



Annual statement on research integrity for 2024/2025

University of the Highlands and Islands

This statement utilises the standard national template for research integrity as developed by the UK Research Integrity Office in conjunction with the Research Integrity Concordat Signatories Group.

Section 1: Key contact information

1A. Name of organisation	University of the Highlands and Islands
1B. Type of organisation:	University
1C. Date statement approved by governing body	
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	<u>Research Policy and Ethics - Research Integrity (uhi.ac.uk)</u>
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Professor Brian Williams, Deputy Principal (academic and research)
	Email address: brian.williams@uhi.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: Professor Brian Williams
	Email address: brian.williams@uhi.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

How the organisation maintains high standards of research integrity and promotes positive research culture. It includes information on the support provided to researchers to understand standards, values and behaviours, such as training, support and guidance for researchers at different career stages/ disciplines.

Policies and systems

The University's Research Resources SharePoint page hosts the undernoted policies:

Research specific frameworks and policies

- UHI Research, Impact and KE Strategy 2022-2025 (an up-to-date version will be available in mid 2026)
- Research Values Framework
- Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees 2025-26
- Ethics framework
- Intellectual Property Policy UHI IP Policy (2020) and UHI student IP guidance 03-2021
- Due Diligence Policy and Process
- Researcher Development Concordat
- REF Code of Practice
- Using research metrics responsibly - policy and guide
- Open Access Policy and Retaining Rights to Published Work
- UKRI UK Research and Innovation Trusted Research and Innovation Principles
- Research Governance Framework
- Research Data Management policy
- Fees policy
- Research Sustainability Concordat
- Project Case Studies
- Research Integrity

Wider university policies

- Data Protection, including GDPR
- Due Diligence Policy and Process
- Use of Generative AI – UHI guidance document
- Turnitin Policy and Guidance
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusiveness
- Health and safety policies
- Anti-bribery policy
- University Values Framework
- The National Security and Investment Act: guidance for universities (universitiesuk.ac.uk)
- Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) Guidance

Further university policies (Freedom of Information, Academic Standards, Risk Management, Travel and Subsistence, adverse events) are available on the University governance webpage.

The University's Research Ethics webpage hosts the undernoted documents/videos:

- Adverse Events Policy
- Animal and Environmental Research
- Applying for and being granted ethical approval (recording of a session with Fiona Leiper, Research Ethics Officer)
- Archiving request form
- Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986
- Arts and Humanities Business Ethics Publications
- Audio/visual release form
- British Psychological Society Internet Mediated Research Guidelines document
- Consent Form checklist
- Consent form template
- Data Protection Information
- Data protection policy
- Drone regulation guidance
- ESRC Points for Planning Research
- Ethics PIS template-personal data
- Faculty Information re HRA-IRAS-Student Research
- Food standards agency
- Gatekeeper template
- General Data Protection Regulation presentation

- General Ethics Publications and Articles
- Getting informed consent for user research
- Guidance on researching emotionally sensitive subjects
- ICT and library support for research
- Internet Mediated Research Guidelines
- MRC ethics series Human Tissue and Biological Samples for Use in Online application for ethical approval
- Participant information sheet checklist
- Participant information sheet template-no personal data
- Participant Information sheet template – personal data
- Professional Associations and Codes of Practice
- Research data management
- Research email template
- Research Governance and Integrity Framework
- Research with potentially vulnerable people
- Risk assessment template
- Safeguarding in International Development Research: Evidence Review
- Science Health Engineering Ethics Publications
- Service evaluations guidance
- The Research Integrity Concordat
- UHI audio-visual research participants form
- University student research in NHS Scotland
- UK Research Integrity Office resources
- UKRI's policy on research and innovation involving animals
- Video guidance (with Clive Fox) on completing an application for ethical approval including research with animals and / or the environment

The Graduate School's Public (staff) access SharePoint pages host the undernoted document:

- Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees

Communications and engagement

- The UHI Communications team encouraged the research office to use the new space in Sharepoint for news posts however after 12 months it was deemed unsuccessful due to very low readership after which we reverted back to the Research Ethics Officer producing monthly research newsletters (University Research Update) to inform their research community about opportunities for training, funding applications, research

activity, calls for collaboration, publications, events, resources, job vacancies, lectures and grants. This has resulted in much better engagement and positive feedback from the research community. To enhance this offering the Research Ethics Officer continues to build on the communication networks she has created across the partnership.

