Annual Statement on Research Integrity

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	Sheffield Hallam University
1B. Type of organisation: **higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)**	Higher Education Institution
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/excellence/ethics-and-integrity/integrity-concordat
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Professor Mayur Ranchordas
	Email address: ethicssupport@shu.ac.uk
1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Name: Dr Keith Fildes
	Email address: ethicssupport@shu.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

Please describe how the organisation maintains high standards of research integrity and promotes positive research culture. It should include information on the support provided to researchers to understand standards, values and behaviours, such as training, support and guidance for researchers at different career stages/ disciplines. You may find it helpful to consider the following broad headings:

- Policies and systems
- Communications and engagement
- Culture, development and leadership
- Monitoring and reporting

Policies and systems

Sheffield Hallam's primary ethics and integrity policies are located here: https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/excellence/ethics-and-integrity/policies

These are:
- Research Ethics Policy and Procedures
- Principles of Integrity in Research and Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct
- Policy and Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct Against Doctoral and Masters Research Students

Policies are reviewed by the University's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) at least every two years. This was last undertaken in September 2023.

The misconduct process is managed by the University Head of Research Ethics, supported by appropriate members of the UREC, Research & Innovation Services and HR.

Accusations of misconduct are generally submitted to a mailbox (ethicssupport@shu.ac.uk) and this can be done so anonymously. Staff and students are also encouraged to raise any concerns relating to research integrity with their line-manger/supervisor, or any other appropriate colleague or representative, in line with the University's Whistleblowing Policy:

https://www.shu.ac.uk/-/media/home/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice/whistleblowing-policy.pdf.

All University-approved Participant Information Sheets advertise this same email mailbox (and a postal equivalent) for any research participants who have "concerns with how the research was undertaken or how (they) were treated" to contact.

Communications and engagement

At the start of each academic year, two bulk emails are sent.

The first goes to all academic staff (c.1600 individuals), outlining their research integrity responsibilities. The second goes to all Heads of School and research leads (c.35 individuals), reminding them of their additional responsibilities as research leaders.

The most recent communications can be found at the bottom of this page: https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/excellence/ethics-and-integrity/integrity-concordat

A comprehensive programme of training and development for ethics and integrity is in place. This consists of typically one event per month during semesters. Recordings are made of events and these are collated as a permanent on-demand resource. The 2023-24 programme is detailed here:

- October - Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) for researchers
- October - Training for Department Ethics Lead
- October - Training for Ethics Reviewers
- November - Research Ethics for New PhD students
- December - How to Get your Ethics Approved First Time
- January - Authorship Guidance for Researcher - What Contribution Merits Authorship?
- February - Training for Ethics Reviewers
- March - How to Complete Risk Assessments
- April - IRAS Ethics Training
- May - Authorship Guidance for Researcher - What Contribution Merits Authorship?
- June - Category Approval - Do your Students Collect Data as Part of your Module?

Additional bespoke sessions are also run within Colleges, Institutes and Schools, and with UG and PGT student cohorts. Taught UG and PGT programmes run research integrity and research ethics training as part of the project (dissertation) modules.

Culture, development and leadership

The University has a proud tradition of strong research leadership, which expects the highest levels of integrity from all its community, but is supportive and nurturing in its approach to ensuring this.

Research integrity at Sheffield Hallam is upheld by trust, professionalism, peer-regulation, and the existence of a supportive culture that is conscientious, reflective and where genuine mistakes are permitted if they are admitted and learnt from.

This culture of integrity is underpinned by the values that Sheffield Hallam researchers share. They are individually and collectively responsible and accountable for their research and its consequences. They demonstrate honesty, openness and fairness in undertaking and reporting research. They are aware of expectations regarding practice, and have the courage to stand up for principles and act when integrity is absent or in question. They have respect for research participants, other professionals and the public, and engage with collaborators, colleagues and stakeholders. Above all, they recognise and uphold their position as stewards of their disciplines and role models for the next generation of researchers.

Good practice in research integrity is embedded through staff and doctoral development training programmes; as well as through research leadership, line management and doctoral supervision.

Monitoring and reporting

The PhD and Staff ethics application approval figures for 23/24 are:

Year	No Human	Low Risk	All Other	IRAS	Given Elsewhere	Total
23/24	88	226	166	7	20	507
22/23	111	200	165	13	13	502
21/22	90	219	197	11	17	534
20/21	67	233	186	7	7	500
19/20	64	215	171	10	9	469
18/19	64	214	168	17	11	474
17/18	68	230	125	18	13	454

While not centrally recorded, the number of UG and PGT applications per year are in the thousands (there are c.8000 Y3 projects and c.10,000 from PGTs; category approvals do enable the grouping/collective review of many of these).

