Research Integrity Annual Statement 2022-2023

Enhancing support for researchers – Embedding a culture of research integrity

Online Research Integrity eLearning launched

1. One of the commitments of the UK Concordat is to provide learning and training opportunities for research integrity. In recognition of this, for a number of years the Research Integrity team have managed the Introduction to Research Support & Integrity programme for postdoctoral researchers. Greatly expanded and moved online during 2020-2021 this four-week course provides PhD researchers with clear training on research integrity, data protection, research ethics, research data management, research IT, open access and copyright.

2. To add to the current offering, and as mentioned in the previous annual statement (2021-2022) a new self-paced eLearning course entitled 'Research integrity' was launched in March 2023.

3. The online course is available to all UCL staff and students and provides a detailed introduction for research integrity and integrity at UCL over three modules:

    − Introduction to research integrity: The first module covers what the purpose of research is, how to ensure research benefits society, what research integrity is and why it matters, and UCL's 3 E's for research integrity (Every researcher, Every discipline, Everyday).

    − Research integrity at UCL: The second module explains UCL's approach to research integrity including the Statement of Research Integrity, the Code of Conduct for Research, and the Principles of Integrity.

    − Leading by example: The third module looks at what it means to lead by example, how to do it, and why it matters for research integrity and research culture at UCL.

4. On completion, learners are provided with a certificate which can be used as evidence of meeting learning requirements.

5. For PhD researchers, the course was made a pre-requisite for the Introduction to Research Support & Integrity course, enabling the live integrity session to focus on the practical application of integrity through interactive discussions of case studies and dilemmas.

UCL Code of Conduct for Research

6. As stated in the previous annual statement, the new UCL Code of Conduct for Research 2023 (the 'Code) was considered by the Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee in July 2022, and following additional revisions, the final version was approved in March 2023.

7. Following this, the Code was published on the Research Integrity website in April 2023 and therefore forms part of the UCL Framework for Research Integrity. www.ucl.ac.uk/research/integrity/ucl-code-conduct-research

8. In order to promote ease of access and engagement, the 2023 Code was published in three versions. The first as a series of interactive webpages, enabling readers to move between different sections and to identify and locate information with ease. The second is an enhanced PDF version, and the third an accessible Word version. Both document versions were published on the UCL Research Data Repository (RDR) with a direct link available on home page of the Code website for ease of access.

9. The use of the RDR enables open and transparent version control, as previous versions are stored enabling the reader to track the evolution of any changes to future versions of the Code. It also provides a single DOI reference, even when new versions are uploaded, allowing easy citation of the Code. To date the Code has been downloaded 277 times.

10. As part of the launch, in June 2023 a Town Hall was held to formally launch the revised Code, providing an additional opportunity for the community to discussions and ask questions regarding the Code, as well as enabling the Research Integrity Team to provide feedback on the results of the previous UCL-wide consultation.

Enabling a healthy and sustainable research culture at UCL

11. A healthy, inclusive and sustainable research culture underpins UCL's excellence in research and innovation and is vital to our academic and societal mission. As described in the previous annual statement, UCL undertook an extensive consultation across UCL's research community in 2021 and, building on this and the Enhancing Research Culture Programme delivered in 2022, UCL published its 10-year Research Culture Roadmap in January 2023. www.ucl.ac.uk/research/strategy-and-policy/research-culture-ucl/ucls-research-culture-roadmap

12. The Roadmap sets out how, as an institution, UCL will develop a healthier, more inclusive and sustainable research culture, where both our research and research community can thrive. The Roadmap sets out five themes, around which research culture activity will be organised:

    – Transparent and fair career development

    – People-centred leadership and management

    – Opportunities to collaborate and innovate

    – Openness and integrity in our research and innovation

    – Supportive and inclusive environment.

13. To support the delivery of research culture activity at UCL, a Research Culture Programme Board was established to approve and oversee the delivery of the portfolio of research culture projects, and to provide strategic guidance in relation to the broader research culture agenda. Additionally, a dedicated specialist Research Culture team was recruited and embedded in the Office of the Vice Provost (Research, Innovation and Global Engagement) to enable the delivery the Roadmap and research culture projects.

14. During 2022-23 a number of faculty-led and cross-UCL research culture projects were delivered, and information on these projects is available on the UCL Research Culture webpages. www.ucl.ac.uk/research/strategy-and-policy/research-culture-ucl/current-research-culture-initiatives

15. During the next academic year, the portfolio of research culture projects to be delivered will continue to focus on bespoke local improvements via faculty-led projects and complex, multi-year, multi-stakeholder cross-UCL projects, that address common issues across the institution. In addition, a Community Steering Group will be launched, which will act as the voice of the research community. It will provide feedback on the design and delivery of research culture initiatives to maximise their positive impact and identify priority issues related to research culture.