- The University hosts an active Viva Engage page entitled 'Research & Graduate School Community' to which regular posts are added to keep the University's research community informed about all relevant research news, opportunities and regulations.
- The Graduate School offer training to support good practice and regulatory knowledge relating to research student supervision.
- The Graduate School hosts a VC drop-in twice yearly (one in each semester) for postgraduate research students, to provide updates (UHI and sector-wide) and answer any general queries that arise. Notes from the drop ins are circulated to all research students and made available on their Postgraduate research intranet area, Brightspace.
- Announcements are made on the Postgraduate research Brightspace area, to notify research students of e.g., external training, funding or career opportunities.

Culture, development and leadership

- The University joined several Scottish universities to form the Scottish hub of The British Academy Early Career Researcher Network.
- **Monitoring and reporting**
The research ethics officer reported to each REC meeting on applications for ethical approval.
- The Graduate School's training sessions are reviewed continually, with consideration given to any new sessions required, based on feedback, direct requests and through Graduate School Committee work when reviewing progress monitoring reports.
- **Mentoring**
The University's mentoring scheme, which includes bespoke strands for research and scholarship development, is well established and offers mentoring opportunities for colleagues and is designed to support professional development and skills enhancement.
- **Training**
The research ethics officer gave several training sessions on the application process for research ethics; to the new PGR students, new AWEC members, new REC members, new Associate Deans, the new Dean, student groups, staff and supervisors. These sessions are promoted through the University's training calendar and promoted through University Research Update, Viva Engage and

the Research Ethics Sharepoint page as well as being promoted through the Associate Deans.

- Completion of the Ethics Reflection and Practice training module continues to be a mandatory requirement for all PGR students and staff submitting an application for ethical approval and for all supervisors, line managers and research directors who endorse such applications. It is also a requirement that all members of REC and REC sub committees complete the module. Compliance continues to increase year on year.
- The development of transferable, employment-related and generic research skills is an important part of postgraduate research training. The University's research student training is aligned with the Vita Researcher Development Framework and supports the development of knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers. There is access to training and events run by the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities, the Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences and the Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland, and through the University of East Anglia's "live-taught" online format, delivering social science-focused training in a virtual classroom.
- Research students and their supervisors are encouraged to complete an annual Training Needs Analysis, and an online tool is available to do this within PGR Manager as part of their annual progress review.

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

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, noted are 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.

- A. Face-to-face inductions for Postgraduate Researchers take place twice yearly in Inverness and include as a standing item a session regarding research ethics. Students are strongly encouraged to attend in person, and funding is available for them to cover a level of travel and accommodation costs. Those unable to attend in person are able to attend by VC.
- B. The UHI Staff/Student Research Conference, was hosted wholly online in January 2026.
- C. Regular communications are issued throughout comms team, University Research Update and Viva Engage to the research community to encourage mentoring partnerships.

- D. Several research ethics presentations were given to various groups, both Postgraduate and Academic Researchers.
- E. The Research Ethics Officer continues to work closely with The University's Health Research Governance Officer to ensure good practice.
- F. The online application for ethical approval was further amended to ensure swift approval of group applications for which the module and programme leaders can apply for ethical approval on behalf of groups of students who are carrying out text-based only research.
- G. We continue to use the members' area in SharePoint for Animal Welfare Environment Committee to host national guidelines and information of interest around animal and environment research to which new guidance from the Animal Materials Working Group was added.
- H. We continued to regularly monitor and update the Research Ethics Framework to reflect changes to both processes and responsible officers because of staff changes.
- I. The Research Office and the Graduate School Office have re-merged, having been separated in the previous year, to become the Research and Graduate School Hub, and will be lead by the new Dean for Research and innovation.
- J. The university created a new guidance document on the use of drones in research.
- K. A place on the University of Edinburgh's Ethics (E1) and National Legislation (L) has been made available to all new AWEC members.
- L. A new gatekeeper template has been made available to researchers to assist in their application for ethical approval.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

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. Notes any issues that have hindered progress, e.g. resourcing or other issues.

Reflections on Progress

Further to terms being served and the restructure we welcomed 7 new members to our REC and 3 new members to our AWEC.

The Research Ethics Officer has collaborated with the Chairs of RDC, AWEC and HSC to replenish the membership of these committees.

The Research Ethics Officer held one to one sessions with all new committee members to outline their roles and responsibilities and guided them through the process as they took on responsibility for application reviews.

The contract for our ethics monitor system was extended with Cayuse for a further year and will conclude on 31/07/26.

The Research Ethics Officer had several meetings with both suppliers for and users of alternative providers for the research ethics online application. She worked closely with the University's Procurement Manager to recruit a new supplier.

The Research Ethics Officer is building a new system for ethics approval with Infonetica who were awarded the contract to provide the system and it is due to be launched in July 2026.

