

## Research Integrity Annual Statement 2020.

### 1. Introduction.

This report outlines the work across the academic year 1 August 2019 – 31 July 2020.

#### 1.1 *The Concordat and the School.*

The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London is fully committed to the spirit and substance of the *Concordat for Research Integrity*. The concordat is designed to help institutions continue to further embed research integrity into their activities. The concordat is formed of 5 commitments to which we commit and in response to feedback have made an additional commitment. In line with the concordat, Central commits to:

1. maintain the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research, which means maintaining honesty and rigour, transparent and open communication, and care and respect;
2. ensure research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards;
3. 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. This includes clear policies and procedures, training and development opportunities for researchers, management systems to ensure policies are implemented, awareness of appropriate behaviour of researchers, and systems to intervene at an early stage where researchers require support;
4. use transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise;
5. work together to strengthen the integrity of research and to review progress regularly and openly;
6. foster an environment of robust debate and engagement with research ethics and integrity.

#### 1.2 *School's policy and procedures in relation to research integrity.*

The School's commitment to the maintenance and enhancement of the *Concordat's* intentions can be traced through its policies and procedures, principally through key policies:

1. The Research Conduct and Ethics Handbook.
2. The School's Strategic Plan.
3. Ethical Policy Framework.
4. Whistleblowing Policy.
5. Standards of Professional Conduct Policy.
6. Academic Strategy.
7. Handbook for Supervisors of Research Degrees Candidates.
8. Research Degrees Programme Code of Practice and Specification.

9. Research Handbook.
10. Research Degrees course documentation.

### *1.3 Activities.*

The commitments to the enhancement of research integrity are not only present in policy, but are also embedded through the cycles of training, development and enhancement, including:

1. Staff training and development.
2. Research student training and development.
3. The Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee (REISC), which reports to Research Committee, Academic Board and The Governing Body.
4. The Research Committee.
5. Reporting lines to the Governing Body.
6. Regular review of policies and procedures.
7. Visiting Fellows, where appropriate.

## **2. Developments and activities for 2019-20**

### *2.1 Roll out of changes to ethics guidance.*

The Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook was fully updated to reflect the changes introduced from the start of the year, with “low risk” and “full applications” being used in part to shift focus away from the time the process takes to the type of activity. Plain language statements were also required to fully evidence informed consent. These moves aimed to encourage a more discursive approach to research ethics and integrity. The changes have been well received by researchers, reviewers and REISC.

### *2.2 Data Collection.*

REISC developed strategies to collect data from taught postgraduate and undergraduate students whose work might be relevant to Research Ethics and Integrity. This is currently managed at a course level with course leaders or appointed staff members managing “low risk” applications which get passed on to REISC where deemed appropriate. It is understood that these low risk applications are stored centrally in the Programmes Office. The Chair of REISC reminded staff members about the need for Taught Postgraduate and Undergraduate Students to consider and engage with research ethics and integrity as required, and to store any forms with the Programmes Office unless these applications are escalated to REISC, at faculty training days. This process was interrupted by COVID-19, however, and will be carried into 2020-21 for further development and improvement.

### *2.3 Conservatoires UK.*

During 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic years, Full Ethics Review Applications that were deemed complex were required to be sent to the Conservatoires UK Ethics Committee. During 2018-19, two applications were sent to the Conservatoires UK Ethics Committee, one from a postdoctoral researcher and one from a postgraduate research student, and each were approved with small clarifications and were resolved within an average of one month. During 2019-20, no ethics applications were sent to the Conservatoires UK Ethics Committee.

#### *2.4 Administrative Support*

From January 2020, the Research Office appointed a Postdoctoral Research Assistant with a purview for Research Ethics and Integrity. The role was designed to support the administration of research ethics and integrity processes including managing the email inbox, liaising between researchers, reviewers and the Chair of REISC and gathering and maintaining data on Research Ethics and Integrity. The role holder also serves as Secretary of RESIC and works with the Head of Research Services as well as the Chair of REISC to support research ethics and integrity at Central. From 2020-21, the role holder will also provide administrative support for the Conservatoires UK Research Ethics Committee.

#### *2.5 Research Ethics and Funding Guidelines*

During 2019-20, REISC developed guidelines to support researchers when considering funding for research. This statement on the Ethics of Research Funding is drawn from existing policies within the Research Conduct and Ethics Handbook, the School's Ethical Policy Framework and the School's Financial Regulations. It has been developed in line with existing publicly accessible policies at other institutions (including UCL, LSE, RCA and St Andrews) in collaboration with REISC. It includes an indicative list of pre-approved funders. The guidelines were approved by REISC, Research Committee and Academic Board and added as an appendix to the Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook available on the [School's website](#) and MyCentral, the School's intranet for all staff. The guidelines will be reviewed annually.