Increased support and guidance for declaring and managing conflicts of interest (Commitment 2 & 3)

16. UCL's current Disclosure of Conflict and Declaration of Interest Policy was published in August 2020 and is supported by an electronic reporting system. The introduction of online mandatory training for staff in 2020-21 raised awareness of the policy and developed a base-line level of knowledge across the institution. Combined with a communications campaign across UCL, the new system helped raise declaration of interest compliance from 63% in the 2021-22 declaration year to over 80% for 2022-23. www.ucl.ac.uk/enterprise/about/governance-and-policies/ucl-disclosure-conflict-and-declaration-interest-policy

17. As stated in the previous annual statement, the policy makes provision for managing conflicts of interest, ensuring the use of conflict management plans to mitigate conflicts and protect the integrity of the conflicted individual, their research, and UCL at large. The collaboration at a local level enabled additional guidance to be created, outlining the end-to-end process for managing a conflict and including a template for conflict manage plans, which were published openly in December 2022 on the Disclosure of Conflict and Declaration of Interest section of the Innovation & Enterprise website. www.ucl.ac.uk/enterprise/about/governance-and-policies/ucl-disclosure-conflict-and-declaration-interest-policy

18. In addition to disclosing conflicts of interest, the policy also covers declarations of interest. Under the policy, senior staff must declare their interests annually, and these declarations contribute to a register of external interests that helps UCL understand the many ways its senior staff engage with the wider world.

19. To further increase usability for staff, the team in Innovation & Enterprise worked with the Information Services Division to develop and add a new feature to Inside UCL (a staff experience app created to bring together administrative areas) to make it simpler for staff to quickly declare an interest, renew declaration each reporting year or to declare no interests. This new feature was supported by a revisions of the previous guidance on declaring interests, providing more detailed guidance to staff, and published on a dedicated webpage to promote policy compliance. https://www.ucl.ac.uk/enterprise/about/governance-and-policies/disclosure-conflict-and-declaration-interest-policy/declaring

Supporting and recognising open science practices (Commitment 3)

Increased support for researchers

20. As a means of ensuring continuous improvement in support offered to researchers, the Office for Open Science and Scholarship team (OOSS team) created a dedicated website for training and researchers around open research. The website draws together existing resources into an easy to navigate space, supporting researchers to identify and locate training relevant to their research and training needs. The site draws together a range of open research areas including:

    – Research integrity
    – Copyright
    – Citizen science
    – Information governance
    – Open access
    – Research data management and planning
    – Research transparency and reproducibility
    – Metrics and bibliometrics
    – Research funding management
    – Advanced research computing
    – Creating accessible content.

21. In addition to the above there is also a dedicated sub-site specifically for doctoral researchers, linking to the Doctoral Skills Development Programme. www.ucl.ac.uk/library/open-science-research-support/open-science/training-and-support-resources-research

Co-production workshop

22. As part of the UCL Open Science Conference 2023, and in support of the conferences' theme of 'Open Science and the Case for Social Justice', the OOSS team facilitated a workshop with a variety of different stakeholders to discuss some of the long-standing issues concerning credit and authorship in research practice and the inequalities that can arise in who receives acknowledgement for their contribution to research, beyond the traditional academic role and credit.

23. The workshop entitled 'Challenges of equity in authorship' provided in-depth, meaningful discussion and is currently influencing the creation of a UCL statement on authorship, that will focus on establishing principles around authorship, similar to the current UCL Statements on research integrity and research transparency, and which is due to be published in 2023-24.

24. A summary of discussions is available on the UCL website. https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/open-access/2023/08/04/challenges-of-equity-in-authorship-co-production-workshop-initial-discussions/

Responsible metrics

25. To support the responsible use of metrics, for the past year UCL had a subscription to the Altmetrics tool, which enables institutions to review the wider impact of research beyond citations in academic journals; looking at how the wider community and public use and respond to research. The tool tracks metrics across a wide scope of areas, including social media, mainstream media, policy documents, Wikipedia, YouTube comments, Mendeley library, etc.