Phase one of the HAPLO PGR Manager system (which was also taken over by Cayuse) was launched on 1st November 2021, delivering online workflows for key processes relating to student progress monitoring and programme management. Although phase two which was to include thesis submission and examination processes has been requested, these new processes will be further delayed indefinitely as Cayuse is also attempting to shift its PGR Manager system into a standardized format for all its customers. As above, UHI will trial the trial the standardised Cayuse version, when it becomes available.

The Graduate School's annual report forms part of the University's evidence in assuring internal and external stakeholders of the quality of postgraduate research provision across the University of the Highlands and Islands and provides an opportunity to reflect on our current provision and consider enhancements for the following year. The report is submitted to the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and forms the basis of discussion during the University's quality monitoring dialogue process, which the Graduate School attends biennially.

As part of the Graduate School's on-going process of continuous enhancement, a yearly review of the Postgraduate Research Degree Code of Practice and Research Degree Regulations, along with associated documents/resources, is undertaken. Any significant changes or updates are undertaken in consultation with relevant colleagues and identified within the annual report.

Progress has been delayed as the Dean of Research & Innovation left the institution in July 2025 and has not yet been replaced.

Plans for future developments

- Plans for the future should be clear once the Research, Impact and Knowledge Exchange Strategic Plan 2026-2031 launches.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

- *a brief summary of relevant organisation policies/ processes (e.g. research misconduct procedure, whistle-blowing policy, bullying/harassment policy; appointment of a third party to act as confidential liaison for persons wishing to raise concerns) and brief information on the periodic review of research misconduct processes (e.g. date of last review; any major changes during the period under review; date when processes will next be reviewed).*
- *information on how the organisation creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct (e.g. code of practice for research, whistle-blowing, research misconduct procedure, informal liaison process, website signposting for reporting systems, training, mentoring, reflection and evaluation of policies, practices and procedures).*
- *anonymised key lessons learned from any investigations into allegations of misconduct which either identified opportunities for improvements in the organisation's investigation procedure and/or related policies / processes/ culture or which showed that they were working well.*

The University has in place several mechanisms to ensure that processes for dealing with research misconduct are transparent, robust and fair.

Supervisors and researchers are reminded of the need to secure ethical approval prior to any research commencing and the fact that approval cannot be granted retrospectively is highlighted. Applications received from students after the research for which they are being submitted are noted.

In terms of dealing with issues of staff academic misconduct in relation to research, there are two broad routes. By way of context, the University consists of a number of individual academic partners that are bound together constitutionally and financially to form the University of the Highlands and Islands. One partner (SAMS UHI) has a specific policy related to investigating concerns about the conduct of research and subsequent arrangements for progressing any incidences where research misconduct is proven. For other partners any cases relating to staff research misconduct are aligned with generic staff discipline arrangements, including investigations.

The University has continued to strengthen its arrangements relating to alleged misconduct involving research students and has specifically developed a procedure for investigating allegations of academic misconduct – bespoke to research students – including appropriate penalties. These procedures and penalties have been brought in line with the existing academic misconduct processes for taught students and are now integrated within the Academic Regulations, ‘Section 19 academic misconduct policy and procedure.’ The Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees includes statements regarding non-academic and academic misconduct, with links provided to relevant policies. Links and references are made to relevant University-wide policies, i.e. Promoting a Positive Learning Environment (PPLC), the Student Code of Conduct and the Academic Regulations and Procedures.

The concordat refers to the need for institutions to have “clear, well-articulated and confidential mechanisms for reporting allegations of research misconduct” (UUK, 2019, p.15). The University has a public interest and disclosure policy and procedure and the scope for this includes all activities conducted under The University’s name, which would include contracted research where the contract is with The University, and also the activities of all research students registered with The University. In relation to students, there is also a confidential students complaints procedure which provides an opportunity for students to raise formal complaints relating to their academic experience in The University. In addition, academic partners also have whistleblowing policies.

Although these mechanisms have served UHI well in the past, as noted in 2.C, above, we believe that there is room for improvement in UHI’s current approaches to addressing and reporting on research misconduct. As such the new Dean of Research & Innovation will incrementally implement the plans outlined in 2. C, above, to encourage greater consistency **on the reporting of research misconduct** across academic partners through training the Research Integrity Officers in each academic partner to use available reporting mechanisms on SharePoint and to regularly report on Research Misconduct through standing Research Integrity agenda items in Academic Partner’s RKECs.

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

The table details the number of **formal investigations completed during the period under review** (including investigations which completed during this period but started in a previous academic year). Information from ongoing investigations should not be included.

The procedure includes an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. Any recorded allegations are included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column.

There were no formal investigations relating to alleged research misconduct at The University of the Highlands the academic year 2023-24

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 (e.g., 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.**