

## Annual statement on research integrity 2023-2024

### Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	University of Suffolk
1B. Type of organisation:  higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)	Higher Education
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	04 July 2024
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	<a href="#">Research Culture   University of Suffolk</a>
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Professor Emma Bond Pro Vice Chancellor Research
	Email address: e.bond@uos.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	Mrs Andreea Tocca Head of Research Culture
	Email address: a.tocca@uos.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 Suffolk is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethics and integrity in its research, and places ethics and integrity at the heart of its decision making. University of Suffolk upholds the commitments outlined in the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) and is committed to fulfilling the principles of the Concordat by providing a framework in support for good research conduct and its governance. Preparing and publishing our annual statement on research integrity demonstrates our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of research.

As part of its commitment to the principles of the Concordat to support Research Integrity, the University of Suffolk will support researchers to maintain the highest standards of integrity in research by:

- providing clear policies and procedures
- training and guidance to help researchers better understand how to maintain high standards of research integrity.
- having suitable mechanisms for reviewing ethical issues raised by research.
- using transparent, robust, and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct.
- continuing to work to strengthen the integrity of its research through regular review and monitoring of its support, policies, and procedures.

Anyone with comments, concerns, or questions regarding research integrity at the University of Suffolk should contact Head of Research Culture.

The University of Suffolk Research Ethics Committee is responsible for advising Research and Enterprise Committee on the development, implementation and review of institutional procedures and guidelines relating to ethical issues arising from teaching, research, and other related institutional activities. The role of this interdisciplinary Committee is to be proactive in relation to emerging issues of institutional, national, or international significance. The Committee oversees research integrity across the University, including monitoring compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The Research Ethics Committee (chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research) members are the Research Institute Directors, Head of Research Culture, Head of Research Management and one Lay member. The committee's composition reflects a diverse range of perspectives and expertise, which is essential for ensuring comprehensive and well-informed decision-making.

The University has clear research ethics related policies and framework in place regarding research integrity. By establishing such policies, the University demonstrates its commitment to upholding ethical standards and promoting responsible research conduct. Information about University policies and procedures is provided to new staff and students as part of their formal induction programme. Information about new policies is communicated to the research community via a range of different platforms including 1-2-1 research inductions, 1-2-1 meetings with staff with significant responsibility for research, internal communications, researcher development programs, research newsletters, university-wide announcements, as well as Schools and course program handbooks. Individual training needs are identified through annual appraisal processes and discussions between staff and line managers and students and their supervisors. The policies are readily available to the university staff and students through the University's Research Hub Pages. This accessibility ensures that staff and students can easily access and refer to the guidelines and requirements pertaining to research integrity. This approach ensures that research integrity is consistently communicated and embedded across the institution. By utilising the annual

appraisal process, the University of Suffolk ensures that individual learning needs are identified and incorporated into training and development plans. This enables staff, researchers, and students to enhance their skills and knowledge in research integrity areas relevant to their roles and responsibilities.

A copy of the Annual Statement on Research Integrity is also published on the University's Research webpage. Relevant third-party organisations (such as funders, journals, professional and regulatory bodies) will also be informed of any allegations which proceed to a formal investigation.

## **2B. Changes and developments during the period under review**

It is a university commitment that all researchers should receive appropriate research training and research development opportunities to enable them to conduct research to the highest standards. Researchers are expected to conduct their work within the established ethical, legal, and professional guidelines, standards, and frameworks. This includes obtaining the necessary ethical approvals for their research projects. Additionally, researchers must engage with their colleagues in a manner that upholds integrity, honesty, and collegiality. This includes providing fair and honest references and participating in peer reviews responsibly.

The University's Research website dedicated to the Research Ethics and Research Governance provide access to supporting documents that can assist staff and students in navigating the ethical review process. These documents include guidelines, templates, checklists, and other resources that provide guidance on ethical considerations and requirements.

