

Annual Statement for The Concordat to Support Research Integrity 2019-20

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Annual Statement is required as part of continued compliance with the revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity, 2019. The original Concordat to Support Research Integrity was published by Universities UK in 2012 and developed in collaboration with UKRI and the Wellcome Trust. The Concordat was devised to provide a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance. The revised Concordat was published in October 2019, providing the principles, commitments and standards which should be inherent in all good research. The revised Concordat represents a renewed ambition to strengthen research integrity building on a shared commitment that research produced, or in collaboration with the UK research community, is underpinned by the highest standards of rigour, integrity and excellence.

2. ANNUAL STATEMENT TO SUPPORT RESEARCH INTEGRITY

2.1 Supporting and Strengthening Research Integrity

- (a) Vision 2028 is the University's ambitious 10-year strategy where UEL has placed increasing the diversity of the talent pipeline for a 4.0 economy at the heart of all aspects of our education & experience, careers & enterprise, impact & innovation, and sustainability strategic goals. The University aims to become the UK's careers-1st university, preparing our students for the jobs of the future and providing the innovation to drive the future sustainably and inclusively. In addition, UEL aims to create a 4.0 education for learners: producing graduates with the skills, tools and competencies sought by employers and entrepreneurs in a rapidly changing world. The University's 'Future Life' objectives are to increase the economic, social & cultural impact of UEL's education, research and enterprise activities to the communities we serve and the planet.
- (b) The University conducts high quality, innovative research and is guided by the principles and standards specified in the Concordat. The University's policies, procedures and guidance support a sustainable, vital and ethical research environment that sets the benchmark for its researchers. The University has clear policies and practices to assist researchers to conduct their research to high standards of integrity and ethical conduct, raise awareness and highlight researchers' obligations to ensure that their research projects are aligned with appropriate legal, ethical and professional frameworks.

- (c) The University's Information Assurance Office has produced guidance on processing research data, data sharing and effective data management in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 2018 and the principles of General Data Protection Regulation, May 2018 (GDPR). The University is committed to improving its information governance and has implemented controls to comply with producing and maintaining relevant information, as well as sustaining a robust privacy program and performing due diligence on all data processors. In addition, guidance has been developed to assist staff in the development and review of risk registers as part of the Strategic Planning round 2020-2021. Each School and Service is required to create and maintain a local level risk register to document possible risks that may prevent the team from achieving their objectives.
- (d) The Library, Archives and Learning Services provides support for the University's Open Access Policy which recognises the importance of open access in increasing the visibility and impact of its research. Effective research data management supports the integrity and quality of research and encourages best practice to minimise the risk of data loss. It is mandatory for all applications for ethical approval from the University's staff and postgraduate research students to include a Data Management plan to avoid data loss, enable data sharing and re-use and demonstrating a commitment to good research practice.
- (e) The Research and Development Support (ReDs) team produces an annual report on the University's research outcomes via the 'Researchfish' system. The information provided in the University's Annual Statement for the Concordat makes an essential contribution to the evidence needed to continue making the case for public funding of research. The ReDs team hosted a UKRO Information session on the ERC Grant Scheme and continue to co-ordinate a programme of workshops, one-to-ones and training, supporting colleagues in the selection of funding opportunities and the associated skills in building and refining competitive proposals.

2.2 The University Research Ethics Sub-Committee (URES)

- (a) The University Research Ethics Sub-Committee (URES) and subsidiary School Research Ethics Committees (SRECs) are all validated and approved by Academic Board. The URES Committee supports the Impact and Innovation Committee, with regard to the successful achievement of the Future Life strategic objectives and related transformational projects. Both URES and SRECs collate and

monitor the Annual reports of activity for all applications for ethical approval. An audit of the University's collaborative partners who conduct research with human participants, human material or personal or sensitive data was completed and continues to be monitored.

