# University of Westminster Research Integrity Annual Narrative Statement, February 2024

| Section 1: Key contact information | |
|---|---|
| **1A. Name of organisation** | University of Westminster |
| **1B. Type of organisation:**<br><br>**higher education institution/ industry/ independent research performing organisation/other (please state)** | Higher Education Institution (HEI) |
| **1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)** | Approved by Research Committee on 07/02/2024<br><br>Noted by Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee 27/02/2024<br><br>Noted by Academic Council on 29/03/2024<br><br>Noted by Court of Governors 13/03/2024 |
| **1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)** | https://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/research-governance/research-integrity |
| **1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity** | Name: Professor Andrew Linn, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Exchange)<br><br>Email address: A.Linn@westminster.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: Huzma Kelly, Research Ethics and Integrity Officer, Research and Knowledge Exchange Office (RKEO)<br><br>Email address: H.Kelly01@westminster.ac.uk |

## Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken

The University is committed to developing, enhancing and sustaining research good practice as part of its research culture and environment, through research that is ethical and of the highest quality and standards. The University has been a member of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) since 2014 and has actively supported research integrity, as an employer of researchers, to fulfil its responsibilities as expected and required, by the signatories of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2012 and 2019), and others we collaborate with.

### *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

A working group, chaired by the College Research and Knowledge Exchange Director for Liberal Arts and Sciences, and including representatives from key stakeholder groups, was convened late in 2022 and met regularly to discuss the findings and recommendations, of the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel final report, with input requested from a broad range of interested colleagues including University colleague networks. A report with a range of recommendations was approved by University Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee on 31 May 2023. Subsequently an Equality Diversity and Inclusion sub-committee has been set up which reports into Research & Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee.

#### *Westminster Fellows*

In June 2023, three Westminster (post-doctoral) Fellows were recruited (supported by research culture funding from Research England), with the aim of offering opportunities to those who completed their PhD at Westminster and who are engaging in equality, diversity and inclusion agendas within their research.

### *Researcher Development*

In March 2023, the University retained its HR Excellence in Research Award, underpinned by our Action Plan and supporting our commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

In February 2023, University Executive Board approved the creation of a series of four face to face workshops the first of which, the Welcome to Westminster Induction session runs face to face to enable networking amongst colleagues and was delivered in December 2023. This programme is in addition to the existing Researcher Development Programme which covers a range of topics aligned with the themes of the funding landscape, managing your research project, data, ethics and our research environment, disseminating publications, the Virtual Research Environment and impact and public engagement and which is delivered via on demand content and live sessions.

### *Researcher Development Awards scheme*

Cohort two of this scheme will finish their final year at the end of July 2024. There has been much positive feedback about the benefits of the funding which has enabled them to attend events, conferences and training inaccessible via other means and which has in some cases been led to awardees establishing new research connections and relationships, and even publishing papers.

## *Engagement with external communities of practice*

The University is a subscribing member of the UK Research Integrity Research Office (UKRIO) and holds memberships of the Association for Research Managers and Administrators.

## *Trusted Research*

The Trusted Research Agenda is now firmly on the radar with the University in the first instance reviewing UKRI's Trusted Research and innovation guidance, including implications of the National Security and Investment Act 2021 and export control guidance that relates to research and innovation. The University ran targeted sessions for researchers, those supporting and managing research in September 2023.

## *Human Tissue Authority (HTA) Research Licence*

A review of the existing portfolio of Human Tissue Authority related University Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) is being carried out along with needs analysis of further guidance enhancements which may be needed. More information on progress around governance of human tissue research at the University can be found at Section 2C. below.

## *Open Research and Research Data Management*

A dedicated team (which works closely with the University's Library & Archives Service) has responsibility for open research and research data management policy, systems, advocacy, training and guidance to enable best practice across our researcher and doctoral researcher communities. The team used Open Access Week in 2023 to write a blog post about the theme Community over Commercialization and to signpost events taking place and support available at Westminster. During 2023 they delivered a range of training workshops to researchers and doctoral researchers, including for the first time a transition from PhD to ECR workshop for doctoral researchers and an open research for teaching and learning workshop for all colleagues.

WestminsterResearch, the University's institutional repository enables the capture and sharing of all research outputs (including publications, research data and non-traditional research outputs such as those created by practice researchers) and monitoring of compliance with relevant funder policies.

The University of Westminster Press (UWP) continues to enable publishing best practice including peer review and Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) standards and provides in-house publishing expertise. UWP continues to influence sector-wide best practice, with

active involvement in the setting up of the [Open Institutional Publishing Association](#) (OIPA), the UWP Manager presented an invited keynote on the challenges facing institutional publishing at the [Scaling Small: Community-Owned Futures for Open Access Books conference](#) in April 2023 and presented as part of an [OIPA/Jisc event on community-led open access publishing](#) in Open Access Week.