Ethics and integrity training is mandatory for all first-year doctoral researchers. Approximately 100 doctoral students completed the relevant online module as part

of their induction programme. In the most recent doctoral experience survey (PRES), 93% of PGRs agreed their understanding of research integrity had developed during their doctoral training (only 2% disagreed, 5% gave neutral responses).

Training attendance at other events is monitored through Eventbrite. 409 researchers (staff and doctoral) attended training during 23/24 (full breakdown below).

Event	Attendees
Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) for researchers	43
Training for Department Ethics Lead	17
Training for Ethics Reviewers	25
Research Ethics for New PhD students	c.100
How to Get your Ethics Approved First Time	52
Authorship Guidance for Researcher - What Contribution Merits Authorship?	42
Training for Ethics Reviewers	40
How to Complete Risk Assessments	24
IRAS Ethics Training	35
Authorship Guidance for Researcher - What Contribution Merits Authorship?	21
Category Approval - Do your Students Collect Data as Part of your Module?	10

There is a standing report to the University's quarterly Research and Innovation Committee on research ethics and integrity. Misconduct cases are monitored by the Chair of UREC and Research & Innovation Services.

Monitoring of open research is undertaken systematically. The University's REF open access compliance levels are considerably above average; 70-80% (varying quarterly figures) of in-scope outputs were compliant (85-95% after exemptions), compared with the UK average of 61% (80% after exemptions; Research England report)

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

Please provide an update on any changes made during the period, such as new initiatives, training, developments, also ongoing changes that are still underway. Drawing on Commitment 3 of the Concordat, please note any new or revised policies, practices and procedures to support researchers; training on research ethics and research integrity; training and mentoring opportunities to support the development of researchers' skills throughout their careers.

The year 2023/24 presented significant challenges for the University, stemming from external funding constraints (notably below-cost home student fees) and longstanding internal issues (such as capital investment commitments). These pressures necessitated a reduction of nearly a quarter of the workforce, including more than 10% of ethics reviewers and a substantial proportion of ethics administrators, notably two of the three ethics 'overseers.' Plans to procure a new online ethics application management system were also deprioritized, with its implementation likely postponed indefinitely.

These developments have led to increasing delays in ethics review processes. More concerning, however, is the broader impact on staff workload. In an environment marked by service gaps and reduced scrutiny, the University Research Ethics Committee is deeply concerned about the growing potential for harm arising from research and innovation activities, both within the University and externally. Upholding high standards of research integrity in the face of staff cuts and resource constraints is challenging, but it is essential to protect the quality, credibility, and societal impact of research. Thus, the UREC have implemented several strategies to help circumvent any issues:

1) Empower and Train Researchers. We have delivered numerous ethics and integrity training sessions and have made this accessible online for all researchers
2) Prioritised Critical Functions. We have allocated resources to ensure robust ethics reviews for high-risk or high-impact research areas, while adopting lighter processes for low risk studies
3) Key Role Retention. Even with staff cuts we have prioritised retaining or reallocating resources for critical ethics administration roles.

An impact of the loss of academic staff is that the number of UG students per supervisor during research project and dissertation modules has increased dramatically, with some staff:student ratios being as high as 1:60. In many areas of the university this is impacting the student experience and limiting the type of research activities that can be undertaken.

In December 2023 the UREC launched a new policy note on the topic of AI and Research Integrity. This is intended to address some pressing concerns, particularly regarding uploading datasets to AI systems, as well as other topics such as acknowledgement of use. The policy note can be found here: https://www.shu.ac.uk/-/media/home/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice/ai--research-integrity-v1.pdf

New guidance was also produced on Interviews on Sensitive Topics and Ethics Guidance on Phlebotomy for Research.

During 22/23 a new Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) process had been established. During 23/24 this was better integrated into the ethics review system, including enabling the Data Protection team to more easily review and report on submitted DPIAs.

Large effort was expended during the year process mapping all ethics processes and considering potential improvements, in anticipation of a procuring a new ethics system, as part of the replacement of the University's main CRIS. The intention was for the new ethics software to also be used with UG and PGT students, as currently taught students use paper-based ethics documents.

The University formally joined the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN) in summer 2024.

