

ANNUAL STATEMENT ON RESEARCH INTEGRITY 2023-2024

MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY

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| Name of organisation: | Middlesex University |
| Type of organisation: | Higher education institution |
| Date statement approved by governing body: | (DD/MM/YY) |
| Web address of organisation's research integrity page: | Currently located here https://www.mdx.ac.uk/our-research/research-integrity In 2024 this will appear here https://www.mdx.ac.uk/research/research-culture/ |
| Name and role of senior member of staff to oversee research integrity | Pro Vice Chancellor, Research and Knowledge Exchange |
| Email Address | a.boddington@mdx.ac.uk |
| Name and role of member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity: | Director of Research |
| Email address: | N.Raina@mdx.ac.uk |

Description of current systems and culture

The University was an early adopter of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and continues to adhere to the principles and practices set out in that document. All staff and students engaged in research are required to conduct their activities in line with the Concordat, including any visitors who make use of, or are supported by, the University and/or its facilities. Staff are reminded of obligations in respect of research integrity at induction and on subsequent occasions. Concordat awareness, responsibilities and principles of research shall be delivered as a series of regular workshops by RKEO in 2024/25.

Policies and systems

The University's research and ethics policies (<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/policies>) are overseen by a university Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) which reports to the University's Academic Board, which in turn reports to Governors. Policy development and enhancement is the result of periodic review, with regular field reviews of policies and their interaction. Faculties have their own RKECs which report to the university RKEC, and these are a key mechanism for distilling themes in the operation of policies related to research integrity and ethics and bringing them to attention.

The University's Registry managed processes for the reporting and investigation of allegations of research misconduct through a clear and well publicised Policy and Procedures for Academic Integrity and Misconduct, which presumes and inculcates the positive virtue of academic integrity as a valued characteristic of an academic community rather than merely outlining the

procedures and penalties for misconduct. Our approach to misconduct derives from a notion of ‘positive integrity’ – that is, the celebration and presentation of good practice as an essential characteristic of good academic practice. Investigations are coordinated by a Deputy Academic Registrar.

Ethics committees at faculty and subject level report to a University Ethics Committee, which in turn reports to RKEC and Academic Board. During 2023/24 the University appointed a new Chair of the Ethics Committee. Our ethics processes have been through a substantial period of review – both in relation to governance and operation. The former has been part of a baseline review of governance in relation to research and knowledge exchange; the former the result of changes to the operation of ethical review via a new integrated ethics system associated with a new information system. A university Ethics Framework (<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/policies/university-ethics-framework>) sets out guiding principles, expectations and the machinery for the operation of policy. The University has an ethics Chair who oversees this aspect of Research Integrity. The university undertakes ethics training for all new staff when they join, training for PGRs on ethics is part of our Researcher Development programme. From October 2024 training in research ethics for all colleagues undertaking research, which is part of our RKEO based training programme shall also be launched. This is to provide robust underpinning on key debates within research ethics which include but aren’t limited to notions of equitability, inclusion and decolonised approaches to research.

Communications and engagement

Communications and engagement are essential to ensuring research integrity at the university. A regularly updated intranet site holds periodically reviewed and updated policy documents as well as guidance, procedure guides and an Academic Staff Handbook. Expectations with regard to research integrity and the ethical conduct of research are communicated on appointment through an induction process (now under revision to improve further this element), through mentoring, training, and through engagement with faculty and university committees. Student engagement with research integrity is achieved through detailed student-specific Unihub pages on academic integrity (<https://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/study/academic-integrity>), briefings on the university’s Regulations and Policies, supervision guidance, preparatory content in taught elements of research degrees as well as in taught research degrees. Undergraduate and graduate student tutorial and pastoral support provide a further opportunity to communicate the importance of these subjects. Further, university microsites (such as a popular Yammer channel on Research, Engagement and Impact, and the MdxMinds blog (<https://mdxminds.com>) periodically touch on issues related to research integrity in their discussion of research practice. In 2024 we shall also launch a regular newsletter from RKEO which lists current funding opportunities, training programme sessions, and a showcase of new external funding successes for research and knowledge exchange.