The team continue to lead (in collaboration with academic colleagues at the University and our collaboration institutions) sector-wide work to recognise and embed non-text/ non-traditional research outputs across open standards and systems. The team presented their findings at international conferences: the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) Plus 2023 conference (Feb 2023), Open Repositories conference (June 2023 in Cape Town) and at a [Jisc/ARMA workshop on institutional research management workflows (April 2023)](#). The team also published an [invited journal article](#) in December 2023 based on their Arts and Humanities Research Council funded work.

## 2A. Description of current systems and culture

### *Policies and systems*

- The University has a suite of policies and procedures relating to research and KE for use by colleagues and students to support them in best practice. The policies and strategies for research and KE are usually reviewed every three years or sooner if necessary. A list of current policies and strategies can be found here: https://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/research-governance/research-strategies-and-policies

- The University's Open Access Policy was revised in 2023, informed by sector-wide developments in relation to rights retention, articulating connections with sustainability, equality, diversity and inclusion (including the recognition of a diverse range of outputs including practice research outputs), and highlighting best practice in relation to licensing for re-use and ORCID. This policy was approved by Academic Council on 6 December 2023.

- Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee approved a new Public and Community Engagement Strategy on 31 October 2023.

- The University employs the use of the Virtual Research Environment (VRE) System for the entire research life cycle, used by researchers, students and those managing research and KE. The RKEO and Graduate School Office are the module owners and continuously review the needs and suitability of the system for all users in collaboration with academic colleagues who sit on a working group to ensure there is representation from our researcher communities.

- The University internal Blackboard site provides resources and SOPs for our colleagues and students working under the Human Tissue Authority (HTA) licence, and those managing and supporting this research. The University uses its Quality Management System for HTA research to ensure that all human tissue work is carried out in line with the Codes and Standards of the Human Tissue Authority.

### *Communications and engagement*

- Research and knowledge exchange best practice and guidance can be found on the Researcher Support web pages, the Research and Knowledge Exchange Office blog hosts news content and the Researcher Development Hub and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Office Communications site (log in access required) signposts relevant content such as guidance on running your project, applying for funding forms, key topic guides and information about 'Who's who in the Research and Knowledge Exchange Office.'

- The RKEO sends out a monthly newsletter, and works with colleagues in Marketing and Communications, [Colleague Network](#) representatives and Colleges and Schools to enabled a wide dissemination of messages.

- The University's Early and Mid-Career network have their own Blackboard site in order to share relevant materials.

### *Culture, development, and leadership*

The University's strategy, [Being Westminster 2022-2029](#), highlights three priorities, one of which is inclusion. We commit to putting equality, diversity and inclusion at the core of how we engage with everyone and is underpinned by our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#).

Research and Knowledge Exchange (R&KE) is one of four university-wide objectives. The University's [Making a Difference: Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy: 2022-29](#) was approved by Academic Council on 21 June 2023and puts openness and transparency at its core, aligning with the [University of Westminster strategy values](#) of progressive, compassionate and responsible which underpin our mission.

The creation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion sub-committee of University Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee is an important step forward to ensure this University priority is enabled and supported.

### *Monitoring and reporting*

The University has established a new **Report and Support** platform this year, which makes it straightforward for colleagues to anonymously (or non- anonymously) report incidents of bullying, harassment, or misconduct.

## 2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

(guidance note for us: Please provide an update on any changes made during the period, such as new initiatives, training, developments, also ongoing changes that are still underway. Drawing on Commitment 3 of the Concordat, please note any new or revised policies, practices and procedures to support researchers; training on research ethics and research integrity; training and mentoring opportunities to support the development of researchers' skills throughout their careers.)

The University has recognised the need for representation at university executive level by the creation of and appointment to a dedicated Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange which replaces the previous dual Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Pro Vice-Chancellor Knowledge Exchange roles which sat with existing Heads of College. This is supported by the bringing together of research and knowledge exchange into one strategy: [Research Strategy and Knowledge Exchange Strategy](#).

The University has also invested funding achieved from its REF2021 performance in the Research and Knowledge Exchange Office. This has involved the creation of a Senior Governance and REF Manager (under recruitment) which is dedicated resource at a senior level. The team structure has been reviewed and in addition to the recruitment to an upgraded researcher development post, new posts have been created and recruited to support research governance and research and information systems.

## 2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

(Note for us: This should include a reflection on the previous year's activity including a review of progress and impact of initiatives if known relating to activities referenced in the previous year's statement. Note any issues that have hindered progress, e.g. resourcing or other issues)

*2023 was a year of transition, putting in place appropriate investment in roles, governance and structures to enable research and knowledge exchange best practice as highlighted above. The following areas have been identified as priorities going forward.*

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Following the EDI recommendations and creation of the EDI sub-committee of University Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee there is now a plan to commit to Athena Swan and other related charter marks.

### Trusted Research

A further session for senior leadership will be organised around matters impacting University policy and processes around the Trusted Research agenda.