Sheffield Hallam was the first university in England to introduce a rights retention policy for publications. This was introduced for papers on 15 October 2022 and widened to include book chapters on 1 January 2024. 88% of eligible publications are now made available open access immediately (without embargo), with half of those being via the rights retention route and the other half via gold open access.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

This should include a reflection on the previous year's activity including a review of progress and impact of initiatives if known relating to activities referenced in the previous year's statement. Note any issues that have hindered progress, e.g. resourcing or other issues.

Until higher education receives a new funding settlement and/or the University can offload its most incapacitating property investment, it is difficult to see anything occurring in this space beyond 'survival mode'. All efforts are being turned to maintaining the basic core services (primarily undertaking ethical reviews) with as little disruption and delay as possible. We will continue to deliver training and development to the research community using online and face-to-face sessions.

2D. Case study on good practice (optional)

Please describe an anonymised brief, exemplar case study that can be shared as good practice with other organisations. A wide range of case studies are valuable, including small, local implementations. Case studies may also include the impact of implementations or lessons learned.

All the University's ethics and integrity training from 2023/24 was captured and has been made available as an on-demand resource. This means staff resource is not required to deliver these again next year, and can instead be focused on other priorities within their ethics and integrity remit.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

Please provide:
- a brief summary of relevant organisation policies/ processes (e.g. research misconduct procedure, whistle-blowing policy, bullying/harassment policy; appointment of a third party to act as confidential liaison for persons wishing to raise concerns) and brief information on the periodic review of research misconduct processes (e.g. date of last review; any major changes during the period under review; date when processes will next be reviewed).
- information on how the organisation creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct (e.g. code of practice for research, whistle-blowing, research misconduct procedure, informal liaison process, website signposting for reporting systems, training, mentoring, reflection and evaluation of policies, practices and procedures).
- anonymised key lessons learned from any investigations into allegations of misconduct which either identified opportunities for improvements in the organisation's investigation procedure and/or related policies / processes/ culture or which showed that they were working well.

Misconduct Policies:
- Principles of Integrity in Research and Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct
- Policy and Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct Against Doctoral and Masters Research Students

https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/excellence/ethics-and-integrity/policies

The policies were reviewed in September 2023. Minor changes were made. In the ethics policy this related to improving advice regarding intersections with HMPPS procedures and clarification about what constitutes an 'approved' reviewer. In the misconduct policies these were based on providing more assurance (around process, presumption of innocence etc.) and better support to those accused of research misconduct. These are next scheduled for review in September 2025, although external developments may necessitate earlier consideration.

Whistleblowing Policy:
https://www.shu.ac.uk/-/media/home/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice/whistleblowing-policy.pdf

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

Please complete the table on the number of **formal investigations completed during the period under review** (including investigations which completed during this period but started in a previous academic year). Information from ongoing investigations should not be submitted.

An organisation's procedure may include an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. These allegations should be included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column.

Type of allegation	Number of allegations			
	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	0	0	0	0
Falsification	0	0	0	0
Plagiarism	1	0	0	0
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	2	1	0	0
Misrepresentation (e.g. 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)	0	0	0	0
*Other**	0	0	0	0
Total:	**3**	**1**	**0**	**0**

*If you listed any allegations under the 'Other' category, please give a brief, high-level summary of their type here. Do not give any identifying or confidential information when responding.

The levels of verified research misconduct are low. In line with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity training on research ethics and integrity is promoted and the research misconduct policy is publicised widely emphasising that failure to report misconduct constitutes a breach of university policy. For research misconduct policies to work, researchers within an institution are required to take collective responsibility and police each other, thereby protecting the reputation of the University and ensuring that we have the highest standards of research integrity. The reporting of allegations, since training has become widespread for staff and mandatory for doctoral students, has evidenced that this is happening. We also have a research misconduct policy for doctoral students here.

Three research misconduct allegations were made this academic year which were reviewed by the Head of University Research Ethics. Only one of these allegations was formally investigated; the other two were dismissed and did not proceed to formal investigation.

A key learning point from the research misconduct case that was formally investigated was that poor communication from a research team and a failure to follow institutional process regarding research integrity resulted in the allegation. The research team were informed of the policies and were referred to our ethics integrity and training programmes

This compares with one research misconduct investigation in 2022-23, one research misconduct investigation in 2022-22, three research misconduct investigations in 2020-2021, three in 2019-20, two in 2018-19, and zero in 2017-18.

Research staff regularly seek advice suggesting that the system is seen to be accessible, and that research integrity has a high priority with our researchers. Lessons learned from misconduct cases are discussed by the University Research Ethics Committee and published on the University's external ethics website.