



Annual Statement on Research Integrity Academic Year 17/18

Introduction and Context

As a signatory to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, De Montfort University (DMU) has a responsibility to ensure that all research conducted under the auspices of the university is undertaken with integrity. We set out our commitment 'to improve accountability, and provide assurances that measures being taken continue to support consistently high standards of research integrity'.

As employers of researchers, and signatories of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, it is highly desirable to use the UK Research Integrity Office's Self-Assessment Tool, and publish an annual statement outlining:

- A summary of actions and activities undertaken to support and strengthen the understanding and implementation of research integrity;
- Confirmation that we have provision for dealing with allegations of misconduct and that all procedures follow a transparent, robust and fair process;
- Details of any formal investigations of research misconduct and outcomes.

Through compliance with the Concordat, DMU are able to demonstrate a commitment to promoting good research practice, as set out in the [Statement of Governance](#).

Self Assessment

Research at DMU covers a wide spectrum of topics and faculties provide support and subject specific guidance for researchers, including ethical considerations (<https://www.dmu.ac.uk/research/ethics-and-governance/research-requiring-ethical-approval.aspx>). It is imperative that ethical approval is applied for **prior to the commencement of research** and routed through the appropriate Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC), meetings of which are held quarterly. FRECs report to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). Studies that are deemed high risk may be escalated to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). Failure to obtain ethical approval is dealt with through the Misconduct in Research Policy.

Systems and Processes

- The University Research and Innovation Committee (URIC), in reviewing its Terms of Reference for 2017-18, retained its commitment to ensure compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.
- The existing governance structures were upheld, with the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) and the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body reporting to URIC;
- Each of the faculties continued to have their own Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs), which reported to UREC. The constitution of the FRECs was reviewed and updated (March 2018).

- The July 2018 meeting of URIC proposed the setting up of a Concordats Operating Group to provide direction and operationalise both, the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, as well as the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

Policies and Initiatives

DMU has developed a number of governance policies and guidelines that offer a framework within which staff and students conduct their research, and which continued to inform and guide practice over 2017-18. These include:

- [Guidelines for Good Research Practice](#)
- [Policy on Conducting Sensitive Research](#)
- [Misconduct in Research – Investigation Procedure](#)

In addition, a number of new initiatives in relation to research conduct were rolled out:

- Turnitin was trialled as a way of submitting ethics applications online. However, several legal implications were identified (breach of copyright regulations, confidentiality and data protection) and the trials were not taken any further. A review (including visits) was undertaken to look at online ethics systems currently in use in other higher education institutions. It was projected that requirement specification to procurement and deployment could take 18 to 24 months. Any new system would also need to interface with SAP. It was considered appropriate to wait on the purchase of a new system until the affordances of another project looking at research application (pre- and post-award processes) were fully identified, with a view to integrating the ethics online system requirements with the new proposed 'RAPS' project.
- Policies to cover Serious Adverse Events were developed in conjunction with University Hospitals Leicester, and subsequently circulated.
- The Sensitive Research Policy was updated (December 2017).
- Guidance was produced to assist with decision-making on ethics applications for undergraduate and taught modules.
- All FRECs were fully briefed in on the new GDPR guidelines.

Investigations of misconduct during academic year 17/18

DMU clearly states that “within a framework of good governance and appropriate training, responsibility for the conduct of ethical research must ultimately lie with the researchers themselves.” DMU has in place a [Misconduct in Research – Investigation Procedure](#) to allow for allegations of research misconduct to be investigated in a fair, objective and confidential manner, by implementation of a three stage process: (i) Preliminary Consideration, (ii) Screening and (iii) Formal Investigation. Informal resolution (without the need for formal investigation) may be appropriate for allegations that are not considered of a serious nature.

No serious issues of misconduct were investigated over 2017-18.