

Research Integrity Annual Statement 2021

1 Introduction.

This report outlines the work across the academic year September 2020 – September 2021

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. In line with the concordat, Central commits to:

- 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.
- ensure research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.
- 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.
- use transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.
- work together to strengthen the integrity of research and to review progress regularly and openly.
- foster an environment of robust debate and engagement with research ethics and integrity.

1.2 *The 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:

- The Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook.
- The School's Strategic Plan.
- Ethical Policy Framework.
- Whistleblowing Policy.
- Standards of Professional Conduct Policy.
- Academic Strategy.
- Handbook for Supervisors of Research Degrees Candidates.
- Research Degrees Programme Code of Practice and Specification.
- Research Degrees course documentation.
- Research Handbook.

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:

- Staff training and development.
- Postgraduate Research Student (PGR) training and development.
- The Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee (REISC), which reports to Research Committee, Academic Board and The Governing Body.
- The Research Committee.
- Reporting lines to the Governing Body.
- Regular review of policies and procedures.
- Visiting Fellows, where appropriate.

2 Developments and activities for 2020-21

Developments for the year under review are determined by the agreed planned activities expressed in the previous report.

2.1 *Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee (REISC) Membership (Lay Member)*

During the year 2020-21, REISC agreed an application from Dr Andrew Cooper as lay member. Dr Cooper will serve as a member of REISC for three years. REISC welcomed the input from a member with external expertise.

2.2 *Research Ethics and Integrity Training*

In the year under review, all members of REISC underwent training and development delivered by a senior colleague in the sector. REISC had hoped to extend this training to all research active staff, but given the fluidity of the year in relation to COVID, this activity has been moved to the coming academic year.

2.3 *Data Collection*

Work this year developed around the proper storage and assurance processes of ethics forms for taught courses. In the cycle under review, staff were reminded at regular intervals to lodge student ethics forms with the Programmes Office. Data about these submissions appears below.

2.4 *Review Research Ethics and Integrity Guidance and Handbook*

The Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook and other guidance has now entered a yearly cycle of review by the Chair and REISC. Along with other stakeholders, the members of REISC have reflected on the current useability of the Handbook and explored alternative expressions of guidance.

2.5 Review Research Misconduct Procedures

REISC reviewed the School's Research Misconduct Procedures set out in the Research Ethics and Integrity handbook. Members discussed the procedures during the course of the year. It was agreed that the guidance and information circulated by UKRIO and further material relating to good practice in the public domain should continue to serve as guidance for our own procedures. Guidance in the Handbook was updated at the end of 2020/21.

2.6 Low Risk Applications and Research Ethics and Integrity

In the year under review, REISC agreed the requirement for all applications involving interviews to require a plain language statement as standard practice to simplify this process for researchers and reviewers. Guidance on the content of plain language statements is provided in the Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook.

2.7 Minor Amendments and Ethics Check-Ins

As part of a review of the forms that researchers complete when submitting research for ethical review, members highlighted the need for researchers to update REISC about any changes to their research (or circumstances of their research) which requires further ethical scrutiny. This is highlighted both on the forms and on the confirmation email and certificate that researchers receive granting ethical approval, stating that it is incumbent upon the researcher to inform REISC via email about changes in the research or circumstances of the research.

Minor amendments to research projects which have been previously approved by REISC are primarily considered by the Chair, but further advice is sought from the original reviewers and other members where it is deemed proportionate by the Chair.

2.8 Conservatoires UK

From 2020, the Chair of REISC at Central (Dr Stephen Farrier) began serving as the Chair of the Conservatoire UK Ethics Committee, supported by the Postdoctoral Research Assistant (Ethics and Practice Research) (Dr Joe Parslow).

During the year under review, it was agreed that all first-year PGR students will submit their projects to the Conservatoire UK Ethics Committee.

2.9 Other activities.

The Chair, Secretary and REISC Members undertook other projects and tasks beyond the planned developments laid out in the annual statement 2019-20.