26. To support its usage, the Bibliometrics team offered training, including drop-in sessions and working with local impact officers to support its use in assisting pathways to impact case studies. The team also published a blog post highlighting

it's use over the past year. https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/open-access/2023/08/29/altmetrics-at-ucl-one-year-on/

Open Science Scholarship awards

27. In October 2023, UCL will host the first Open Science and Scholarship Awards. Organised by the local chapter of the UK Reproducibility Network and co-organised with the UCL Office for Open Science and Scholarship the awards were announced in July 2023 and over 50 nominations were submitted. Students at all levels, and staff from any discipline, including professional services staff, were eligible for nomination for activities undertaken to promote open science in their area; for example, by implementing open science practices, enhancing their adoption or impact, using open access resources in research and teaching, or any improvements to open practices. The winners will be presented with their awards at the ceremony in October. https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/open-access/2023/07/17/announcing-the-inaugural-ucl-open-science-scholarship-awards/

Improving Research Compliance and Assurance (Commitment 2)

28. In January 2023, UCL stood up a permanent Compliance and Assurance team for research and innovation. The team has rolled out an expanded and enhanced due diligence process, implemented compliance processes on national security regulations and access and benefit sharing measures, created support mechanisms for researchers and launched new webpages https://www.ucl.ac.uk/research-innovation-services/compliance-and-assurance. An extensive programme of communications and engagement has been delivered across the community and will be further enhanced with additional training provision in 2023/2024 along with an ambitious programme to enhance UCL's Trusted Research compliance.

29. During the 2022/2023 Academic Year, the UCL Data Protection Office (DPO) has undertaken a range of activities to help support staff and students who conduct research activities with the University. In October 2022, to improve and streamline the research registration review process across the University, the DPO introduced a new online (Microsoft Forms) data protection registration form, available to all staff and students. The new form (supported by a downloadable version), broadened the scope of data protection registration review to include new areas requiring consideration such as the use of special category data in connection with AI and further processing permissions and international data transfers, whilst making it more intuitive and user-friendly process. The use of Microsoft Forms includes analytics that also further supports the review process by creating research registration response summary information and enabling more in-depth analysis. (Data Protection online registration application form)

30. To date the introduction of the online registration application form, has shown to improve the efficiently of the review timeframe by around 40%, providing a clear benefit to research staff and students, as well as for staff in the DPO and Research Ethics Service.

31. Since the launch the DPO continued engaging with key stakeholders across the University to ensure the new process remains complementary to existing policies and processes as well as adaptable to any future alternations. In addition, to ensure staff and students are supported in their research, and to enhance accountability

regarding data usage, the DPO review and updated the data protection research registration [webpages and guidance](), as well as reviewing the online data protection training for researcher to ensure it remained fit for purpose. ([UCL data protection training for research]())

Research Misconduct

32. The UCL procedure for investigating and resolving allegations of misconduct in academic research is heavily based on the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO)'s model whilst allowing some minor variations to fit with local circumstances and usage of terminology. The Named Person has increased powers to resolve allegations that are considered to be straightforward and not considered to be serious in nature and there is no intent to deceive. The version of the UCL procedure for investigating and resolving allegations of misconduct in academic research (the "procedure") that was in place for most of 2022-23 was implemented on 1 November 2022. It can be accessed via the UCL website at: [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/governance-compliance/sites/governance-compliance/files/research-misconduct-procedure-nov-2022.pdf]().

33. The minor revisions made to UCL's procedure for allegations received from 1 November 2022 onwards include explicit reference to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles.

34. UKRIO published its second model procedure in March 2023.It is intended that a Working Group drawn from the Research Misconduct Committee be set up to review the revised model to determine the further changes to be made to the UCL version.

35. The Research Misconduct Committee was set up in June 2021 to expedite the screening stage of UCL's process and has continued to be very successful in its second full year of operation. It is supported by an advisory team consisting of colleagues from UCL's Governance Team, Human Resources and Legal Services. Details of its membership can be found at: [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/governance-compliance/research-governance/research-misconduct-committee]().

36. The committee met three times in 2022-23 (including two training sessions) and members have received refresher training on their role and the procedure and ensuring fair treatment, as well as a training session covering data fabrication. The committee has also provided screening panels constituted from its membership to consider any allegations referred for screening in 2022-23 and they were able to complete their work well within the required timescale.

Lessons learned

37. Continuous improvement is a core part of UCL's approach to managing research misconduct; both policy and process. In terms of the process for investigating allegations of research misconduct, UCL's Procedure is under continual review and revisions are made in light of its operation at all stages of the process. In addition, the design of training for members of the Research Misconduct Committee is adapted to enable it to draw from experience of screening of allegations.

38. Discussions have continued on how best to draw out lessons to be learned from investigations of research misconduct (regardless of the outcome) in order to provide additional support and guidance for researchers and to further embed a

strong culture across the institution. It is intended that the Research Misconduct Committee draw out any lessons to be learned from its screening of allegations (regardless of outcome) at this earlier stage of the process.

Summary of investigations

39. One of the two cases carried forward from 2021-22 that were referred for formal investigation has completed its work. It was determined that the allegation was upheld in part and research misconduct was determined to have been found partly proven. The recommendations arising from the case were followed up as necessary that included seeking a correction to the publication in question to ensure the scientific record is correct. The other case remains ongoing and will complete in 2023-24.