- (b) The Research Ethics Sub-Committees completed Annual reports of the business of their Committees, detailing how they are maintaining research integrity and the Committees sampled ethics applications for moderation. Overall, the Research Ethics Sub-Committees were consistent in their review of research ethics applications and the University continues to champion good research practice.
- (c) The URES Committee is comprised of academics from each of the Schools, professional support staff and a lay member. The Committee has oversight of the University's compliance with the mandates and framework of research integrity, in accordance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, and associated policies. It is the responsibility of URES to protect the interests and welfare of participants or those affected by the proposed research project and URES has an additional role by considering ethical approval to facilitate high quality research.
- (d) The Terms of Reference for URES were reviewed and revised and changes were made to the membership of URES and SREC Committees. The Schools of Architecture, Computing and Engineering (ACE) and Arts and Creative Industries (ACI) have a combined Research Ethics Committee, reflecting the expertise and interests across ACE/ACI in order to function effectively and command the necessary confidence and support. An integrated research ethics committee can have greater merit, as it draws on a larger pool of committee members and helps to build the training and knowledge to aid ethics reviews. The URES Committee was able to provide a prompt turnaround and timely approvals for research projects, particularly Covid-19 related projects, in response to the pandemic.
- (e) URES regularly reviews and updates its policies and procedures to safeguard good research practices across the University and inform researchers of their responsibilities and the principles and standards that they are expected to meet. In accordance with the revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity, the University's Code of Practice for Research, which sets out the University's principles for the governance of good research conduct and provides a framework for ethical conduct, was revised to detail the University's expected standards for good research practice and compliance with professional, statutory, regulatory and funding bodies. In addition, the University's Code of Practice for Research Ethics has been updated, reviewing

existing research ethics processes in response to increasing expectations within the higher education sector for research governance.

2.3 Training and External Engagement

- (a) The University champions high quality research that is impactful and values creativity and innovative research projects. The University provides comprehensive research integrity and ethics training to assist all researchers and stakeholders in understanding their responsibilities and obligations, with regard to responsible research conduct. The training ensures that researchers are equipped with the necessary skills to conduct high quality research. Training sessions, workshops and seminars have taken place throughout the Academic year, with mandatory training for postgraduate research students and discipline-specific research integrity and ethics training conducted.
- (b) The University held a 'Research Is Open' (RIO) conference on 31st July 2020. The conference was delivered online and featured research from each School at the University and with representatives from every career stage. 112 presenters were involved in the conference across almost 30 panels. The keynote speaker was Professor Lord Richard Layard, author of numerous positive psychology texts. Research topics included, amongst others: global challenges; connecting contexts and creative approaches, connectivism and digital technologies; criminal exploitation and youth crime; learning disabilities and aspirations; and sustainability and development.
- (c) The Graduate School welcomed James Parry, Chief Executive of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), as a guest webinar speaker at their Research Integrity seminar in June 2020. The seminar was attended by academics, early career researchers and postgraduate research students. Conducting high quality research, striving for excellence, creating and maintaining a healthy research culture and safeguarding trust in research, were some of the topics discussed, as well as the requirements of the revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity.
- (d) The Researcher Development Programme, operated by the Graduate School, provides in-house training and development opportunities to PGR students, research-active staff at all levels, and PGR supervisors. Training opportunities map onto the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, corresponding to the broad areas of knowledge and intellectual abilities, personal effectiveness, research governance and organisation, and engagement and impact. Through a competitive

process the Graduate School won a Vitae-funded workshop, 'Intellectual Property for Research,' delivered by the UK Intellectual Property Office.

- (e) The University's has subscribed to the second edition of the suite of Epigeum's online Research Integrity Modules, which have been updated to integrate the principles detailed in the revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The Modules provide comprehensive research integrity training that delivers robust and consistent training in responsible research conduct. In addition, the Modules determine best practice informing users of the key concepts of research integrity, for each discipline, identifying all of steps of the research process from design to reporting, addressing the types of issues important to researchers going through the different stages of the research project.
- (f) In May 2020, the University's Civic Engagement team, as part of the Impact and Innovation directorate, organised the inaugural Public Engagement Award ceremony to celebrate the work of UEL's students and academics, recognising their contributions through public engagement projects across the University's communities. Awards were granted for innovation, partnerships, individual and student contributions to public engagement. The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Impact and Innovation, Professor Verity Brown, said that *"The awards would mark a new stage on our journey towards a more strategic approach to ensure that as a community we recognise, record, celebrate, evaluate and provide support for civic and public engagement"*.

2.4 Processes in place for Research Misconduct

- (a) The University has in place Codes of Practice for Research and Research Ethics, Procedures for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research for both staff and students and the Student Code of Conduct. The University has a transparent process to investigate allegations of misconduct in research by staff and a separate set of procedures for those involving postgraduate research students.

2.5 *Investigations of Research Misconduct

- (a) There were three separate allegations of research misconduct concerning three of the University's researchers that were investigated under the University's Procedure. None of the allegations reached a formal investigation.

