University of Northampton annual statement on research integrity

Reporting period: 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	University of Northampton
1B. Type of organisation:	Higher education institution
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	27.10.26
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.northampton.ac.uk/research/research-support/research-integrity-ethics-and-governance/research-integrity/
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Professor Mark Rothery Email address: mark.rothery@northampton.ac.uk

F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Name: Dawn Hibbert Email address: dawn.hibbert@northampton.ac.uk

Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken

2A. Description of current systems and culture

Policies and Systems

- The University has robust, regularly updated policies covering research integrity, ethics, data management, privacy, and intellectual property.
- Researcher Code of Practice set clear standards and expectations for all researchers.
- The Research Ethics Committee (REC) oversees ethical compliance and provides updated guidance and training.

Communications and engagement

- Researchers at all career stages (including PGRs and ECRs) receive tailored support through the Graduate School, Research and Knowledge Exchange Support Teams, and faculty structures.
- Regular training is provided on research integrity, ethics, and research systems (e.g., PURE), with ongoing improvements to ensure staff and students have equal access.
- FAQs, templates, and guidance are available on the intranet; drop-in sessions and workshops are offered.

Culture, Development, and Leadership

- The University fosters a positive research culture through inclusive networks (e.g., ECR Network), mentoring schemes, and recognition of achievements.

- Leadership is provided by the Research and Knowledge Exchange (RAKE) committee, faculty committees, and the RAPP Forum, with strong engagement from senior staff.
- Feedback from surveys and committees informs continuous improvement, with a focus on wellbeing, inclusivity, and community.

Monitoring and Reporting

- Progress on integrity and culture is monitored through regular committee meetings, action plans, and annual reviews.
- Research activity and compliance are tracked and reported, with issues addressed promptly and transparently.

In summary:

The University ensures high standards of research integrity and a positive culture through clear policies, comprehensive support and training, inclusive leadership, and ongoing monitoring—supporting researchers at every stage and across all disciplines.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

Policies and Systems

Research Data Management Policy & Research Privacy Notice

- **What changed:** Both policies were updated to reflect new UKRI and legal requirements, and to address operational feedback (e.g., clearer guidance on consent and data sharing).
- **Why:** To ensure compliance with funder mandates and to support open research practices.
- **Outcome:** Researchers now have clearer, more accessible guidance, reducing risk and supporting best practice.
- **Next steps:** Ongoing review as requirements evolve, and further training for staff on implementation.

Intellectual Property and Commercialisation Policy

- **What changed:** The policy was revised to clarify procedures for spin-outs, staff involvement, and compliance with national best practice.
- **Why:** To align with sector standards and support innovation and commercialisation.

- **Outcome:** Staff have clearer guidance, and the university is better positioned for compliance and external audit.
- **Next steps:** Continued feedback and review, with further communication to staff.

Change for Student Ethical Amendments

- **What changed:** Supervisors must now sign off student amendments; previously students could submit independently.
- **Why:** To strengthen academic oversight and ensure amendments are ethically sound.
- **Outcome:** Better-quality amendment submissions and improved supervisory engagement.
- **Next steps:** Review impact after one cycle and determine if further process refinement is needed.

Research Ethics and Integrity

Guidance on the Use of AI in Research Degrees

- **What changed:** New guidance was introduced to address the ethical and integrity implications of AI in research degrees.
- **Why:** To respond to emerging risks and sector developments, and to ensure responsible use of AI in research.
- **Outcome:** Raised awareness of potential issues and provided a framework for responsible AI use.
- **Next steps:** Ongoing review as technology and sector guidance evolve.

Updated Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form Templates

- **What changed:** Revision of Gatekeeper and General PIS templates and Consent Forms.
- **Why:** To strengthen clarity, consistency, and compliance across all research involving participants.
- **Outcome:** More user-friendly, standardised documentation for researchers and participants.
- **Next steps:** Monitor user feedback and update templates as needed.

Creation of Research Ethics FAQ for staff and PGRs

- **What changed:** New FAQ resource and intranet page hosted by Research Support.
- **Why:** To improve researcher access to clear, concise ethical guidance.
- **Outcome:** Greater self-service support and reduction in routine enquiries.
- **Next steps:** Keep FAQs updated as new issues or policy changes arise.

