

Annual statement on research integrity

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	Aberystwyth 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)	This statement was presented and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee on 16 th October 2025.
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	Research Integrity Concordat : Research, Business & Innovation , Aberystwyth University
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Professor Angela Hatton
	Email address: anh84@aber.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: Lisa Fisher
	Email address: lif1@aber.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

Current systems and culture

Aberystwyth University is firmly committed to the principles found within the **Concordat to Support Research Integrity**. We strive to continually improve accountability and provide assurances that measures are being taken to support high standards of research integrity.

Policies and systems

The University has a range of policies and systems to not only ensure that research is conducted appropriately, but to also ensure that effective mechanisms exist for the reporting of any concerns or queries. These policies are regularly reviewed and monitored by the appropriate University Governance committee:

- Sensitive Research Policy
- Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research
- Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy
- Professional Integrity Protocol
- Data Protection, Processing & Retention Policies
- Research Data Management Policy
- Due diligence policy on overseas research collaborations

AU has an online ethical review system (built in-house) used for all research projects (externally and internally funded) from undergraduate through to staff research.

AU also has a research management system (Worktribe) to manage externally funded research projects. At pre-award this includes prompts and data fields to cover ethics, research governance and trusted research.

Communications and engagement

Researchers in the University are expected to maintain responsibility for understanding what standards are expected of them and how to undertake research with integrity and following best practice.

The University supports students and research active staff with this in a number of ways. Training is provided, clear guidance and information about policies and procedures and a clear process for ethical review is communicated and published on the University's website. Contacts for further information are published online, and new information and updates are communicated via e mail, online and via departmental contacts.

Training

Staff training

Staff and students across the University have access to a range of courses, information and support from both academic departments and service departments. In a continual effort to promote good research practice, the Research Business and Innovation (RBI) department specifically hosts a number of events and training sessions on an annual basis:

- [Research Good Practice](#): a programme of sessions to support active researchers on a range of topics including;

- ethics,
- data management,
- research grant application processes,
- research impact,
- Research Ethics & Integrity workshops; a combination of tailored sessions.
- Research Ethics Induction sessions; *for all new staff*.
- Research Data Management/ Open Access sessions and induction.
- REF/ PURE training.

Post-graduate training

Postgraduate Research students must attend an Ethics and Integrity module in their first year in order to progress onto their next year of study. This module contains a number of tailored sessions around ethics and integrity, applying for ethical approval and discipline specific ethics management. These sessions are monitored through the Graduate School. The module is compulsory for all new research students (PhD and MPhil). This module is run every September and January. The content of these modules is continually reviewed and updated by the Research Ethics and Integrity Officer (REIO). All research students are required to complete a number of assessments after undertaking this module to ensure that they have a Favourable Ethical Opinion before proceeding with their research projects. These assessments also enable the REIO to identify any students who might be intending to undertake high risk research and offer support and guidance to them and ensure all of the appropriate processes have been followed.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught student Training

Training for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students is generally conducted by individual departments. Module co-ordinators and other departmental staff are encouraged to embed the appropriate University processes and procedures into their delivery of teaching. Training at this level is organised on a departmental level, however, the REIO is working directly with a growing number of departments to offer training, guidance and support for students.

In July 2025 we launched the new UKRIO Introduction to Research Integrity for all staff and students after launching the initial version successfully last academic year.

Culture, development and leadership

The University recognises the importance of maintaining a research environment which promotes good research practice and a strong culture of research integrity. We achieve this through underpinning our research with a number of quality processes and by providing relevant support, policies and guidance in a widely accessible format.

During this academic year the REIO has prioritised working closely with departments to raise awareness about research good practice and increase the visibility of research ethics policies and procedures, especially within the creative arts disciplines where it has been identified that research methodologies and the changing ethical landscape in this area has quickly evolved. Researchers have received increased support and working to try and facilitate their knowledge and awareness of ethical procedures and policies. It has become evident that

there is a need for increased support for researchers who are moving into cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary research areas.

Monitoring and Reporting

The newly launched online ethics checklist allows the central team to report on the number of applications by applicant type, outcome, current status in the system. This data is monitored and reported to UREC and to the University's Governance and Compliance Committee via an annual report.

Engagement with the online ethical review system is also checked via our Research Grant Administration Software (Worktribe). During approval stage for individual research grant applications checks are undertaken by the Research Development Team to ensure that the ethics, governance and trusted research questions in the project risk assessment are completed.

The 3 sub-committees of the University Research Ethics committee (Sponsorship Group, Research Ethics Panel and Animal Welfare and Ethics Research Board) provide a report of their business at each UREC meeting.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

Training

The University Research Ethics Committee recognises the importance of training and development for all staff and students and work continuously towards ensuring that a universal level of training is provided for all researchers. The University is currently working towards enhancing continued professional development for research students and staff and have made progress towards creating a number of modules which will be available in video format in the 25/26 academic year. These modules will include training for research ethics, research integrity, working with human participants and animal ethics and will be available internally to all staff and students, in order to continually promote best practice and ensure that all researchers are aware of the Universities responsibilities under the Concordat and to keep abreast of any new emerging ethical issues.