Culture, development and leadership

The development of a culture of research integrity is led by a University Executive Team which places integrity at the heart of research practice. A PVC (Research and Knowledge Exchange) [currently pending a permanent appointment] leads assurance and governance through the

mechanisms described above – for example, the PVC chairs the RKEC, and sets the framework for research governance in the university. Development of the framework for research integrity is led through RKEC, through the ethics committees and via a periodic review of all policies conducted by Academic Board. Reports on research, including research integrity, matters are made to Governors periodically. The PVC is supported and assisted in ensuring fit-for-purpose governance of research integrity by faculty Deputy Deans (Research & KE) [x4], and by the Director of Research. Ethics committee chairs receive training, and are involved at faculty and university level in the development of the landscape of research integrity. Our research culture is enhanced through a rich and diverse range of activities including lectures, workshops, training sessions, and access to multitude of regularly updates resources available on the intranet. In 2024 these will be complimented by a series of research podcasts, newsletters from the RKE Office, inaugural lectures by professors and associate professors, as well as lead investigators of externally funded projects.

Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring and reporting of student misconduct is undertaken by Registry, with a dedicated Academic Misconduct Team of considerable experience leading both the ‘positive integrity’ messaging discussed above and the enforcement action necessary to ensure compliance with the dictates of policy. Annual reporting on research integrity at university level is coordinated and routed through RKEC and onwards to Academic Board.

Changes and developments during the period under review

During the year under review the following developments were worthy of note:

1. The PVC (Research & KE) undertook a thorough governance review of research, including a review of the terms of reference of the ethics committees, their role and operations as well as a refresh of our key policies and statements listed below:

- a. Academic Policy Statement APS27 – Research Data Management
- b. Research Ethics Policy Framework 2023
- c. Academic Policy Statement 4 – Research and Knowledge Exchange
- d. Academic Policy Statement APS26 – Open Access Publications
- e. Middlesex University Definition of Research Statement
- f. Middlesex University Ethics Policy Statement 2023/24

2. The university began to enshrine some of these changes and developed our new current research information system (CRIS), including a thoroughgoing review of research integrity workflow models for ethical approval, the management of ethics cases and information/reporting flows to faculties and RKEC. The Ethics element of the CRIS system is in an advanced stage of development as a software tool.

3. The Director of Postgraduate Students continued to focus work on student support for research integrity through a review of induction and other support courses, through a Research

Student Summer Conference, and through active discussions on matters related to research integrity with supervisors.

Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

Progress has been considerable, not least because the governance review discussed has brought to light ways in which the design of mechanisms to assist with the maintenance of academic and research integrity can be improved. A review of policies with relevant updates, the capturing of progress within the CRIS modules, of which the repository module is now live and public facing. Cross referenced underpinning work on data systems and open access, as UKRI brings out new updated policies, has made progress. Reasoned delays in CRIS system development (notably in the postgraduate student management module); and by the changes to the academic programmes for teaching and research, and a staffing restructure has hindered some progress. Future developments include a large portfolio of training to be rolled out from October 2024 for research and knowledge exchange with the intent of providing up to date, easy to access, regular training sessions to all members of staff and students. The university also plans to activate a roadmap of research that enables a thriving culture of research to be enabled and supported through engagement and dissemination activities for internal and external audiences. We welcome the launch of the research on our new external website <https://www.mdx.ac.uk/research/> which showcases the depth and breadth of excellence in our research.

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

The policy architecture of the university is set out on the university website (<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/our-research/research-integrity>) and relevant policies include the thirteen documents mentioned therein.

The University continues to maintain and deliver the Research Development Programme a comprehensive training package for research students. For postgraduate researchers, research ethics and Integrity are covered both in the research induction course (“Kickstarting series”) and in regular researcher development sessions focussing on ‘Planning and organising research’, ‘Being a resilient researcher’, ‘Ethics’, ‘University processes and research’, ‘Working across Boundaries: Multi and Trans Disciplinary research’, and ‘Research integrity in practice’. Postgraduate researchers are also invited to use the app Dilemma, which gamifies engagement with research ethics issues. At both University and Departmental level staff and students are trained in the use of MORE (Middlesex Online Research Ethics) form, through which ethical approval for research projects is submitted for approvals of the ethics boards. In 2022-23 new postgraduate research regulations have been introduced that require postgraduate researchers to submit a MORE application in their first review panel and update it as they progress through their research project. This will transition into the CRIS system in 2024/25.

Courses for academic staff covering research integrity include ‘Managing externally funded research’, ‘Viva Chair Training’, ‘Viva panel training’, ‘Research supervisor training’ and ‘The role of the supervisor’

These courses, the arrangements discussed above relating to communication and engagement, and the informal mechanisms for discussing good practice (such as the microsites) all foster an openness toward matters of good conduct and misconduct. Genuine errors are accepted; self-critical practise is celebrated and supported.

Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken 2023/24

| 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 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Plagiarism | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 |

NR/July2024