Edge Hill University

Concordat to Support Research Integrity

The University is committed to supporting the highest standards of research integrity which are reflected in the 2019 [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#).

- Commitment 1: To uphold the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.

- Commitment 2: To ensure that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal, and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.

- Commitment 3: To support a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers.

- Commitment 4: To use transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.

- Commitment 5: To work together to strengthen the integrity of research and to review progress regularly and openly.

The University Research and Innovation Committee is responsible for ensuring adherence to these commitments which it discharges via the University Research Ethics Sub-committee (URESC). We have a range of policies, codes and processes to support researchers in maintaining these standards, including:

- Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research

- Code of Practice for the Reporting of Research Misconduct

- Research Ethics Policy (REP) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

  - o URESC Ethical Guidance for Undertaking Research with Children and Young People

  - o URESC Ethical Guidance for Undertaking Research with Vulnerable Adults

  - o URESC Ethical Guidance for Undertaking Research with Edge Hill University Students

- Human Tissue Quality Manual

- Research Risk Assessment Guidance

- Open Access Policy

- Research Data Management Guidelines

- Policy on Researching and Handling Sensitive Material

- Health-related findings guidance

- Guidance when applying for sponsorship

All documents relating to research governance are all available on the University's [webpages](). The Research Office oversees the review and updating of these codes and policies on behalf of Research Committee. In 2020-21 a new guidance document on researchers working on their own research was developed and will be presented to URESC at its first meeting of 2021-22.

The Director of the Research Office provides an induction workshop that highlights these policies and codes and highlights researchers' responsibilities. In addition, the newly enrolling PhD students have training sessions which cover the codes of practice, the ethics approval process, risk assessment and working with human tissue. The chair of URESC also delivers training sessions on the process of ethical review.

There is an additional policy on intellectual property that is owned by Regulation, Assurance and Governance Unit (RAGU) and is held on the central regulations pages.

Research Governance Structures

Research and Innovation Committee (URIC) is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research. It has representatives from each faculty and ex-officio and appointed members from the Research Office, URESC, Learning Services and the Governing Body. The Committee delegates the responsibility for the ethical approval process to URESC which meets three times a year. Among its ex-officio members are the chairs of each Subject Research Ethics Committee (SREC) which, in turn, oversee the ethical approval processes of research conducted in their areas. The SRECs were new for the academic year 2020/21, there are five in total: Arts & Humanities, Education, Health-related, Science and Social Sciences. Departmental review is encouraged but not mandatory. All applications must be endorsed by the head of department with post graduate researcher (PGR) applications requiring the endorsement of the supervisor before the head of department. Where a SREC does not feel able to grant ethical approval, it may ask URESC to review the application. It is the nature of the project not the applicant's department that determines which REC reviews the project.

URESC provides URIC with an annual report and a plan of business for the forthcoming year at its first meeting of the year.

In addition to the ethics committees, there is a Human Tissue Management Sub-committee (HTMSC) chaired by the Associate Dean for Research and Innovation, Faculty of Health and Social Care, which has oversight of the work carried out under the licence. All projects carried out under the licence must receive ethical approval from the Science Research Ethics Committee. The 'Designated Individual' under the terms of the HTA licence is a member of the HTMSC and an ex-officio member of URESC. The Biological Safety Officer is a member of the Science REC and is also an ex-officio member of HTMSC.

All governance policies are reviewed by both URESC and URIC before being taken to Academic Board for final approval and adoption.

The Director of the Research Office is the named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity and ensure that this information is kept up to date and publicly available on the institution's website. The secretary to URESC is named staff member who acts as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity, and his contact details are publicly available on our website.

Activities and developments in 2020-21

(The relevant Concordat commitment is indicated in parenthesis.)

The five Subject Research Ethics Committees launched in November The move to SRECs will help to ensure that the application is reviewed in a timely fashion (the committees review on a monthly basis), and that here is greater consistency across the organisation and the projects are seen by the right committee. To ensure that best

practice is shared, representatives from different committees are members. URESC has two lay members and we will be inviting applications to join the SRECs (#1, #3, #5).

- The online ethics system (Haplo) was launched in November 2020 (#1,#2,#3,#4,#5). Additional policy and guidance documents have been created and revised training resources such as online narrated presentations to facilitate easy access to training. The implementation was overseen by a working group consisting of the chair, deputy chairs and secretaries of the new SRECs and URESC plus the Director of the Research Office who supported one another with navigating the new system and developing guidance documents. Committee members will be provided with additional training both regarding the system and ethics principles based on training materials from UKRIO (including the new Concordat) (#1; #2; #3; #5):

- Training sessions on the GDPR and research are normally delivered by the RO and the Information Governance Officer but most training was put on hold during lockdown but researchers could, and did, ask for individual advice and guidance where required. Many research projects were suspended during 2020-21. Instead of training sessions, a Reboot Research Working Group was established and new guidance written to support staff who were carrying out research in new environments (e.g. virtual rather than face-to-face interviews; new practices in labs; managing human tissue work). (#1, #2, #3, #5)

- The Director of the Research Office delivered an online induction session, An Introduction to Edge Hill's Research Strategy and Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research, which includes reference to the range of governance documents; this was also online for the first time and is available to staff as a recording at any time. This session is aimed particularly at new academic staff but is open to all. In the induction session it is stressed the anyone who witnesses or suspects misconduct should report it to whomever they feel comfortable to help to ensure that any such circumstance is addressed. It is noted, however, that any investigation must be led by the people designated in the Code of Practice on Research Misconduct (#1; #2; #3; #5).

- PhD students have sessions on governance and ethics in the first semester and have access to RDP sessions more generally (#2; #3).

There have been no cases investigated under the Code of Practice for the Investigation of Research Misconduct, but one PhD student was investigated for suspected plagiarism under Research Degree Regulations: the outcome was that there was no case to answer.

Dr Nikki Craske

Director, Research Office August 2021

Received by University Research Ethics Sub-committee, 16 September 2021

Received by University Research and Innovation Committee,