Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2020-21

A Aims and objectives

1.   As a signatory to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, DMU is required to publish an annual research integrity statement, which is published on DMU's website, following which the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) is notified, and a link to the DMU is published on the UKRIO site.

B Recommendations

2.   It is recommended that URIC should approve the Annual Statement 2021/22.

C Background

3.   As a signatory to 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 (Appendix 1) outlining:

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

D Actions, timeframe and follow-up

4.   Following approval of the statement, it will be published on DMU's website, and UKRIO notified of this publication.
5.   In compiling the statement, an in-depth review of DMU's responsibilities as a research institution has been undertaken using the UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool. This has allowed us to identify areas of research practice that require attention in order to meet the requirements of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

E Risk assessment and opportunities *(Where relevant)*

6.   No particular risks. The Annual Research Integrity Statement is an example of good practice rather than a mandated requirement.

Report author:
Susie Fowler, Research Governance Officer: Ethics and Integrity
08/02/2023

Appendix 1: Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2021/22

**Annual Statement on Research Integrity
2021/22**

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

DMU continues to be a member organisation of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), and we have engaged regularly with the online webinar and training offered by them. We also invited UKRIO to provide a training session for our Ethics Committee members during this period, which has fed into a University-wide review of our ethics processes (see below). We also continue to engage with the ARMA Special Interest Group (SIG) on research ethics.

Research at DMU covers a wide spectrum of areas, and faculties provide support and subject specific guidance for researchers, including on 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). During this reporting period, we have particularly focused on strengthening the following areas:

- A self-assessment audit of research integrity across the university was completed with recommendations to be reported to the University Research Innovation Committee in AY22/23;

- The introduction of the online ethics application module from Worktribe has allowed for closer monitoring and compliance checks of ethics applications with a full schedule of audit and monitoring requirements approved with launch set for the start of AY 22/23.

Following the introduction of ethics and integrity training from Epigeum, mandatory training for postgraduate research students has now moved to the online provision where we are able to monitor completion rates. The training is also available for staff with the recommendation that anyone undertaking research or actively involved in reviewing ethics applications completes both the ethics and integrity modules. Undergraduate and postgraduate taught students will be able to access a 'lite' version of the training from the start of AY22/23.

Systems and Processes

Following the successful launch of Worktribe Ethics for staff and postgraduate research student ethics applications in March 2021, a pilot was undertaken during AY21/22 to ascertain the viability of using the system for the management of undergraduate and postgraduate taught ethics applications. The pilot was very well received by both students and members of the academic teaching teams, with approval given for full transition to Worktribe with effect from October 2022.

Policies and Initiatives

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

Policies

- Guidelines on the ethics of research with children and young adults have now been published and disseminated across the university.

- The Research Ethics Code of Practice was updated to include requirements of the Nagoya protocol, relating to biological research, with a detailed framework for the effective implementation of the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

- Work has continued on the Sensitive Research Policy to ensure it facilitates compliance with our duty to prevent staff and students from being drawn into terrorism or extremism.

New Initiatives

- Introduction of Epigeum online training for Ethics and Integrity for researchers at all levels (staff/PGR/PGT/UG)

- Work continues on updating the DMU webpages for Ethics and Integrity, which will allow for greater transparency of policies and processes, and to make key documents more visible and accessible to staff and students. Content now includes pages for NHS Research, Nagoya protocol, Trusted Research and Export Controls.

Investigations of misconduct during academic year 2021/22

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 cases were dealt with in this academic year.