

Research Integrity Annual Statement 2021-2022

Enabling a healthy and sustainable research culture at UCL

1. Ensuring a supportive and collaborative research environment is an essential part of enabling and supporting researchers; not only to enable them to undertake high quality research, but also to provide them with a safe and supportive research environment where they are able to seek guidance and advise when needed, and to feel confident to admit errors in order to address them.
2. In the previous academic year, a Task and Finish Group undertook a scoping research culture, including challenges and positive influences (both internal and external) to identify any priority areas for improvement. This included an extensive consultation period the environment in which research happens, including the expectations, values, attitudes and behaviours that enable our research excellence.
www.ucl.ac.uk/research/strategy-and-policy/research-culture-ucl/research-culture-consultation
3. Five priorities were identified from the consultation, and a new Head of Research Culture was appointed to lead on the development of research culture at UCL. In addition the Enhancing Research Culture Programme (ERCP), funded through the £1.073m Research England allocation, was created to test interventions and inform the development of a long-term roadmap for change.
4. The ERCP opened up funding to academic and professional services staff to apply to run pilots that would consider areas most relevant to their areas whilst also being aligned with institutional priorities. In total 39 projects were funded, including 25 faculty-led projects and 14 cross-UCL projects. Information on these projects is available on the UCL Research Culture webpages:
www.ucl.ac.uk/research/strategy-and-policy/research-culture-ucl/enhancing-research-culture-programme.

for the whole institution. There is also a dedicated email address to enable staff to obtain advice if they have further queries. The guidance document and templates are due to be published openly on the Disclosure of Conflict and Declaration of Interest section of the Innovation & Enterprise website in early December 2022. www.ucl.ac.uk/enterprise/about/governance-and-policies/ucl-disclosure-conflict-and-declaration-interest-policy

17. These conversations have had a notable positive impact on the dialogue around conflicts of interest, enabling good practice to become more embedded into everyday activities through the use of open, collaborative discussions on managing conflicts. This includes extending discussions around the policy relating to non-research specific conflicts of interests, such as around procurement.
18. As part of embedding lessons learned to ensure continuous improvement (Commitment 5), the current policy is due to be reviewed and revised in the academic year 2023-2024. This review will enable UCL to build in practical updates to further improve support for individuals identifying and managing conflicts of interest, ensuring the highest levels of integrity across the university.

Introduction to Research Integrity – New online programme

19. UCL continues to take a broad view regarding the scope of training required to support research integrity, focussing not just on research integrity itself (what it is, why it is important and how it impacts upon research), but equally the relevant methods and skills to support and enable researchers to be able to undertake their research to the highest standards.
20. This is encapsulated in the Research Integrity Training Framework which incorporates this broad scope; considering training from a perspective of what would be required for a research project to be said to have integrity, and therefore the knowledge and skills researchers would need to have to ensure the research is conducted to the highest standards and has integrity.
www.ucl.ac.uk/research/integrity/research-integrity-trainingframework

21.

32. As part of this work, in August 2022, RIS soft launched a Due Diligence Stage One process for all new industry organisations (UK and overseas), which now undergo a standardised due diligence assessment at the onboarding stage. This assessment is carried out by a team in RIS which provides advice and support for researchers and academic departments for the mitigation and management of risks where these are identified.

National Security and Benefit Sharing

33. Throughout this academic year work was undertaken to enhance guidance, processes and controls to support compliance relating to Export Controls (export of items such as goods, software and data overseas), the National Security

resources and the benefits that result from their use are shared between those providing and using such resources).

34. The National Security and Benefits Sharing project team (a collaboration between staff from RIST, RIS, Legal Services and Research Integrity) developed and launched new web pages relating to Export Controls (www.ucl.ac.uk/research-innovation-services/node/1368) and the NSI Act (www.ucl.ac.uk/research-innovation-services/node/1369) providing clear information and guidance for researchers and academic departments, as well as access to training on export controls. In addition, a support specific email address (ec.nsi@ucl.ac.uk) was

35. In April 2022 a new process for export controls was launched within RIS providing a dedicated review route to determine where export control licenses would be required, as well as support for obtaining licenses. To further support researchers and compliance, and to raise awareness of the support available and roles and responsibilities, in the Summer Term export controls training sessions were rolled out and all UCL academic departments and impacted Professional Services teams notified.

Stakeholder engagement

36. To ensure a joined-up approach and reduce the potential for duplication, professional service and academic stakeholder engagement was a key part of the projects. As an example, a walk-through of the new due diligence process was arranged for researchers and departmental staff to demonstrate the new process and to gather feedback on usability. Additional UCL-wide engagement is planned for the next academic year and will include both academic and professional service areas.

New Compliance and Assurance Team within RIS

37. In addition, work commenced on the creation of a new dedicated Compliance and Assurance team within RIS with responsibility for operating the enhanced UCL due diligence framework and the enhanced processes to support compliance with export controls, the NSI Act and Access and Benefit Sharing regulations, as well as other key international risk areas.

intended that a review be undertaken by the Named Person to determine the further changes to be made to the UCL version.

43. The Research Misconduct Committee (initially called the Research Misconduct Allegations Screening Panel Committee) screening committee was set up in June

very successful in its first full year of operation. It is supported by an advisory

and Legal Services. Details of its membership can be found at:

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/governance-compliance/research-governance/research-misconduct-committee>.

44. The committee met five times in 2021-22 (including two training sessions) and members have received training on their role and the procedure and ensuring fair treatment, as well as a training session covering the wellbeing of participants. The committee also made some revisions to its Terms of Reference to include oversight of all stages of the procedure to include decisions made by the Named Person at the Initial Assessment stage and at the Formal Investigation stage. This would allow for increased governance of all stages of the process. The committee has also provided screening panels constituted from its membership to consider any allegations referred for screening in 2021-22 and they were able to complete their work well within the required timescale.

45. UCL is also keen to ensure that its scientific record is correct. While it is considered that UCL should publish information where it has requested retractions of publications following a misconduct verdict at the formal investigation stage, discussions continue on the feasibility of doing this.

Lessons learned

46. Discussions continue on how best to draw out lessons to be learned from investigations of research misconduct (regardless of the outcome) in order to provide additional support and guidance for researchers and to further embed a strong culture across the institution. It is intended that the Research Misconduct Committee draw out any lessons to be learned from its screening of allegations (regardless of outcome) at this earlier stage of the process and discussions continue on the best way to do this.

47. This earlier work and consideration is essential to ensure that relevant information is drawn out ndn0e u/Bot(p)6(p)-stage thdlier 3(scre)9(e)-3(rawnwere)-2(a)5(u)-3(t

papers in question to ensure the scientific record is correct by the journals concerned. Two further cases have been referred for formal investigation in 2021-22 and will complete in 2022-23.