UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA

Concordat to Support Research Integrity 20/21 Annual Statement

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1. Introduction

The University is committed to supporting the highest standards of research integrity as outlined in the 2019 [Concordat to Support Research Integrity.](#) The five commitments are outlined below:

- Commitment 1: To uphold the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.
- Commitment 2: To ensure that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal, and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.
- Commitment 3: To support a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers.
- Commitment 4: To use transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.
- Commitment 5: To work together to strengthen the integrity of research and to review progress regularly and openly.

2. Policy Context

The University's *Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC)* is responsible for ensuring adherence to these commitments. Day to day management is undertaken by the *Research Ethics Panel (REP)*, a sub-committee of RKEC. A number of policies are in place to support researchers and to uphold integrity, and these are available on the University's public [webpages](#) or staff intranet (Staff Hub):

- Code of Practice for Research
- Postgraduate Code of Practice for Research
- Research Ethics Policy
- Research Risk Assessment Guidance
- Open Access Policy
- Lone Worker Procedures for Research
- Intellectual Property Policy

The *Research and Knowledge Exchange Office* are responsible for reviewing and updating these codes and policies on behalf of RKEC. The *Research Skills Development Programme* for PgRs and staff features sessions on Ethical Research and Ethical Approval as well as an Induction and Introduction to Research.

These policies also interact and make reference to, relevant corporate polices, including the *Corporate Public Interest Disclosure Policy* (outlining support for whistle-blowers) and the *University's Disciplinary Policy*. These are available on the University's staff hub pages.

Research integrity is therefore discussed at the corporate and policy level as well as at local levels via our Research Centres and Networks. This ensures an open and honest culture of research integrity and disclosure.

3. Research Governance

Research governance is enabled through:

- The REP is Chaired by the Director of the *Institute of the Arts*, and comprises of representatives from each academic area as well as PgRs. There are two external panel members.

- The RKEC is chaired by a Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) and comprises of Centre Directors, Institute Directors, and representatives from each Research Centre and Network, and the *Research & Knowledge Exchange and Graduate School offices*. This enables effective co-ordination of research activity and integrity. RKEC subsequently reports to *Academic Board* and relevant governance documents are reviewed by both REP and RKEC before being taken to Academic Board for final approval and adoption.
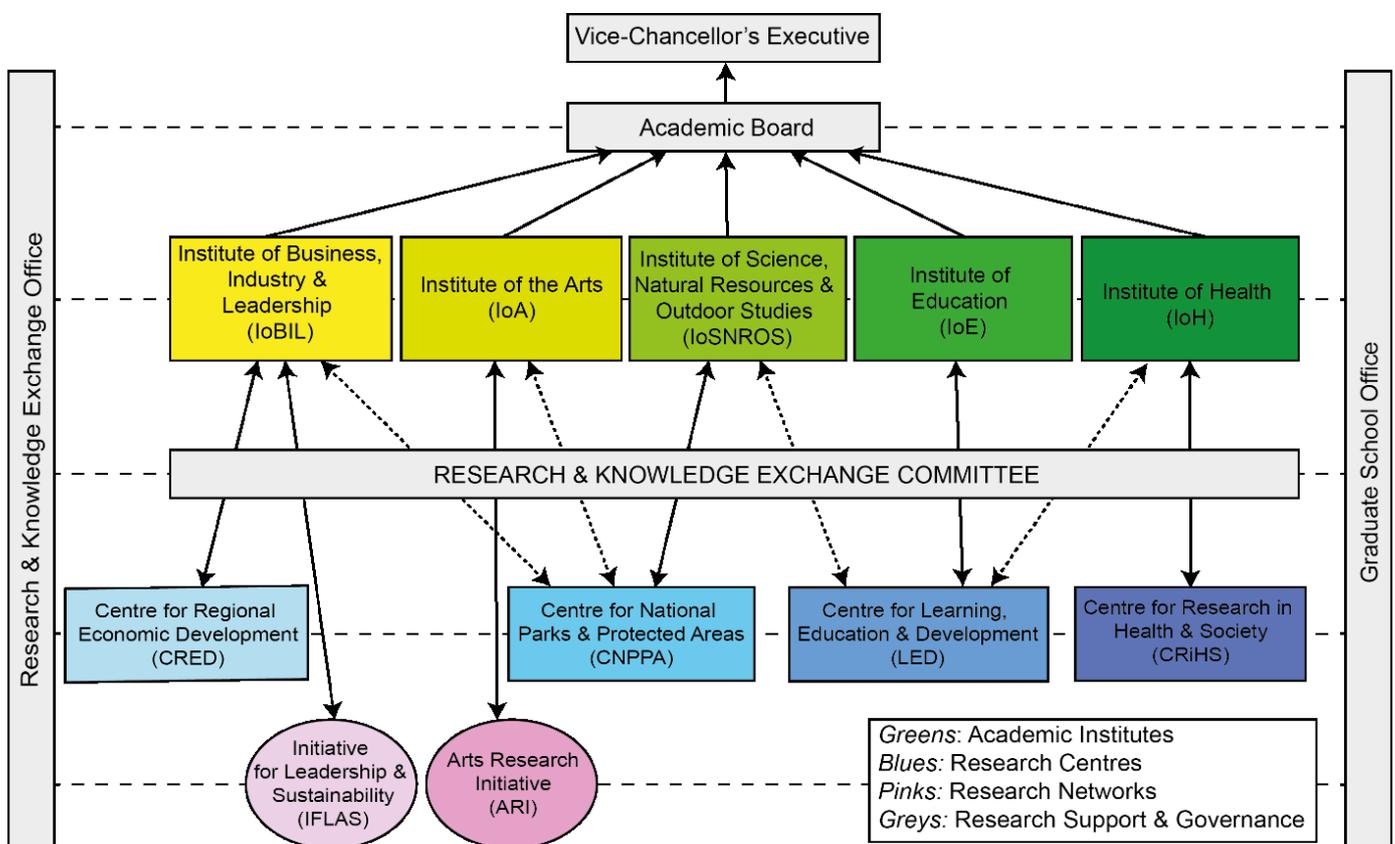