During the year under review, REISC added two new standing items to meeting agendas. The first, 'Current Data in Research Ethics', is an opportunity for members to review the ongoing data for ethics applications within the School, looking at data about the number of applications from staff

and research students and the reviewers assigned to each ethics applications. This enables REISC to notice trends in applications and reviewers responses and improve ongoing guidance and policy. The second, 'Current Issues in Research Ethics and Integrity', is a discursive item enabling members to engage with recent policy changes, emerging issues and other items for discussion which are pertinent to the remit of REISC.

Notably, the members of REISC have engaged with external policy and procedure updates as part of the 'Current Issues in Research Ethics and Integrity' Standing Item. Firstly, the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) document *Research Ethics Support and Review in Research Organisations* facilitated discussions around research governance and ethics and the ethics processes at the School. This led to the subsequent creation of an Ethics Workflow document outlining the decision-making processes undertaken when a researcher submits an application for ethical review. This Workflow is now available as an appendix in the Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook.

The members of REISC also engaged with the DEMOS report *Research 4.0: Research in the Age of Automation*, beginning to consider the impact of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning on research ethics and integrity. These discussions led to wider conversations about Data Storage and Managing Risky Research which have informed wider institutional conversations as well as the sharing of good practice between Members and research active staff. Additionally, as part of wider conversations with regard to ethics and external research funding, REISC reviewed and removed the list of "Pre-Approved Funders" from the Research Ethics And Funding Guidelines in the Research Ethics and Integrity Handbook.

Along with the REF Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) working group, the Chair of the REISC also produced an EIA as part of the School's Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021. In this role, the Chair worked with the Director of Research and Head of Research Services to ensure equity, ethics and integrity were central to the School's process of undertaking and producing research and documentation for the REF, and holding the School accountable to its Code of Practice. The REF EIA group produced three iterations of the EIA leading up to the submission and produced a final one as required by the REF.

3 Data (as of May 2021)

Applications Received Between September 2020- September 2021

Staff:

Received	Low Risk	Full	Number to CUK
6	6	0	0

Postgraduate Research Students:

Received	Low Risk	Full	Number to CUK
34	3	1	3

Taught Postgraduate and Undergraduate Students:

Low Risk Received	Low Risk, number to REISC	Full	Number to CUK
1	1	0	0

In addition, the Chair of the Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee managed 18 applications from Conservatoires UK.

4 Research Misconduct

4.1 Reports of misconduct.

Details of research misconduct investigations¹:

	Number of formal investigations completed			Number of allegations upheld (in whole or part)		
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Fabrication	0	0	0	0	0	0
Falsification	0	0	0	0	0	0
Plagiarism	0	0	1	0	0	0
Misrepresentation	0	0	0	0	0	0
Breach of duty of care	0	0	0	0	0	0
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
Details of any allegations upheld in part	0	0	0	0	0	0

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 Training for all research-active staff.

In 2020-21, all members of REISC received training from a previous Pro-VC for Research who has held institutional responsibility for Research Ethics at a multi-faculty university. This was a valuable process and REISC will work to provide training for all research active staff in 2021-22. This training

may include REISC-developed resources for research ethics and integrity for staff and students, culminating in a resources repository to be shared with all staff.

5.2 Ethics beyond Research Ethics.

REISC are interested in exploring ethics and integrity issues as they might emerge in other areas of the School (for example, around teaching and scholarship, and knowledge exchange) and begin to instigate conversations about ethics and integrity beyond research ethics in relevant areas of the School.

5.3 EIA Review of Research Ethics and Integrity Processes.

In 2021-22, REISC will produce an Equality Impact Assessment of Research Ethics and Integrity Processes at the School, ensuring that the current process for researchers' submitting applications for ethical review are fair, meet the needs of our staff and students and that they are not inadvertently discriminating against any protected characteristic.

5.4 UKRI Integrity Committee

The Chair and members of REISC propose to actively monitor the progress of the UKRI Integrity Committee, ensuring that the needs of small and specialist institutions are being considered. REISC will also use the developments surrounding research ethics and integrity at national levels to inform and develop our own training and practices in this area.

Approved by: Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee (11th May 2021)

Approved by: Research Committee (10th June 2021)

Received by: Academic Board (29th September 2021)

Received by: Board of Governors (29th November 2021)