The University of Suffolk has also become a subscribing member of the [UK Research Integrity Office \(UKRIO\)](#). UKRIO's comprehensive guidance documents, toolkits, and resources are widely disseminated to the university staff via Newsletters, 1-2-1 research inductions, Researcher Development Programme, and the Research Resources Hub. As a subscribing member, the University of Suffolk has benefited from UKRIO's expertise and insights in policy development and implementation, ensuring alignment with national best practices.

Since June 2022, research integrity training has been compulsory for all University staff on research contracts, ECRs, academic staff on learning, teaching and research contracts and all staff submitting funding research applications (academic or professional services). Online research integrity training has been licensed from the Epigeum. This initiative provides evidence of comprehensive, consistent training in responsible conduct and best practices, and support us as an organisation in incorporating the latest research developments and guidelines. 94% of the staff with responsibility for research have completed the training in March 2024. All Chairs of the School Ethics committees completed the Chair Training led by David Carpenter, UKRIO. This training equipped them with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively oversee and lead ethical review processes within their respective schools. We have organised four face-to-face training workshops as part of the Research Development programme 2023-2024 attended by over 100 staff members on research contracts, ECRs and academic staff on learning, teaching, and research contracts. The additional workshops were designed to help researchers understand and navigate the research ethics processes and procedures specific to the University of Suffolk.

The University is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and excellence in research and seeks to ensure that all research undertaken by staff and students complies with the appropriate ethical, legal, and professional frameworks and procedures. To ensure compliance and effectiveness in governance, Head of Research Culture conducted an internal audit specifically targeted at the Ethics Committees within the Schools. This audit focused on undergraduate and postgraduate taught student applications, aiming to provide an assurance opinion on the sufficiency and efficacy of the existing arrangements governing research projects. This includes aspects such as ethical approval processes, handling

allegations of research misconduct, and adherence to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The results of this internal audit were presented at both the University Research Ethics Committee meeting and the Research Management Group meetings in May 2024.

The University Research Ethics Committee reviewed and approved the statement during at the May 2024 meeting. The statement was also noted at the Senate meeting in June 2024 and at the University's Executive Board meeting in July 2024. The review and approval process by the University Research Ethics Committee, Senate, and Executive Board demonstrates the commitment of the university to research integrity and its efforts to ensure transparency and compliance with ethical guidelines.

## **2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments.**

Progress has been made against all the activities mentioned in the University's 2022/23 Annual Research Integrity Statement. This indicates our commitment to improving research integrity and fostering a culture of responsible conduct within the institution.

Moving forward into the 2024/25 academic year, we have several plans for further developments:

- University of Suffolk will use the new online UKRIO training course, Introduction to Research Integrity for 12 months. The new training course replaces the Epigeum Research Integrity. This is now available in the Staff Research Integrity module on Brightspace. The course is applicable to all disciplines and provides a comprehensive grounding in research integrity for those new to the topic as well as an essential refresher for more experienced staff.
- We will build on our existing research integrity training and the research development programme to address current and future needs related to research integrity and research governance. This will include workshops focusing on potentially high-risk and sensitive research areas. Workshops on Open Research will also be delivered, indicating a commitment to promoting open and transparent research practices.
- We are considering the establishment of a network of ECRs as Research Integrity Champions. These champions would promote good research practices within their respective Schools and Research Institutes.
- We are considering the implementation of a new online ethics application system that integrates the undergraduate, postgraduate taught, PGR and staff application forms. This system will facilitate easier submission, review, and tracking of ethical review applications.
- Work on a training framework has been expanded to look at all aspects of research training needs and which will be tailored to specific groups. Over the next year work will be underway on the creation of a new online research integrity training programme for staff and students across all disciplines. This new course will complement the existing training opportunities and provide a more in-depth look at what research integrity means for research and researchers, and how this can be applied across the research lifecycle. The training will provide an in-depth look at applying research integrity and the integrity principles throughout the research lifecycle, from research design, funding, ethics, data management, dissemination, peer review to competing interests. There will be case studies and examples to engage learners with different real scenarios and to think through how to approach each using the principles.
- A new policy will be produced on engagement of the public in research, setting out the University's expectations of and obligations to those engaged, and providing guidance on payment where this is appropriate.
- We are committed to continue working with other institutions to share expertise, resources and best practice through forums including UKRIO.
- The University is currently working with the UK Reproducibility Network as a case study. The University of Suffolk is delighted to be participating in OR4 as a case study institution. We will share information about our own progress, provide input and feedback on project tools and resources, and share good practice and