The University ensures that researchers have access to updated training. On 9th July 2025 we launched the new UKRIO Research Integrity training module and have offered all staff and students the opportunity to access this course.

The University held an external training session on 26th November 2024 with the Research Collaboration Advice Team who attended the University to provide researchers with advice on their responsibilities around Trusted Research.

Ethical Review System

After an extensive review and redevelopment of the online ethics assessment form, the new system was launched on 30th October 2024 aiming to streamline the current process and enhance user experience. The new system was successful in providing a user-friendly interface for easy navigation, improving and strengthening review question-sets, improving data security and confidentiality and enhanced tracking and reporting capabilities. A further review of our ethical review processes is currently being undertaken to identify how we can streamline our processes further and ensure that our processes are proportionate and not conflated with governance processes.

Research Governance Review

The University is committed to ensuring that processes are in place and strategies have been developed to successfully manage ethics and governance issues. In last year's statement it was reported that a University executive approved Task and Finish Group led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation was set up in 2023 and reported to the Senior Executive and Vice Chancellor in December 2023. An ongoing review of systems, policies and procedures for both ethics and governance within the University is still underway, and it has been highlighted that a further, more in depth review should be undertaken across both research ethics and research governance to ensure that these two areas can be managed successfully and independently.

Trusted Research

In response to the Trusted Research Agenda and the widening responsibilities Universities need to address for research governance, a new role was created, and a Research Governance and Due Diligence Advisor was appointed to strengthen oversight of the trusted research agenda and ensure effective management of the university's research governance responsibilities. This position will play a key role in supporting the integrity, compliance, and accountability of our research activities, while also promoting best practice and safeguarding the university's reputation in an increasingly complex research environment. To note: The aim is to recruit into the vacant Research Ethics and Integrity Officer vacancy as soon as possible.

A Trusted Research Implementation Plan has been developed, reviewed and approved and is being led by the Research Governance and Due Diligence Advisor who is working with key team leaders to establish the Universities position in relation to the Trusted Research Agenda and work towards improving and strengthening this position. Whilst in the early stages of the process, key progress has been made.

Policy Reviews

The University Research Ethics Committee has reviewed and updated policies relating to Research Integrity as outlined below.

Research Ethics Panel Appeals Policy

The University's Research Ethics Panel Appeals Policy is currently under review. This policy ensures researchers have a fair and transparent route to appeal an Unfavourable Ethical Opinion provided by the Research Ethics Panel.

Research Ethics Panel Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the University's Research Ethics Panel was reviewed and approved in October 2025.

University Research Ethics Committee Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the University Research Ethics Committee were reviewed and approved in October 2024.

Research Ethics Audit Policy

The University Research Ethics Audit Policy was reviewed and an amendment included and approved in October 2024.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

The University has made good progress with the plans for future development as outlined in its Annual Integrity Statement 2023/24.

As outlined above the main targets which the University want to achieve in the year 2024/25 are:

- To ensure that we build on our current programme of training for staff and students and to move towards developing a package of continued professional development materials which students and staff can access when required.
- To undertake a deeper review of our research ethics and governance processes and ensure that they are fit for purpose and remain separate from one another. And to ensure that these processes are clear to students and staff and that they are being correctly adhered to.
- To undertake a review over the research ethics process and move from a two tier to a three-tier review process.
- To progress with the Trusted Research Implementation Plan and keep learning and strengthening our processes to include areas identified within the Trusted Research Agenda across the University.

Future Developments

- The University intends to continue building on their existing training programme for research ethics and integrity. The University is currently organising external training sessions with the National Protective Security Agency for staff at all levels.
- An extensive review of the University's current due diligence policy for work undertaken with collaborators is currently underway and should be completed before Christmas 2025.
- The Research Governance and Due Diligence Advisor works annually with colleagues on a review of all current policies for research ethics, integrity and governance. The aim is to ensure that all policies are up to date and fit for purpose.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

The University strives to maintain a culture which promotes good practice and encourages honest and ethical research. Researchers have a responsibility to report any allegations of research misconduct and the University has created a procedure which not only facilitates the investigation of research misconduct but allows people to feel comfortable in reporting any allegations.

All members of the University, particularly those involved in research, must be aware of the following policies and understand how they operate in relation to their role at Aberystwyth. All of these policies are displayed clearly on the University website, with contacts for further information which can be treated confidentially if required.

Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research

The University has rigorous mechanisms in place for the **reporting** of any wrongdoing and for the **handling** of allegations of research misconduct. The University takes allegations of misconduct seriously and has developed a procedure to facilitate full exploration of potentially complex matters in research that can arise in situations where misconduct may have taken place.

This procedure follows the guidelines for a Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research issued by the UK Research Integrity Office in August 2008 and in accordance with guidelines from the Concordat. Its objectives are to ensure that issues of misconduct in research may be addressed appropriately and investigated effectively and enable an independent panel to produce a report on the basis of which the University may initiate appropriate action.

