Research Integrity Annual Statement 2017-18

Reviewing and streamlining processes to support a culture of research integrity

1. The review of the ethical review processes across UCL remains an on-going process, with the pilot of the recommendations from the review ending in October 2017 and a report submitted to the Research Governance Committee.

2. The results of the pilot overall supported the original recommendations; agreeing with the creation of a devolved system that was founded on proportionate review (based on ethical risk) which would enable a flexible approach to ethical review as well as to ensure the review is managed in accordance with the level of ethical risk. The pilot also noted the natural benefit that reviewing and piloting new processes had on increasing awareness of ethical issues.

3. The importance of establishing clear 'stage-gates' within a future devolved system was highlighted, in order to ensure that ethical issues and the need for approval are raised and considered at an early stage of any planning process. This would include project planning for student research, applying for funding and also in the creation of new programmes where students would be asked to undertake a research project.

4. The report also highlighted the value of local ethics co-coordinators (including reviewers and administrators) as essential roles, not only to create and manage local review processes but also to support training and awareness raising and to act as a source of advice and guidance.

Preparing for impact

5. Creating a devolved ethics review structure across UCL will be a complex and lengthy process, having clear implications for resourcing both to prepare for devolution and to manage the devolved structures. Therefore, in January 2018 a mapping exercise began to provide a detailed impact report of changes to current UCL systems and policy regarding ethical review. The mapping exercise considers all student programmes across all faculties as well as staff research so that the variances in impact across all faculties, and at all levels can be assessed and planned for going forward. The mapping exercise is due to end this calendar year.

Creation of a devolved structure based on proportionate review

6. A Steering Group consisting of representatives from across UCL, has been created to focus on the agreement of the new UCL-wide Research Ethics Policy, as well as the levels of proportionality. It is anticipated that these two core aspects will be finalised and formally approved during the academic year 2018-19.

Supporting ethical review

7. Ethical review of research involving human participants and/or their data, is an essential part of ensuring the integrity of research, and the effectiveness of any ethical review system relies on the experience, knowledge and commitment of the reviewers. In order to provide additional support for reviewers across UCL, a Research Ethics Reviewers Forum was established. The primary aim of the Forum is to provide a supportive network, and to enable reviewers across the UCL to meet each other in person and to

share best practice and exchange ideas. It also provides an opportunity for UCL-wide discussion of ethical issues and new developments, both internal and external to UCL.

Guidance and support for researchers

Development of central resources

8. Further guidance to support UCL researchers is under development, with detailed guidance for researchers conducting overseas research due to be published 2018-19, alongside update guidance for research involving children. Work is also underway on the development of a new research ethics website that will act as the central source of guidance and information on research ethics for UCL staff and students.

Research Staff Code of Practice

9. In September 2018, a code of practice[1] was published as part of the support provided to researchers in developing their roles as researcher and leaders, as well as their future career paths whether within academia or elsewhere. The code helps to ensure that research staff have access to relevant personal and professional development. It also sets out what a member of research staff can expect from their Principal Investigator (PI), their Department and from UCL, together with what PI and others in UCL can expect from a researcher.

10. The code was developed by the Research Staff Consultative Group (RSCG) in association with the Office of the Vice-Provost (Research) and UCL HR.

Training & Awareness Raising

Research Integrity Training Framework

11. The Research Integrity Training Framework was published last academic year on the research integrity website[2] along with detailed guidance on the pathways though the Framework, as well as an explanation of each level.

12. The Framework was chosen as one of a series of case studies of positive interventions for the Integrity in Practice Toolkit[3]. The toolkit was developed by the Royal Society (as part of the Research Culture programme[4)]) and UKRIO. It centres on seven ways that organisations seek to improve research integrity and to embed and support a culture of research integrity within their organisations.

     i. Creating informal channels to openly discuss research integrity

     ii. Creating a dialogue around research integrity and culture

     iii. Agreeing shared expectations

     iv. Constructing an environment that nurtures training

     v. Developing a research environment to be proud of

     vi. Embedding research integrity into institutional culture

     vii. Fostering community ownership of research integrity

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[1] www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/news/2018/sep/launching-ucl-research-staff-code-practice
[2] www.ucl.ac.uk/research/integrity/research-integrity-training-framework
[3] http://ukrio.org/integrity-in-practice-toolkit/
[4] https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/research-culture/changing-expectations/integrity-in-practice/

13. Each area is supported by a series of case studies showing as examples of such initiatives from organisations around the world. The case studies range from more complex, longer initiatives to more simple, quick examples so as to provide examples of initiatives that can be adopted by any organisation to improve their culture of research integrity.

