

## Concordat to Support Research Integrity

---

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

- Commitment 1: To maintain 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.

Research Committee is responsible for ensuring adherence to these commitments. 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)
  - URESA Ethical Guidance for Undertaking Research with Children and Young People
  - URESA Ethical Guidance for Undertaking Research with Vulnerable Adults
  - URESA 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

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. The Director of the Research Office provides an induction workshop (three times a year) that highlights these policies and codes; 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.

---

There is an additional policy on intellectual property that is owned by Academic Quality and Development Unit (AQDU) and is held on the central regulations pages.

## **Research Governance Structures**

Research Committee 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, its Research Ethics Sub-Committee (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 Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) which, in turn, oversee the ethical approval processes of research conducted in their areas. In the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), two departments, Psychology and Sport and Physical Activity, have their own departmental research ethics committees (DREC) which are able to approve ethics applications. All departments are expected to review projects in their areas and make recommendations to the FAS FREC. In the other two faculties, Health and Social Care, and Education, the FREC is responsible for all ethical approval processes. Where a FREC does not feel able to grant ethical approval, it may ask URESC to review the application.

URESC provides Research Committee 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 Group (HTMG) 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 license. All projects carried out under the license must receive ethical approval from URESC rather than the FRECs. The 'Designated Individual' under the terms of the HTA licence is a member of the HTMG and an ex-officio member of URESC.

All governance documents are reviewed by both URESC and the Research Committee before being taken to Academic Board for final approval and adoption.

## **Activities and developments in 2017-18**

(The relevant Concordat commitment is indicated in parenthesis.)

- The Research Ethics Policy (REP) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were established based on a complete review of the Framework for Research Ethics which had been the previous key document. The review was informed by resources from the UK Research Integrity Office and the Association for Research Ethics Committees (AREC) (#1, #3, #5).
- The membership of the committee was revised to include a member of the PGR community (#3, #5).
- A standardised participant information sheet (PIS) template was created, not least to assist researchers to understand and abide by the requirements of the GDPR (#1; #2; #3).
- Additional policy and guidance documents include (#1; #2; #3; #5):
  - Health-related findings guidance
  - Policy on Researching and Handling Sensitive Material

- Research Data Management Policy (plus guidance and metadata standards)
- Training was provided on the impact on GDPR on research and training materials provided – this is now a regular training event (#1, #2, #3).
- URESC has instigated a more rigorous monitoring of projects approved by devolved committees by review randomly selected applications to ensure that they meet expected standards of review (#1, #3, #5).
- The ToR of the three FRECs were reviewed and some were revised in the light of feedback (#1, #3, #5).
- Ethics committees for UG and PGT student work respectively have been established in the Faculty of Health and Social Care.
- The Director of the Research Office continued to deliver three annual sessions on the 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 session is aimed particularly at new academic staff but is open to all. In addition, there are other sessions in the Researcher Development Programme (RDP) programme which promote research integrity including research ethics, data protection, research management and working with human subjects (#1; #2; #3).
- PhD students have sessions on governance and ethics in the first semester and have access to RDP sessions more generally (#2; #3).

For the record, there have been no cases investigated under the Code of Practice for the Investigation of Research Misconduct (hence there are no actions under commitment 4). One research participant raised some issues with the chair of URESC which, given the importance, were investigated. As a result, the PIS now includes more explicit guidance on aftercare and signposting research participants in the event of a query.

Dr Nikki Craske  
Director, Research Office

January 2019

*Received by University Research Ethics Sub-committee, 17 January 2019*

*Received by University Research Committee, 27 February 2019*