- (b) In accordance with the revised Concordat, the University's Procedures for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research, for both staff and students will be reviewed in Academic year 2020-21. The revised Code of Practice for Research, updated COPRE and revised Procedures for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research, will ensure that appropriate policies are in place to inform researchers of their responsibilities and the principles and standards they are expected to meet and uphold, with their research projects.
- (c) The second edition of Epigeum's online Research Integrity Modules which provides comprehensive information on responsible research conduct and best practice, will be promoted throughout the University as a useful resource. The second edition of the Modules will be available to all researchers in Academic year 2020-21. School Research Degree leaders will be directed to the Modules as a mechanism for all disciplines to be aware of research misconduct and how to minimise the risk.
- (d) The provision of research integrity and ethics training at the University will include a renewed focus on research misconduct, ensuring that researchers are aware of their individual responsibilities to comply with all legal, regulatory and ethical requirements, and signposting the relevant resources and guidance that is available to support them.
- (e) The University has a Policy on Public Interest Disclosure which is available on the main website and the intranet, to offer advice about how such "public" disclosure should be made to enjoy the protection of the Act, and an understanding on how each case will then be handled. The policy, in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act, is concerned with alleged malpractice, impropriety or wrongdoing in the workplace. The policy allows employees, and such other persons who are covered by the policy, to raise concerns or disclose information at a high level, which the discloser believes in good faith to show evidence of serious malpractice.

2.6 Equality Impact Assessment

- (a) The University puts the values of equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of its transformation strategy, Vision 2028. Increasing the diversity of the talent pipeline for a rapidly changing world is central to the University's 10-year strategic plan, realising the potential of all of its students, graduates and staff. The University has a comprehensive EDI Strategy with the key objectives of ensuring inclusion is embedded in to its organisational culture and environment, promoting an inclusive staff experience, reflecting the University's approaches to the recruitment,

development and progression of staff and have an inclusive student experience which celebrates diversity and enables all of its students to succeed. The Strategy is reviewed periodically, and institution wide EDI plans are embedded within the different Schools' objectives and strategies to improve accountability and have mechanisms in place to support implementation of the EDI Strategy, which can be measured and evaluated.

- (b) In April 2020, the University received global recognition for its work in reducing inequalities. In the Times Higher Education Global Impact Rankings, 2020, the University was ranked in the top 20% globally in its overall impact. The Global Impact Rankings performance tables assess Universities against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Calibrated indicators are employed to provide comprehensive and balanced comparisons across three broad areas: research, outreach and stewardship, to measure the degree of institutional success in delivering the SDGs. The SDGs were created by the United Nations to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all and address global challenges such as poverty, inequality and climate change, by 2030. This is the first time that the University has submitted to the Times Higher Global Impact Rankings the University was ranked 2nd in the world (1st in the UK), in a field of over 750 institutions from 85 territories, for 'reducing inequities'.
- (c) The University has established an Office for Institutional Equity (OIE), the first of its kind in the UK, that has specific responsibility for addressing inequalities within the University by creating sustainable cultural changes which will positively impact the University's community. The objective of the UEL Race Equality Action plan 2019-2022 is to ensure that progressing race equality is embedded across the institution. The OIE recognised the requirement for clear responsibility and ownership for actions which are spread across the University. Members of the University Executive Board (UEB) have been specified in the action plan as the person accountable for ensuring implementation of their objective. The plan will be reviewed periodically to monitor progress.
- (d) The University holds an Athena SWAN Bronze award recognising the University's commitment to, and success in, supporting gender equality. The School of Architecture, Computing and Engineering (ACE) was awarded a Bronze award. Through its work the School of ACE champions for a significant cultural change in promoting gender equality in arts, engineering, computing and architecture. The School is committed to further embed and promote the principles of the Athena SWAN Charter in all areas of its activities.