14. The UCL Research Integrity Training Framework was chosen as an example of 'Constructing an environment that nurtures training'.

Research Integrity Training

1. Development work continues on the creation of an online research integrity programme for staff and students. The online programme will form a core part of levels 2 and 3 from the Research Integrity Training Framework. While the programme is in development, 5 sessions of the Post-Doctoral workshop Introduction for Research Support & Integrity were run during 2017-18 and additional workshops will be run during 2018-19.

2. In support of this, the editing of the video series on research integrity is nearing completion. The video series will be published next academic year and will act as a key awareness-raising tool on research integrity for staff and students.

Research Integrity – External Engagement

Russell Group Research Integrity Forum

3. UCL continues to play an active role in the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum. The Forum, established in 2013, is an active network of those with responsibility for aspects of research integrity within their institution. The Forum meets twice yearly, openly sharing and developing good practices as well as engaging with a range of stakeholders, such as funders and publishers.

4. The meeting on 25 April 2018[5] was a collaboration between the Forum and the Committee for Publication Ethics (COPE) to seek to jointly address common areas; authorship, peer review, ethics review and reproducibility and negative results. Joint presentations on these areas were given in partnership, and the results were presented jointly at the 2018 UKRIO Annual Conference.

Statement of Cooperation

5. As part of its work within the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum, UCL led on the development of the *Statement of Cooperation* regarding the management of cross-institutional research misconduct allegations. The Statement does not direct how review should be conducted, but acts as guiding principles for how such cases should be managed between the Russell Group members and other universities. The Statement was submitted as evidence to the Science & Technology Committee as part of the Research Integrity Inquiry, and is publically available on the Russell Group website[6].

Research Integrity Inquiry

6. On 21 November 2017, the UCL Registrar and Head of Student & Registry Services gave evidence to the Science & Technology Committee[7].

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[5] https://publicationethics.org/news/letter-cope-co-chairs-may-2018

[6] https://russellgroup.ac.uk/policy/policy-documents/research-integrity-statement-of-cooperation/

[7] www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/research-integrity-17-19/publications/

League of European Research Universities

7. UCL is an active member of the League of European Research Universities (LERU); an association of 23 European research-intensive universities. As part of its wider activities, LERU published a note in July this year setting out concerns from the academic sector regarding dual use regulation, of which UCL was part of the discussion group[8].

Research Misconduct

8. The UCL procedure for investigating and resolving allegations of misconduct in academic research closely follows the UK Research Integrity Office's model whilst allowing some minor variations to fit with local circumstances and usage of terminology. UCL also has a standing a pool of screening panellists from across all UCL's faculties from which to draw on to form screening panels. Recruitment to the pool has been repeated in 2017-18. Training has also been developed and delivered in house for the pool members to ensure fair treatment and will be repeated in 2018-19. Consideration will be given to designing bespoke training for individual investigation panels in 2018-19. The current version of the procedure was implemented on 1 January 2017. It can be accessed via the UCL website[9].

Summary of investigations

1. Two cases of research misconduct were upheld in 2017-18. Both cases concerned data manipulation. It was recommended that corrections be made to several of the journal papers in question in order to correct the scientific record.

2. Two cases have been referred for formal investigation in 2017-18 and one further case has been carried forward from 2016-17. All three cases are still in process and aim to complete in 2018-19.

Special Inquiry into Regenerative Medicine Research at UCL

3. During 2016-17 session, a Special Inquiry was set up, outwith the procedure, to look into the role of regenerative medicine research at UCL. Its report was published in September 2017 that included a number of recommendations, some of which related to the operation of UCL's procedure. A Task and Finish Group was formed in 2017-18 to develop an associated action plan for implementing the panel's recommendations. The action plan will be monitored by UCL's Research Governance Committee in 2018-19.

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[8] www.leru.org/publications/the-dual-use-regulation-specific-concerns-from-the-academic-sector
[9] www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/governance-and-committees/resgov/research-misconduct-procedure-jan-   2017.pdf