experience through the wider community of practice. The University of Suffolk will benefit from support in planning and implementing reform and stands to become a leader in open research reward and recognition practices. We aim to recognise open science as a good research practice that can enhance the university profile and its research impact, by widening participation and outreach of research, promoting a sense of civic responsibility among academic staff. The National Contract, 'scholarly activities' includes the production of books, contributions to books, articles, and conference papers, and is to be construed in the light of the common understanding of the phrase in higher education. In our revised approach, we also aim at recognising open practices beyond open access publishing, including open data, open-source code and software production, recognition of pre-prints and leadership in citizen science programmes, as well as the production of open educational resources and engagement in open educational practices for capacity building in Open and responsible research practices in line with the UNESCO recommendations for Open Educational Resources and Open Science.

These planned developments demonstrate our ongoing efforts to strengthen research integrity practices, provide appropriate training and support, and streamline ethical review processes. By implementing these initiatives, the University of Suffolk aims to foster a research environment that upholds the highest standards of integrity and promotes responsible and ethical research conduct

## Section 3: Addressing research misconduct.

### **3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with**

The University Research Misconduct policy (version October 2022) outlines the processes which should be followed when complaints of misconduct in academic research are brought against any student or member of staff whose research is liable to bring the University of Suffolk into disrepute. We are committed to promoting and supporting a culture of research integrity that discourages unacceptable behaviour by dealing seriously and sensitively with all allegations of research misconduct.

The University's named contact for matters relating to research integrity and misconduct is the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research. Concerns relating to the integrity of research conducted under the auspices of the University may also be addressed to the Head of Research Culture. Following the implementation of the updated policy and procedure, a dedicated webpage will be created to raise awareness of university expectations. We will continue to ensure that all staff, researchers, and students receive regular training to increase awareness and understanding of misconduct issues and reporting mechanisms.

By making information about the Research Misconduct policy readily available and offering advice and resources via the Research Resources Hub, Research Newsletters, University wide communications, 1-2-1 research induction and 1-2-1 meetings with staff with significant responsibility for research, the University of Suffolk demonstrates its commitment to maintaining research integrity and provides a supportive environment for researchers. These resources empower individuals to raise concerns and address any potential research misconduct, thus upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct.

We foster a supportive and inclusive research culture by providing a research mentoring programme for all staff on research contracts only and staff on learning, teaching and research contracts and ECR support network. We encourage open dialogue and create an environment where individuals feel comfortable seeking advice and reporting concerns.

There have been no reported cases of allegations relating to research misconduct made against any staff and student at the University of Suffolk.

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

There have been no reported cases of allegations relating to research misconduct made against any staff and student at the University of Suffolk

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	0			
Falsification	0			
Plagiarism	0			
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	0			
Misrepresentation (e.g., data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)	0			
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	0			
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)	0			
<i>Other*</i>	0			
<b>Total:</b>	<b>0</b>			

This statement reflects our commitment to creating a vibrant and ethical research environment that nurtures innovation, respects all participants and stakeholders, and contributes to the advancement of knowledge and societal benefit. We hold our researchers to these standards, expecting that they exemplify professionalism, integrity, and excellence in their work, thereby upholding the reputation and values of University of Suffolk.