Reviewer Template introduced

- **What changed:** A new template was designed to support internal ethical reviewers.
- **Why:** To improve consistency and quality of ethics reviews.
- **Outcome:** Clearer reviewer expectations and more structured feedback to applicants.
- **Next steps:** Gather feedback from reviewers and refine template for next cycle.

Engagement with DPO and Insurance Teams

- **What changed:** Collaborative work with Data Protection Office and Insurance team to align ethical guidance with compliance frameworks.
- **Why:** To ensure that research ethics processes reflect the latest data management and insurance requirements.
- **Outcome:** Stronger alignment between ethics review processes and institutional risk management.
- **Next steps:** Ongoing consultation as regulations and institutional needs evolve.

Changes to Committee Membership and Support Structures

- **What changed:** Recruitment of new REC members, including ECR and PGR representation; creation of an ethics team mailbox.
- **Why:** To broaden committee expertise and improve communication channels.
- **Outcome:** More diverse committee membership and clearer routes for participant concerns and researcher enquiries.
- **Next steps:** Introduce mailbox formally and evaluate its impact on handling queries and complaints.

Training and Mentoring for Researcher Development

Expanded research integrity, and ethics training provision

- **What changed:** Regular training sessions on PURE, research integrity, and ethics were provided, with a focus on expanding access to staff (including visiting professors and supervisors). There was also a review of the cost and access to staff training platforms.
- **Why:** To address gaps in staff knowledge, reduce errors in ethics applications, and ensure all those involved in research are equipped to uphold integrity standards.
- **Outcome:** Increased awareness and competence among staff, and improved quality of ethics applications in some faculties.

- **Next steps:** Review and potentially expand subscriptions for staff ethics training; promote mandatory training for all research supervisors; develop targeted training for new and early-career researchers.

Early Career Researcher (ECR) Network

- **What changed:** The ECR Network was formally launched, with a steering group established and regular meetings scheduled. The network is supported by a dedicated budget and is developing terms of reference and deliverables.
- **Why:** To provide peer support, mentoring, and professional development for ECRs, addressing feedback about isolation and lack of support.
- **Outcome:** Increased engagement and support for ECRs; new opportunities for networking and skill development.
- **Next steps:** Launch ECR events, evaluate impact, and expand mentoring opportunities.

Mentoring and Peer Support

- **What changed:** Expansion of mentoring schemes, including the extension of the RAPP mentoring scheme to all staff and the integration of ECRs into existing networks.
- **Why:** To support career development and share best practice, and to address feedback from staff and surveys.
- **Outcome:** Broader access to mentoring and increased cross-faculty collaboration.
- **Next steps:** Further consultation and formalisation of mentoring policies.

Ethics Training and Researcher Support

- **What changed:** Further training sessions delivered across the year for supervisors, PGRs, ECRs, and faculty groups. Ethics drop-ins expanded, with plans to pilot staff-specific sessions.
- **Why:** To increase researcher competence and confidence in ethical practice.
- **Outcome:** Higher engagement, improved quality of submissions, and accessible ongoing support.
- **Next steps:** Launch Staff Ethics Drop-In pilot in 2025–26 and evaluate participation.

Ongoing and Planned Developments

- **Workload and Support:** Ongoing review of workload models and research targets to ensure fair allocation and support for research activities, with feedback loops to address concerns.
- **Wellbeing and Inclusion:** Continued provision of writing retreats, social events, and support for remote researchers to mitigate isolation and stress.

- **UON Research Ethics Code and Procedures:** Finalise the review through RAKE , followed by communication and implementation across faculties.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

Reflections on Progress

Below are 2023-24 actions:

Action	Completed
A review of the Research Misconduct Policy in line with the recommendations from the Concordat and update accordingly.	A review has been undertaken and policy has been revised. Currently working with HR to ensure the processes of the main misconduct policy align.
A review of the Research Integrity Policy in line with the recommendations from the Concordat and update accordingly. It will be made available on a dedicated Research Integrity webpage.	Yes, overhauled and now titled the Researcher Code of Practice.
To review and deliver a range of research and knowledge exchange training development for PGRs and staff. Including: ECRs, the Graduate School also provide this training for all staff. Both FHES and FAST to have implemented mentoring programmes for ECRs and the research centres also deploy training programmes around ethics and integrity.	Yes, the research and knowledge exchange provides an annual training programme, which can be adapted for specific needs of Faculties and centres.
To update the University staff intranet Research and knowledge Exchange pages to support the training and development of University Staff.	Yes, this has started and is still an ongoing activity. Ethics FAQs for staff and PGRs is now available.
To develop a gender equality plan, a dedicated webpage and a working group to further develop this.	A draft version has been submitted to the university leadership team. A second draft be submitted this academic year.

