



## Annual Statement on Research Integrity Academic Year 18/19

### 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.

A significant step in the self-assessment process has been the setting up of an Ethics Task Group. The Group, formed towards the end of the last academic year (2018/19), and chaired by the Associate Dean for Research and Innovation in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, reports to the University Research Ethics Committee, which will be putting forward a set of recommendations on aspects of research ethics and integrity that need reviewing (including, for example, research sponsorship, risk assessment and ethics and integrity training).

## Systems and Processes

- This year saw the Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs), together with the University Research Ethics Committee, trying to streamline processes with a view to procuring an online system to make the ethics application processes more efficient and auditable. All FRECs reviewed ethics application forms in order to produce a standard university-wide form. Revisions incorporated more detail that would reflect the requirements of the research project in greater depth, thus supporting a better-informed decision-making process for the FREC, and to better ensure that students are alerted to ethical issues that they may not have foreseen.
- The constitutions of the Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs) were reviewed and updated and processes are being reviewed to ensure that approval of commercial projects is possible.
- New Chairs of FRECs were appointed in Business and Law (BAL), as well as in Health and Life Sciences (HLS). The ethical approval processes within BAL have been strengthened under the guidance of a new FREC Chair, which included a series of training courses and presentations to staff to socialise a more robust approach. Steps are also being taken to examine the quality of research ethics processes of partner colleges to ensure their processes align with those of the Faculty.
- In June 2018, the Faculty of Business and Law signed up Leicester Castle Business School as a partner to the European RRBM <https://rrbm.network/> and endorsed their position paper on the responsible use of research metrics.
- There is greater alignment between the committee looking at PREVENT and ethics. One ethics application was received to conduct research on the dark web, which was approved in line with DMU's [Policy on Conducting Sensitive Research](#).

## Policies and Initiatives

DMU has continued to review policies and guidelines that inform and guide research practice in line with current legislations.

- New policies have been drafted on the ethics of research conducted online, and research with children and young adults;
- A paper went to UREC in June 2019 for a process of agreeing block proposals for pedagogic research. This is to be reviewed and developed, alongside a policy supporting 'exceptional general approval', where block approval might be granted to a module if the same protocol is used by all researchers (normally undergraduate students) in conducting their research, with a validity of no more than 4 years at a time;
- The Sensitive Research Policy was reviewed and updated to provide clarity on the uses of data between evaluation and research purposes, between handling sensitive data and handling sensitive materials, and to be extended to cover teaching, not just research.

- Programme handbooks are being reviewed and revised to ensure that students are fully aware of the repercussions of not applying for ethical approval PRIOR to the commencement of ANY project/ dissertation that involves research.
- Research ethics training is to be rolled out with iterations every 2 months for staff, and a set of training materials and online resources for postgraduate research students, completion of which is mandatory for them. Training on responsible innovation is to be rolled out in the new academic year.

### **Investigations of misconduct during academic year 2018-19**

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 staff misconduct were investigated over 2018-19. Three research student cases of plagiarism/bad academic practice, have been investigated as follows:

<b>No. of Cases</b>	<b>Plagiarism/Bad Academic Practice</b>
1	Awaiting Academic Offence Panel
1	Found guilty following Academic Offence Panel. Given 12 months to revise thesis due to mitigating circumstances.
1	Found guilty following Academic Offence Panel. Given 11 months to correct issues and submit examinable thesis.