#### *2.6 COVID-19*

During the second half of the academic year, plans and developments for research ethics and integrity were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic on research ethics and integrity will be reported on further in the Research Integrity Annual Statement 2021.

### **3. Data**

#### **Applications Received Between September 2019- September 2020**

**Staff:**

<b>Received</b>	<b>Low Risk</b>	<b>Full</b>	<b>Of Full, number to CUK</b>
8	8	0	0

### Postgraduate Research Students:

Received	Low Risk	Full	Of Full, number to CUK
11	11	0	0

### Taught Postgraduate and Undergraduate Students:

Received	Of Received, number to REISC	Full	Of Full, number to CUK
0	0	0	0

N.B. As noted in Section 2.3 the data collection for Taught Postgraduate and Undergraduate Students was interrupted by COVID-19, however this data collection is being foregrounded in the coming cycle.

In addition, the Chair of the Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee commented on 22 full applications from Conservatoires UK.

## 4. Research Misconduct

### 4.1 Reports of misconduct.

Details of research misconduct investigations:<sup>1</sup>

	Number of formal investigations completed			Number of allegations upheld (in whole or part)		
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
<b>Fabrication</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Falsification</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Plagiarism</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Misrepresentation</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Breach of duty of care</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Other</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0

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<sup>1</sup> Table adapted from University of Liverpool.

	Number of formal investigations completed			Number of allegations upheld (in whole or part)		
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
<b>Details of any allegations upheld in part</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0

In the year under review there is one ongoing investigation notification of misconduct; it will be reported on in the Research Integrity Annual Statement 2021. The process for reporting misconduct is communicated to researchers through briefings and the availability of material on the School's website.

## **5. Planned Developments 2020-21.**

In line with current practice, we will continue to engage with materials published by external organisations that examine and report on UK research ethics and integrity, including Universities UK (UUK), UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), and the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) and appropriate international sources and developments.

### *5.1 Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee Membership (Lay Member)*

During 2019-20, external membership of REISC was discussed and it was agreed that a Lay Member would be invited to join as an external member of REISC. The Chair of REISC proposed an appropriate Lay member who is invited to observe the first REISC of 2020-21 and will thereafter, we anticipate, become a full member of the Sub-Committee.

### *5.2 Research Ethics and Integrity Training*

REISC will recommend further training for research active staff during the 2020-21 academic year. The Chair of REISC will consider external training activities in conversation with REISC. Training will be offered to all members of REISC in the first instance, and will then be extended to all members of staff on teaching and research pathway contracts.

### *5.3 Data Collection*

There is an ongoing need to more fully record and store research ethics applications data for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students to more accurately reflect the consideration of research ethics that takes place in the School. This was commenced 2019-20 academic year but was interrupted due to COVID-19 and is a priority of REISC in this cycle.

### *5.4 Review Research Ethics and Integrity Guidance and Handbook*

In light of feedback from REISC members and academic staff, REISC aims to explore different configurations of the Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook and guidance in this cycle and the next. REISC aims to make this more user-friendly and accessible for research staff and PGRs.

#### *5.5 Review Research Misconduct Procedures*

REISC has determined to undertake a review of procedures for investigating research misconduct and develop clearer guidance for research ethics and integrity conduct. This will form a large part of the work for the Chair and Postdoctoral Research Assistant this year with input from REISC members.

#### *5.6 Low Risk Applications and Research Ethics and Integrity*

It is noted that there is still need to foreground the importance of research ethics and wider discussions of integrity for projects that involve low risk applications, and particular research involving interviews with non-vulnerable adults. REISC will discuss the requirement for all applications involving interviews to be submitted with a plain language statement as standard practice in order to simplify this process for researchers and reviewers.

#### *5.7 Minor Amendments and Ethics Check-Ins*

During 2019-20, REISC discussed the procedures for researchers submitting minor amendments to ethics applications once the research was underway and demonstrated new risks or developments requiring further ethical consideration, and the viability of ethics check-ins for research-active staff. This will be discussed at REISC this year and recommendations will be made to the Research Committee for further discussion.

#### *5.8 Conservatoires UK*

From 2020, the Chair of REISC at Central (Dr Stephen Farrier) will serve as the Chair of the Conservatoire UK Ethics Committee, and this role will be supported by the Postdoctoral Research Assistant (Ethics and Practice Research).

In the coming cycle it has been proposed that all first year research degree students (postgraduate research) will submit their projects to the Conservatoire UK Ethics Committee and this is being confirmed in this cycle with the Associate Director of Research (Research Degrees).

This report was approved by Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee (November 2020) and Research Committee (November 2020) and Academic Board (December).