To review and develop the training and supporting documentation to support staff undertaking ethics.	Still ongoing – the university has signed up to UKRIO's ethic training package and continuing to develop training and support.

Plans for Future Developments (2025–26 and Beyond)

Action	**Date to be achieved by**
A review of the Research Misconduct Policy in line with the recommendations from the Concordat and update accordingly.	**31.03.2026**
Developing a provision of training for PGRs and supervisors in how to do Data Protection Impact Assessments, delivered by the DPO team via induction.	**31.07.2026**
A review by RDC of the "Guidance on the use of AI in Research Degrees" document, to take account of the fast-changing nature of the field.	**31.07.2026**
Delivery of training including (PGR 'Getting Started with Research Ethics', Supervisor Development 'Ethics' and ECR 'General Ethics'.	**31.07.2026**
Updated UON Ethics Code and Procedures (version 5.0)	**31.03.2026**
Using the UKRIO self assessment tool undertake an initial review to identify areas of our research practices, systems and policies, researcher development and monitoring that may need to be revised in order to adhere to the requirements and recommendations of The Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2025).	**31.07.2027**

In summary:

UON has made significant progress in strengthening research integrity through policy, training, and governance improvements. The impact is seen in increased awareness, more robust processes, and a clearer framework for compliance. However, resource constraints and the pace of technological change have slowed some initiatives. The coming year will focus on completing key policy reviews, expanding training and mentoring, and embedding sustainability and equality into research integrity practice.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

Policies and Procedures

- The University has a **Research Misconduct Procedure** that outlines how allegations are handled, including investigation, resolution, and reporting.
- There are supporting policies such as the **Whistle-blowing Policy** and **Bullying/Harassment Policy**, which provide additional routes for raising concerns.
- The process includes the appointment of a confidential liaison or third party for individuals wishing to report concerns discreetly.
- Policies are reviewed periodically, typically annually or in response to sector changes.

Creating a Supportive Reporting Environment

- The **Researcher Code of Practice** and training sessions embed expectations for integrity and encourage open reporting of concerns.
- Reporting systems are signposted on the University website and intranet, with clear guidance on how to raise issues.
- Informal and formal routes are available, including direct contact with the Research Support Team, Graduate School, or confidential liaison.
- Mentoring, training, and committee engagement (e.g., RAKE, REC) help foster a culture where staff and students feel safe to report misconduct.

Lessons Learned and Continuous Improvement

- Investigations into allegations are anonymised and reviewed to identify opportunities for improvement.
- Key lessons have included the need for clearer guidance on reporting, improved communication about available support, and streamlined investigation procedures.
- Where processes have worked well, this has been attributed to timely action, transparency, and support for all parties involved.
- Outcomes and lessons learned are shared with relevant committees and used to inform future policy updates.

- Any use of GenAI tools in academic work must be undertaken in a manner which is ethical and transparent.

3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken

Type of allegation	**Number of allegations reported to the organisation**	**Number of formal investigations**	**Number upheld in part after formal investigation**	**Number upheld in full after formal investigation**
Fabrication	*106*	*106*	*No Data*	*76*
Falsification	*73*	*71*	*No Data*	*71*
Plagiarism	*256*	*249*	*No Data*	*189*
Collusion	*72*	*72*	*No Data*	*71*
Contract Cheating	*378*	*378*	*No Data*	*346*
AI	*56*	*56*	*No Data*	*53*
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)	*324*	*0*	*No Data*	*0*
Other Exam Misconduct/Impersonation	*25*	*25*	*No Data*	*11*
Total:	**1290**	**957**	**N/D**	**817**