Figure 1: Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee leads research strategy and coordinates research activity through links between Research Centres/Networks and Academic Institutes. Arrows identify directions of research reporting and management (solid lines represent primary research connections, dotted are secondary) between Centres and Institutes. Dashed lines show connections between Research Support and Centres/Institutes.

Ethical approval is required for all research carried out by staff and students at the University and it is the responsibility of the research supervisor (at both undergraduate & postgraduate level) to ensure that research complies with University ethical guidelines. The REP is primarily concerned with staff and postgraduate student research, and is tasked with ensuring that the dignity, rights and welfare of research participants are protected.

The REP will scrutinise proposals for research involving human participants (that are not otherwise subject to Health Research Authority [HRA] ethical approval) and where appropriate, non-human animals as identified. Proposals requiring NHS ethical clearance are expected to follow the most recent guidance provided by the NHS Research Ethics Service (NRES).

The *Director of Applied Research and KE* is typically the named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity and ensure that this information is kept up to date and publicly available on the institution's website. Across 20/21, this was a current vacancy at UoC (Dr Karen Shaw is joining the University on the 18th October 2021) and the named senior member of staff has been *Dr Colette Conroy* as Chair of REP, with the *Interim Head of Research* listed as first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity. Contact details for both these individuals are publicly available on our website.

The University's research environment and culture for integrity is reinforced by our four [Research Centres and Networks](#) (see Figure 1). These Centres and Networks are the engine of research activity and integrity, sustaining an inclusive, collaborative research culture, and enabling adherence to the concordat. Centre Directors and Theme Leads provide additional support to staff on matters of research integrity.

4. Developments across 20/21

Across the academic year 20/21, the following activities were undertaken to ensure continued support of research integrity and implementation of the concordat:

- The newly formed '*Research and Knowledge Exchange Office'* completed its first year of operation and has improved coordination for integrity across the full spectrum of RKE activity.
- The *Research Ethics Policy* and *Code of Practice for Research* were reviewed and updated in September 2020.
- The *Intellectual Property Policy* has undergone an extensive re-write and is expected to be approved by *Academic Board* early in the 21/22 academic year.
- The *Research and Knowledge Exchange Office and Graduate School* has worked with the *Information Governance Officer* to update our *Record of Processing Activities* for GDPR purposes.
- PgRs have continued to access training on research integrity via the *Research Skills Development Programme*, which was delivered entirely online across 20/21.
- The '*Research and Knowledge Exchange Toolkit'* was launched across 20/21 which provides a central resource for supporting documentation, policies, forms etc.
- A project has commenced to create a digital system for administering of ethics applications and approvals, expected to be implemented across 21/22.
- The University retained the *HR Excellence in Research Award* in October 2020, at the four year review stage, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to research integrity.

As required by the concordat, we can confirm there was 0 formal investigations of research misconduct undertaken across 20/21.