- (e) The University continues to invest in the personal development of its staff and supports external programmes provided by Advance HE; the Aurora Women’s leadership development programme and the Diversifying Leadership programme. Aurora was developed to address the underrepresentation of women in leadership, including research leadership positions, in Higher Education Institutions, for both academics and professional services staff members. Diversifying Leadership addresses the underrepresentation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) leaders in HE institutions in the UK, particularly at senior levels. The University put forward staff members for both Advance HE leadership development programmes.
- (f) The Chair of the Board of Governors, Anulika Ajufo, spoke on behalf of the Board of Governors regarding the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) and said that *“The Black Academy at UEL is one of the largest in the sector and has a special focus and passion for issues of social justice, racial equity, anti-racism and black representation. The Black Academy and the wider University is committed to supporting all student study endeavours and wellbeing”*. The University provided support and resources to those who had found the events initiating BLM difficult, including the University’s connected wellbeing portal, student wellbeing drop-in sessions and the Hub, and recommended Togetherall (formerly Big White Wall) for wellbeing support for staff and students. Events were also held addressing the topic of race, proving a space for staff and students to talk about events and share experiences.
- (g) The University is one of only 14 Universities to be awarded the Race Equality Charter Bronze award, affirming the University’s commitment to support race equality and develop an inclusive research environment at every level.

2.7 Risk Assessment

- (a) The University is committed to enabling innovation and decision-making by having a clear understanding of the risks and opportunities that it faces. Efficient and effective risk management is necessary to support the University’s core functions and activities, to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations and to contribute to the effective overall management of the institution. The Information Assurance Office has revised the University’s Information Governance framework which clearly sets out the expectations for those individuals who have responsibility for managing risks on behalf of the University. The Framework will be used to establish new processes, procedures and documentation to enable the University to manage risk consistently

across its operations. The University also has a Risk Management policy that combined with UEL's Information Governance Framework are established mechanisms through which effective risk management can be achieved.

- (b) The University has an Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHMS) which is fully aligned with the University's principal aim of evolving Vision 2028 for UEL to become the leading careers-led university in the UK – a place where the future of learning and work is advanced today and potential is realised. The OHSM system assists in developing an outstanding, career-ready workforce, meet specific health, safety and wellbeing needs for the University's civic engagement initiatives, offer a first-rate student and staff experience, and a thriving research culture.
- (c) The University's Health & Safety department hold Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee meetings each Academic year, in addition to the Schools and Services Health & Safety Committee meetings, and the Health & Safety department provides an annual report to the Board of Governors. Significant importance is placed on the health and wellbeing of the University's staff and students. The support arrangements include mini-health MoTs, an employee assistance programme, self and management referral systems, and intranet Health & Safety, Occupational Health and Wellbeing guidance documents.
- (d) The University's Health and Safety team won the Gold President's Award from the RoSPA Health and Safety Awards for sustaining good practice for the 13th consecutive year. The RoSPA Award scheme is open to organisations around the world and recognises achievement in health and safety management systems (including research activity).

Appendix

***Investigations of Research Misconduct**

Researcher

1. A UEL researcher made an allegation of research misconduct against an internal collaborator in their research team, as the researcher was not re-engaged to continue working with the team on a follow up research project. This allegation of research misconduct was dealt with at local level, as it was deemed as a lack of clarity of roles at the start of the research and a breakdown of communication in the team, rather than research misconduct.
2. An allegation of research misconduct was made against a UEL researcher from an internal party, querying whether the author had acknowledged their previous institution in their publication, had cross-referenced previously published papers and requested clarification of each co-author's contribution. The allegation was found to be mistaken and the case dismissed, as the UEL researcher had acknowledged their former institution in the publication, cross-referenced previously published papers reporting on the same report and specified the co-authors and their involvement in the research.
3. An allegation of research misconduct was made against a UEL researcher and their collaborators (et.al.) from a research team in an external institution, alleging that their publication had been plagiarised by the UEL researcher and et al. This allegation was found to be mistaken and the case dismissed, as the UEL researcher and et al. had evidence of researching the project for a few years and they had published the results of their research, before the Complainant's research was made public.

Open cases

Researcher

1. A UEL researcher has made an allegation of research misconduct against a collaborator in an external institution. The UEL researcher states that their contribution to the research project has been rejected by the collaborator and that their work should be used.

Postgraduate Research Student

1. A formal meeting was conducted into alleged plagiarism of published content and images in a PhD thesis by a student under the University's Student Code of Conduct. The investigation found that the student had breached the regulations and concluded that the thesis should be resubmitted within 6 months of the date of the meeting with the inappropriate material removed



and appropriate editing undertaken. The student also faced allegations of gross misconduct. Based on the evidence presented the Disciplinary panel believed that the allegation of research misconduct did not take place and that the allegation of misconduct in research has been proven not true on the balance of probabilities. However, UEL's Pro Vice-Chancellor for Impact and Innovation and the University Secretary are conducting a further investigation.