 2024. A working group of concordat champions was established with researchers, research students and professional service staff from across the University. The group actively review the culture and environment of all researchers at the University and is currently conducting a gap analysis of the Research Integrity Concordat.

Monitoring and reporting

The Research Committee meets four times a year, and two standing agenda items are 'Review of Research Misconduct Policy and Cases' and 'Review of Promoting Research Integrity'.

The University Research Ethics Committee, Research Finance Officer and University Research Degree Committee produce an update report to the Research Committee quarterly.

The University Research Strategy and Faculty Research Strategies are reviewed annually by the Research Committee.

The Research Committee receives updated progress reports on all strategies and action plans, including Research Integrity, REF, Impact and Communications, and Research Development.

Staff development needs are identified through the annual Performance Development Review procedure (PDR) and annual Personal Research Plans (PRP), which generate training and development programmes.

Changes and developments during the period under review

As previously detailed, the University has launched the new Wrexham Research Ethics System, introduced a tiered ethics committee structure based on the level of risk involved in a project and has a new public-facing Research Ethics webpage.

The 2023-24 training and development programme was mapped against the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF). A total of 36 researcher training sessions were delivered in 2023-24, including Introduction to Research Ethics, Introduction to Research Integrity, and Understanding Research Data.

Wrexham University has recently acquired the online training programme Research Integrity 2.0 via the Epigeum platform. This comprehensive training is designed to reduce the risk of research misconduct, boost confidence in published works, and meet the requirements of funding agencies. The training will be available for all academic staff and Postgraduate Research Students, with specific modules being made mandatory for research students in its first year.

Last year, the Research Information Governance Task & Finish group was established, reporting to the Information Governance Committee and Research Committee. In 2023-23, this group played a pivotal role in implementing key policies such as the Research Data Management Policy, Research Participant Privacy Notices, Data Sharing/Processing Agreements, Research Data Management Plans, and Data Protection Impact Assessments.

Based on the gap analysis conducted by the University in 2023, using the UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool, an action plan was established to address the current gaps and further strengthen our commitment to the concordat. As part of this action plan and to support its delivery, Research Integrity Champions, one in each faculty, have been recruited to embed further a research culture and an environment of best practice across the faculties.

In the last 12 months, the University has implemented its REF 2029 strategy and action plan. The strategy reinforces our commitment to the Research Integrity Concordat, with priority aims including sustaining a positive research environment that embeds inclusion, integrity, and openness and creating a research culture that encompasses “behaviours, values, expectations, attitudes and norms of our research communities and influences researchers’ career paths and determines the way that research is conducted and communicated.”

The University has also reviewed its corporate risk register in the last 12 months. The research element of the corporate risk register has been renewed to focus on the associated risks of increasing research intensity and quality while maintaining integrity and promoting culture and the ability to adhere to research governance requirements across all student cohorts and staff.

The University was awarded 10 years of HR Excellence in Research in 2024. A three-year action plan mapped against the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers has been published against the three pillars: Environment & Culture, Employment and Professional & Career Development.

Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

The gap analysis conducted and the subsequent action plan established in 2023-24 highlighted the need to ensure principles of Research Integrity were embedded in the University infrastructure and key strategies. The last 12 months have been dedicated to embedding the commitments of the Concordat, a health research culture and an environment of best practice across the key University research strategies and action plans. Reflecting on the plans detailed in our 2023-24 annual statement, the University has launched a new REF2029 strategy, published our 2023-2026 Researcher Development Action Plan, established a Research Information Governance Task and Finish Group and developed a training programme dedicated to research integrity.

Our commitment to becoming a signatory to DORA and reviewing our policies and procedures regarding Research Integrity and Misconduct has been rolled over to our 2024/25 plans.

Plans for 2024/25

As noted, Wrexham University currently has a Research Integrity Action Plan based on five themes: Policies and Procedures, Communications, Culture, Development and Leadership, Addressing Research Misconduct and Monitoring and Reporting. The action plan is implemented by the Research Office and overseen by Research Committee. The below details some of the plans as detailed in the overarching action plan.

- The University proposes to commit to and become a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA).
- Establish a new Research Integrity Policy and Research Misconduct Procedure.
- Review of Open Access Policies, Procedures and repositories at the University.
- Develop and publish an Institutional statement of Research Culture
- Develop a process or reporting confidential concerns to the research office.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct**Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct**

Responsibilities for monitoring research misconduct at the University lie within the Research Office reporting to the Research Committee, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for research. Responsibilities for academic integrity lie within the Academic Integrity Team in Strategic Planning and Student Administration. Allegations of research misconduct involving University staff and research students are dealt with according to the provisions of the University's Disciplinary Procedure for Staff and/or the Disciplinary Procedure for Students and the Academic Integrity Procedure or Suitability for Practice Procedure, as appropriate. Related procedures have appropriate principles and mechanisms to ensure investigations are thorough and fair, carried out in a transparent and timely manner, and protected by appropriate confidentiality.

No research misconduct cases were investigated during 2023/24 relating to staff of postgraduate research students.

Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken

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				
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)				
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of				

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concern (when received in a single allegation)				
<i>Other*</i>				