The procedure ensures openness, transparency and fairness in its proceedings, with clear stages, steps and timescales for all involved.

The University offers an informal process of managing such allegations to alleviate the worry some may feel when making a complaint. A complainant has three other options rather than a formal complaint:

- A) Approaching the individual and seeking a way jointly to resolve the matter.
- B) Approaching the faculty PVC/Head of Service Department and requesting that they act as an intermediary between the two parties to resolve the issue.
- C) Seeking mediation through an ACAS trained mediator at the University.

If a researcher felt that they had no option but to report an allegation of research misconduct then the University has developed procedures as previously outlined, which not

only provide a mechanism to investigate the allegation but to also support the researcher(s) involved.

As previously noted, the University Research Ethics Committee have recommended an extensive review of this policy which is expected to be completed within the 2025/26 session.

During this session there have been **no** allegations of research misconduct.

Whistleblowing (Public Interest Disclosure)

The University is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. It seeks to conduct its affairs in a responsible manner, taking into account the requirements of the funding bodies and the standards in public life. The University also wishes to ensure that anyone who discloses wrongdoing at work can do so without fear of sanction.

This policy is designed for all employees, students and contractors of the University to assist individuals who believe they have discovered wrongdoing at the University.

Dignity and Respect at Work Policy

Aberystwyth University is committed to providing a working and learning environment that enriches lives, and where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

The University will not tolerate bullying or harassment of any kind (this includes unlawful discrimination and victimisation). Those working or dealing with the University should not be treated unfavourably or be subjected to bullying or harassment.

All staff are required to treat colleagues with dignity and respect at work. We have a personal responsibility to treat each other the way we would wish to be treated ourselves and should raise with individuals directly, if possible, where our expectations in terms of their behaviour to us falls short.

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

The University strives to maintain a culture which promotes good practice and encourages honest and ethical research. Researchers have a responsibility to report any allegations of research misconduct and the University has created a procedure which not only facilitates the investigation of research misconduct but allows people to feel comfortable in reporting any allegations.

All members of the University, particularly those involved in research, must be aware of the following policies and understand how they operate in relation to their role at Aberystwyth. All of these policies are displayed clearly on the University website, with contacts for further information which can be treated confidentially if required.

Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research

The University has rigorous mechanisms in place for the **reporting** of any wrongdoing and for the **handling** of allegations of research misconduct. The University takes allegations of misconduct seriously and has developed a procedure to facilitate full exploration of potentially complex matters in research that can arise in situations where misconduct may have taken place.

This procedure follows the guidelines for a Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research issued by the UK Research Integrity Office in August 2008 and in accordance with guidelines from the Concordat. Its objectives are to ensure that issues of misconduct in research may be addressed appropriately and investigated effectively and enable an independent panel to produce a report on the basis of which the University may initiate appropriate action.

The procedure ensures openness, transparency and fairness in its proceedings, with clear stages, steps and timescales for all involved.

The University offers an informal process of managing such allegations to alleviate the worry some may feel when making a complaint. A complainant has three other options rather than a formal complaint:

- D) Approaching the individual and seeking a way jointly to resolve the matter.
- E) Approaching the faculty PVC/Head of Service Department and requesting that they act as an intermediary between the two parties to resolve the issue.
- F) Seeking mediation through an ACAS trained mediator at the University.

If a researcher felt that they had no option but to report an allegation of research misconduct then the University has developed procedures as previously outlined, which not only provide a mechanism to investigate the allegation but to also support the researcher(s) involved.

As previously noted, the University Research Ethics Committee have recommended an extensive review of this policy which is expected to be completed within the 2025/26 session.

During this session there have been **no** allegations of research misconduct.

Whistleblowing (Public Interest Disclosure)

The University is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. It seeks to conduct its affairs in a responsible manner, taking into account the requirements of the funding bodies and the standards in public life. The University also wishes to ensure that anyone who discloses wrongdoing at work can do so without fear of sanction.

This policy is designed for all employees, students and contractors of the University to assist individuals who believe they have discovered wrongdoing at the University.

Dignity and Respect at Work Policy

Aberystwyth University is committed to providing a working and learning environment that enriches lives, and where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

The University will not tolerate bullying or harassment of any kind (this includes unlawful discrimination and victimisation). Those working or dealing with the University should not be treated unfavourably or be subjected to bullying or harassment.

All staff are required to treat colleagues with dignity and respect at work. We have a personal responsibility to treat each other the way we would wish to be treated ourselves and should raise with individuals directly, if possible, where our expectations in terms of their behaviour to us falls short.

This policy aims to:

- Provide guidance to colleagues about their responsibility to ensure the dignity and respect of others;
- Inform colleagues about their rights if they feel they are not being treated with dignity and respect by colleagues and signpost colleagues to the tools they can use in these situations
- To encourage positive behaviour and to use informal approaches to resolve issues where possible
- To emphasise commitment to AU values in respect of dignity and respect at work

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

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	0	0	0	0

Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	0	0	0	0
Misrepresentation (eg 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
<i>Other*</i>	0	0	0	0
Total:	0	0	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.**