

An extract from the forthcoming second edition of UKRIO's Self-Assessment Tool for the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (***NB subject to final alterations***):

Annual research integrity statements: suggested content

The Concordat (2019) requires that institutions make an annual statement to their governing body on the actions they have undertaken to sustain and further enhance integrity in their research. It also requires that institutions make their statements public.

The annual statement is a valuable opportunity for internal review and reflection. Equally, it is an opportunity to demonstrate publicly a commitment to high quality and ethical research, by declaring the practical measures which an institution has undertaken to support research integrity.

Drawing on UKRIO's extensive experience, and feedback from institutions and researchers, this section suggests possible content for the annual statement. As noted earlier, the self-assessment tool should not be seen as prescriptive. Accordingly, this section is intended as a guide to inform the drafting of an annual statement. It is up to institutions to determine what their statements will contain.

Like the rest of this document, this annex will be revised as the implementation of the Concordat evolves. UKRIO welcomes enquiries from institutions seeking advice on the content of their annual statements and is happy to assist its subscribers in drafting them.

Commitment 5: Strengthening Research Integrity, *The Concordat to Support Research Integrity* (2019):

“Employers of researchers will ...produce a short annual statement, which must be presented to their own governing body, and subsequently be made publicly available, ordinarily through the institution's website.

This annual statement must include:

- a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and the application of research integrity issues (for example postgraduate and researcher training, or process reviews)
- a statement to provide assurance that the processes the institution has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, timely, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation
- a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, which will include data on the number of investigations. If no formal investigation has been undertaken, this should also be noted
- a statement on what the institution has learned from any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken, including what lessons have been learned to prevent the same type of incident re-occurring
- a statement on how the institution creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct

...To improve transparency, a link to the statement should be sent to the secretariat of the signatories to the concordat.”

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Writing the annual statement

The annual statement should provide a brief but wide-ranging summary of activities undertaken to support research integrity, including addressing any allegations of misconduct. The statement should **not** be limited to activities which relate specifically to the implementation of the Concordat, let alone to those which relate only to compliance with the Concordat, or with other guidance, as a condition of grant.

This is not to diminish the importance of contractual and other mandatory standards. The annual statement can certainly be used to demonstrate that these are being met, in particular the 'responsibilities of employers of researchers' listed in the Concordat. However, it can – and, in UKRIO's view, **should** – also demonstrate a broader commitment to the promotion of research integrity.

If for any reason a contractual or other required standard is not being met, the statement should contain a brief summary of what is being done to address this and a proposed completion date. For example: "The publicly accessible web link to our research integrity policies and the named person for receiving allegations of misconduct is not yet in place. This will be rectified by the beginning of the next semester."

It may be challenging to summarise a year's worth of research integrity support in a brief and accessible form. However, merely listing activities undertaken should be avoided. It would be helpful not only to say what has been done, but the reasons for actions taken and the outcome. For example: "Drawing on lessons learned from a recent investigation of research misconduct, we have undertaken additional activities to raise awareness of the sources of help on research practice and ethics available to researchers.

Downloads of relevant policies and visits to our institutional research integrity web pages subsequently increased."

The annual statement is also an opportunity to highlight how existing measures and previous actions are being built upon or further developed. As successive annual statements are published by an institution, we feel it would be helpful if they had a strong focus on new measures and significant changes to existing measures, rather than simply echoing what has gone before. Previous statements should remain available on the institution's website.

Suggested content: supporting and strengthening research integrity

Evidence of how your institution is implementing the commitments of the Concordat, including compliance with its 'responsibilities of employers of researchers'. For example:

- An overview of your institution's strategy and objectives to strengthen understanding of research integrity.
- Introduction or revision of research integrity policies and procedures, requirements, process reviews or support mechanisms.
- Revision of related institutional systems (e.g. financial audit process or whistleblowing policy).
- Inclusion of relevant external requirements and guidance into institutional processes.
- Dissemination and awareness-raising activities that you have undertaken.
- A summary of your education and training provision, including the audiences that have been reached and any new activities.

