Northeastern University - London Annual Statement on Research Integrity

May 2024

Background

The Concordat to Support Research Integrity[1] requires UK organisations to publish an annual statement on research integrity, and regularly review its processes and policies to ensure best practice in research. This report is an account of research integrity activities and developments in the 2023-2024 academic year and has been approved by the Northeastern University London Executive Committee on 22nd May 2024.

Northeastern University London (the University) has undergone a period of rapid growth following acquisition by Northeastern University (Boston, US) in 2020 and gaining a UK university title in 2022. The Research and Knowledge Exchange Services (RKE Services) was established in 2022. A new Director, starting in the 2023-24 academic year, oversees ethics and integrity policies in collaboration with the Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange. In addition, our first cohort of postgraduate research students started this academic year with degrees validated by the University of Kent.

The University is committed to ensuring research integrity, ethical conduct and open research practices, which are fundamental components of our overarching vision. The University wholeheartedly embraces the principles outlined in the Concordat as follows:

1. Upholding the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research

2. Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards

3. Supporting 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

4. Using transparent, timely, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise

5. Working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to review progress regularly and openly

You can find our previous annual report here. If you wish to know more about this report or our approach to research integrity, please email research@nulondon.ac.uk with any questions.

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[1] https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/topics/research-and-innovation/concordat-support-research-integrity

Section 1. Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	Northeastern University London
1B. Type of organisation:	Higher education institution
1C. Date statement approved by ExCo (DD/MM/YY)	22/05/2024
1D. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Carolyn Barker, Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange
	Email address: carolyn.barker@nulondon.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: Alice Caryer, Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange
	Email address: alice.caryer@nulondon.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

The University has established a structured framework to support and sustain a research environment that fosters good research practices and cultivates a culture of integrity in research.

a) The **Associate Dean of Research & Knowledge Exchange (AD RKE)** is the academic lead for research integrity matters within the University and Chair of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. The AD RKE is the Named Person in accordance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

b) The **Director of Research & Knowledge Exchange Services** is the operational lead for research integrity matters, overseeing policy development, training, compliance, ethics review, misconduct investigation management, and the promotion of a culture of integrity to uphold research integrity within the institution, ensuring the credibility and ethical conduct of research activities through continuous evaluation.

c) The **Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC)** exists to develop, oversee, and implement the institutional research and knowledge exchange strategy to actively grow research and knowledge exchange (including public engagement and enterprise) and to ensure compliance with external regulations and requirements. RKEC reports directly to [Academic Board](#).

d) The **University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)** is the overarching, University-wide committee responsible for addressing ethical concerns arising from research involving human participants and personal data. Additionally, it provides guidance to the RKEC regarding the formulation and execution of policies and procedures concerning research integrity. UREC includes student and lay representation and a broad range of discipline expertise. UREC reports directly into RKEC.

RKE Services oversees the University's research ethics process and includes stringent safeguards to minimise harm and actively addresses potential ethical issues in all research activities. This framework allows researchers to demonstrate their engagement with ethical concerns and supports them in designing studies that meet high ethical standards, ensuring integrity and responsibility throughout the research process. RKE Services also works closely with Northeastern research management departments [NU-RES](#) and [Research Development](#), for shared best practice and alignment of UK and US research integrity frameworks.

Policies and systems:

Our commitment to research integrity is upheld within the framework of regularly reviewed policies, regulations, and guidance documents. The key policies governing research integrity at the University - applicable to all staff and students involved in research - are:

- [Human Subjects and Ethical Research Policy](#) (reviewed in January 2023, next review due September 2024)
- [Research Integrity Policy](#) (approved in May 2023, next review due September 2024)
- [Research Misconduct Policy](#) (approved in December 2023, next review due September 2024)
- [Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy](#) (next review due June 2024)

Communications and engagement:

Communication of the University's policies and processes is done via the following methods:

- Termly faculty inductions and one-to-one meetings with researchers
- Faculty-wide meetings
- Staff and student training (in person and online)
- [PhD student handbook](#)

RKE Services is the first point of contact for any queries concerning research ethics or integrity.

Culture, development and leadership:

We foster a collaborative and inclusive research culture that aims for all researchers to thrive and conduct responsible research. Research integrity goals are now included in the faculty annual review process. To ensure that the University keeps up to date of best practice related to research integrity it is a member of or subscriber to several external bodies including:

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- [UK Research Integrity Office](#)
- [Association for Research Managers and Administrators](#)
- [GuildHE](#)
- [Higher Education Export Control Association](#)

2b. Changes and developments during the period under review

Training and Guidance:

- The University's [Research Misconduct Policy](#) was drafted and approved in December 2023, based on UKRIO's Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research[2].
- University VLE (Canvas) pages on research ethics and integrity were created and disseminated to faculty to raise awareness. The pages include advice on whether or not ethical approval is required and how to apply signposting to policies, the role of UREC and ethical considerations for research funding applications.
- Faculty receive training on ethics and integrity via termly mandatory inductions. PGR students receive an ethics and integrity session within their training programme.
- [UK Research and Integrity Office Research Integrity pilot training](#) has been rolled out in May 2024 to all research active staff, staff who supervise student research projects, and PhD students (81 learners). The course is applicable to all disciplines and provides a comprehensive grounding in research integrity for those new to the topic. It is also an essential refresher for more experienced staff. It signposts to our existing policies and processes surrounding research integrity. To date, **62/81 learners** have completed the training.
- Our postgraduate research students all have access to the [University of Kent's doctoral researcher development programme](#), which includes modules on ethics and integrity.
- We have continued to participate in UKRIO webinars on research integrity, which all staff can access through our institutional subscription.
- The Director of RKE Services has been an active participant in stakeholder workshops held as part of the UK Committee on Research Integrity's research integrity indicators project[3].

Trusted Research:

- Training on trusted research was held in September 2023, involving a joint presentation by the [National Protective Security Authority](#) (NPSA) and the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) (FBI), facilitated by RKE Services. The sessions covered NPSA's Trusted Research Platform[4] and FBI case studies highlighting the importance of protecting intellectual property and research integrity as faculty engage in research collaborations.
- An Export Control Policy and associated Trusted Research Guidance has been drafted and is awaiting feedback from stakeholders including the [Research Collaboration Advice Team](#). The guidance helps identify and manage potential risks in research/knowledge exchange activities, enabling researchers to confidently engage in international collaboration and make informed decisions regarding these risks. Additionally, it provides guidance on protecting research and staff from potential theft, misuse, or exploitation.

Open Research:

- Our [institutional repository](#) was launched in summer 2023. The University is dedicated to the principle that researchers should freely publish their results, ensuring their work is accessible

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[2] https://ukrio.org/wp-content/uploads/Procedure-for-the-Investigation-of-Misconduct-in-Research_Accessible.pdf

[3] https://ukcori.org/our-work/exploring-indicators-of-research-integrity/

[4] https://www.npsa.gov.uk/trusted-research-academia

to other researchers and the public. The University actively disseminates research outputs through its research repository and effectively handles situations where publication accessibility is restricted.

● Throughout the year, we have conducted multiple open access training sessions at both institutional and faculty levels to promote green open access routes. In collaboration with librarian colleagues at Northeastern, we have actively promoted existing open access transformative agreements, reinforcing our commitment to making as many of our research outputs as possible accessible to a wider audience.

2c. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

Despite our small team, we have achieved remarkable progress this year and have laid the groundwork for fostering a genuine culture of research integrity within our institution. During 2024-25, the AD R&KE and the Director of RKE Services will collaborate together on the following objectives:

● Conduct a comprehensive consultancy project to review all existing policies and procedures related to research ethics and integrity, ensuring they are in-line with current best practice.
● Organise a training session in collaboration with UKRIO for members of UREC. This session will update members on the latest best practices and developments in research integrity, ensuring they are well-equipped to handle ethical considerations effectively in their oversight and decision-making processes.
● Publish the approved Export Control Policy and raise awareness among faculty members, not only disseminating the policy widely but also using the HEECA beta training tools to complement this.
● Develop and implement an Open Access and Rights Retention Policy. RKE Services will offer training on open access publishing upon request. Additionally, we aim to appoint open access champions in each faculty to advance this initiative. We will become members of the UK Reproducibility Network to further our commitment to promoting rigorous and transparent research.
● Become a signatory to the Researcher Development Concordat[5] and develop an action plan, specifically around research training.

Section 3. Addressing Research Misconduct

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

The University has established a comprehensive policy and process for addressing allegations of misconduct in research. These guidelines are administered by the Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange Services, ensuring adherence to the highest standards of ethical conduct. The framework encompasses a set of clear principles and well-defined mechanisms designed to facilitate investigations. These investigations are conducted with a commitment to transparency, timeliness, robustness, and fairness. This structured approach guarantees that each case is handled with the utmost integrity, providing a thorough and impartial examination of the facts to uphold the University's commitment to academic and research excellence.

The Research Misconduct Policy and associated procedures will also be used to investigate any allegation of research misconduct initially raised through the University's Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy. This Policy does not apply to instances of fraudulent activity or sexual

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[5] https://researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk/

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harassment, or discrimination, which can be found in the University's policies on [Fraud Prevention and Response](#), Discrimination, Bullying, and Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Policy.

Any person wishing to raise concerns about the integrity of research being conducted under the auspices of the University can do so in confidence by emailing researchmisconduct@nulondon.ac.uk.

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

There were no allegations or formal investigations of research misconduct in 2023 – 2024.

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