

RESEARCH WITH PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Plymouth University: Assurance statement on compliance with the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2015 for uploading to web)*

Background

In 2012 Universities UK published the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. As a signatory, Plymouth University is committed to maintaining and promoting the highest standards of integrity and probity in scientific research. This activity is implemented by the Research Support and Development team and progress is reported to the Research and Innovation Committee. As a condition of funding, HEFCE require that as a signatory the University demonstrates compliance in the form of an annual assurance statement, which is subject to audit.

One of the requirements of the Concordat is a short annual statement to the Board of Governors that:

- provides a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues;
- provides assurances that the processes in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair, and continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation;
- provides a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken.

1. 2014/15 actions and activities to support research integrity:

1.1 Staff development

The University continues to maintain its European Commission HR Excellence in Research Award. During 14-15 information was compiled to support the 4 year external review of our Award (submission September 2015).

Research governance and quality training opportunities have increased and are now collated in a schedule for dissemination by the Faculties as well as through the standard channels of advertising on the Researcher Development and Research Support Programmes. Sixteen sessions were made available, including introductory and advanced research ethics, working with human tissue under licence, advice sessions on insurance and submitting ethical review applications, research integrity and achieving high quality research. An e-learning package on data protection has been commissioned and will be rolled out in 2015.

1.2 Regulatory assurances

The Research Governance Officer has supported researchers in securing two US assurance registrations; the Federal Wide Assurance (FWA) for the Protection of Human Subjects (Department of Health and Human Services- DHHS) and the Assurance on Animal Welfare (National Institutes of Health – NIH). These assurances demonstrate on going compliance with US Federal standards. Project staff have completed specific training to meet with these regulations and complied with Institutional Review Board requirements and monitoring.

1.3 Staff resources

The role of Research Governance Specialist has been broadened and has supported an increase in training opportunities for research staff across the university.

1.4 Audits

An audit of research data, data storage and ethical approval processes was undertaken in respect of the security and continuity of research data. Agreed actions from this audit will be implemented and reported on between September and December 2015.

Following a fraud risk workshop in 2015, the University Executive Group commissioned an audit to identify potential risk in respect of academic dishonesty. Outcomes from this audit will be reported on in 2015/16.

2. Research misconduct

2.1 There is policy guidance in place that gives complete coverage for staff, postgraduate research and postgraduate taught students on matters of research misconduct and the processes therein remain appropriate for the organisation.

2.2 Our 'Academic Offence and Research Misconduct Regulations for Research Degree Programmes,' was reviewed in February 2015.

3. Formal investigations

3.1 There has been no formal investigation into research misconduct involving staff in the last year.

3.2 There has been one case of postgraduate research misconduct (plagiarism), upheld post submission. The student was required to work through their thesis and discuss it fully with their supervisory team, including an independent academic expert, before resubmitting their thesis. A record of the investigation was placed on their file.