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- Information on any research into research integrity or related fields, such as research ethics, undertaken by members of your institution.
- A description of your internal monitoring and audit processes, including information on any revisions or developments, plus summary data.
- Summary of outcomes of any external inspections/ audits.
 - The number of ongoing investigations.
- A breakdown of the number of formal investigations undertaken in the past year:
 - By discipline.
 - By the broad type of misconduct that was alleged. For example, fabrication/ falsification, plagiarism or failure of duty of care to research participants.
 - For allegations that were externally funded, a breakdown by funding body.

Suggested content: addressing research misconduct

Confirmation that:

- Your institution has processes for the reporting and investigating of allegations of research misconduct.
- The process has appropriate principles and mechanisms to ensure that investigations are thorough and fair, carried out in a transparent and timely manner, and protected by appropriate confidentiality.

Brief, anonymised summary data on any formal investigations conducted by your institution into allegations of research misconduct. For example:

- Number of allegations received during the past year and how many then proceeded to a formal investigation.
- Number of formal investigations undertaken in the past year, including:
 - How many allegations were upheld in full or in part?
 - How many allegations were dismissed?

Please note that:

- Specific allegations/ investigations and the individuals and research projects concerned should not be identifiable from this data.
- Regarding the number of formal investigations undertaken, how many allegations were upheld or dismissed, and the breakdowns by discipline, type and funder, it is UKRIO's view that there is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer as long as the data provided is accurate. This has been echoed by other bodies with interests in this area.

Confirmation that the institution fulfilled any requirements to make reports to external bodies, including regulatory and professional bodies, regarding the initiation or completion of a formal investigation. In our view, there is no need to provide additional information in the annual statement, simply to confirm that the institution has met its obligations. External bodies may require additional confirmation separately from the annual statement, for example via their assurance or audit processes.

A short summary of key learning points from concluded investigations and subsequent actions taken. For example: revision of systems or policies,

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training on particular aspects of the research process or improvements to dissemination of expected standards.

- **Please note that** it is not suggested that disciplinary or other actions taken in relation to specific individuals is listed. However, if the institution has previously made any public statements that mentioned such actions, these could be linked to.

Suggested content: external engagement

Collaborations with external organisations to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues, whether UK-based institutions or those from other countries.

Regional, national or international initiatives on research integrity which your institution has contributed to or participated in.

Public engagement activities conducted by your institution, particularly involving research participants or patients, which included coverage of research integrity.

External conferences, workshops or other events on research integrity to which your institution has contributed.

Membership of, or collaborations with, organisations with a particular interest in research integrity and related issues, such as the UK Research Integrity Office.

Suggested content: funder-specific activities

A summary of any actions taken to safeguard and support research integrity relating to researchers and projects supported by particular funding bodies.

- **Please note that** you may prefer to list funder-specific activities as subsets of relevant general activities instead of listing them in a separate section. For example, a description of your 'generic' training and development activities could be followed by a summary of training provided for researchers supported by a particular funder.



UKRIO is an independent charity, offering support to the public, researchers and organisations to further good practice in academic, scientific and medical research. We pursue these aims through our publications on research practice, the support and services we provide to organisations, our education and training activities, and by providing expert guidance in response to requests for assistance.

Since 2006, UKRIO has provided independent, expert and confidential support across all disciplines of research, from the arts and humanities to the life sciences. We cover all research sectors: higher education, the NHS, private sector organisations and charities. No other organisation in the UK has comparable expertise in providing such support in the field of research integrity.

UKRIO welcomes enquiries on any issues relating to the conduct of research, whether promoting good research practice, seeking help with a particular research project, or concerns about alleged fraud and misconduct in research.

UK Research Integrity Office

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Registered Charity No: 1147061 Registered Company No: 7444269

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