### Research Development - Introduction to Research Ethics: in-house online training module

The University's own Introduction to Research Ethics training module designed to increase awareness and build research capabilities to recognise and mitigate any ethical implications and sign-post governance issues related to research and KE. The module is due to be released in February 2024 to all [University and College level Research and Knowledge Exchange Ethics Committees (UREC and CRECs)](#) members, as well as ad-hoc ethics reviewers. Undertaking the module will be a requirement for these members and reviewers, to ensure that they are developed and refreshed in the principles of research ethics and to assure researchers that the reviewers are using a consistent approach to review and are trained in recognising best practice in ethics review, including proportionality.

### Policy and guidance - Research and Knowledge Exchange Ethics Policy and Guidance

The current Code of practice governing the ethical conduct of research is currently being improved to streamline processes and make them easy to find, separate governance related remit from RECs and produce a high-level policy statement, with key stakeholders currently being consulted, and will go to R&KE Steering Committee in June 2024. This will act as a statement of the University's ethics principles and policy within the broader framework of its research integrity policies and research governance framework.

To underpin the above policy a suite of core guidance documents for both researchers and reviewers is under development. This will give researchers clear guidance to follow a streamlined processes for seeking ethical review or carrying out their own (or their students' self assessments), as well as transparency around the requirements and remit of the research ethics committee (REC).

### Research Misconduct

The University revision of its procedures and regulations for managing allegations of suspected research misconduct has commenced via ARMA member special interest group participation and review of the UK Committee on Research Integrity Statements report. The review and revision of procedures will take into account the expansion of definitions of research misconduct as well as expansion of responsibilities of all involved within research, as published in the UUK Concordat (2019). The University will use further guidance from UKRIO, in particular; UKRIO's short guidance on misconduct (January 2023) and the new edition of the UKRIO Procedure for Investigating of Misconduct in Research (V2, Published March 2023).

### Governance structures – Human Tissue Authority (HTA) research

The governance structure around management of the HTA licence was approved by the University and the newly established Human Tissue Authority Governance and Oversight Committee now reports to the highest internal research governance body: the Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee. The HTA GO Committee is chaired by the University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer. This has a positive impact in reach of the HTA GO Committee to the highest levels of the University. The new HTA Operational Group will be directly accountable to the HTA Governance Committee has strengthened terms of reference and will allow for closer coordination on the ground. The University also has a new Designated Individual (Life Sciences) and a Persons Designate (Social Sciences), both are building on further work directly with colleagues and students working under the licence as well as governance and reporting to the internal senior bodies.

### *Institutional Research Integrity Self-Assessment*

Although the University had planned to carry out an institutional research integrity self-assessment based on updated guidance from UKRIO, this work had not progressed due to additional work needed around the research ethics governance framework, including training and development in research ethics for reviewers and researchers. This work will be carried forward following review and revision of the misconduct procedures to occur in AY 2023-24.

## Section 3. Addressing Research misconduct

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

The University has clear processes in place for those with concerns about the integrity of research to raise these concerns:

- **Staff research misconduct procedure (PDF) (Approved Academic Council, 18 October 2017)**
- **Student research misconduct regulations (PDF) (Approved Academic Council, 18 October 2017)**
- **Public Interest Disclosure Policy ('Whistleblowing' policy) (Approved Court of Governors 24 November 2021, Updated 22 December 2022]**

The University has robust policies and procedures in place relating to research integrity and research ethics. The key documents for use are the University's Code of Research Good Practice (September 2020) Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research (September 2020).

A list of research related policies and strategies can be found here: https://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/research-governance/research-strategies-and-policies.

### *Key contacts:*

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| **3B. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (containing research good practice and research misconduct information)** | https://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/research-governance/research-integrity |
| **3C. Named Persons contact details for receiving allegations of suspected research misconduct** | Name: Professor Andrew Linn, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Exchange)<br><br>Email: A.Linn@westminster.ac.uk |
| **3D. First Point of Contact for information and queries about the staff (colleague) misconduct procedure** | Department: Research and Knowledge Exchange Office (RKEO) within the Student and Academic Services Department<br><br>Email: research-knowledge-exchange-office@westminster.ac.uk |

| 3E. First Point of Contact for information and queries about the student misconduct regulations | Department: Academic Standards<br><br>Email: academicstandards@westminster.ac.uk |
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The website provides information to easily allow confidential suspected research misconduct to be reported. We continue to signpost colleagues and students via the newly designed webpages, research newsletters, and doctoral training, as well as SOPs.

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

Below is a nil return for allegations and investigations (any stage) regarding staff (colleagues) or postgraduate research students (doctoral researchers):

| 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 |
| *Other** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total: | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |

## Further information

This statement was prepared by Huzma Kelly, Research Ethics and Integrity Officer (REIO) on behalf of Research Committee (7 February 2024) and will be noted by Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee (27 February 2024), Academic Council (29 March 2024) and Court of Governors (13 March 2024).

More details can be sought from the REIO by email to [research-knowledge-exchange-office@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:research-knowledge-exchange-office@westminster.ac.uk)