Template: annual statement on research integrity

If you have any questions about this template, please contact: RIsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk.

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	Health Sciences 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)	08/10/2026
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.hsu.ac.uk/research/integrity/
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Dr Julie Northam
	Email address: Julie.Northam@hsu.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: Dr Julie Northam
	Email address: Julie.Northam@hsu.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

Please describe how the organisation maintains high standards of research integrity and promotes positive research culture. It should include 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. You may find it helpful to consider the following broad headings:

- Policies and systems
- Communications and engagement
- Culture, development and leadership
- Monitoring and reporting

Health Sciences University (HSU) is strongly committed to the principles of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and has been a signatory of the Concordat since October 2017. This statement covers the academic year 2025/26 in relation to research misconduct covering both staff and postgraduate research (PGR) students and confirms that there were no allegations of research misconduct received.

The Director of Research is responsible for overseeing all aspects of research integrity at HSU and is the first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity. The Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC) provides oversight and leadership for matters of research ethics and integrity institutionally, reporting into the Research & Innovation Committee (RIC). The Director of Research and Chair of the IREC are responsible for embedding principles of good research culture. The University's Executive Leadership Group or the Academic Registrar & University Secretary are the primary contacts for whistle-blowing procedures.

We are committed to conducting all research activity at HSU with the highest standards of rigour and integrity. This commitment is reflected in our Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedure, the HSU Code of Good Practice for

Research and our Research and Ethics Policy and Procedures.

Research involving human participants is subject to ethical review through HSU's research ethics review processes. Ethical review is undertaken through School-level ethics review arrangements, supported by institutional oversight through the IREC. Researchers have access to guidance and support throughout the research lifecycle, including research design, ethics review, governance approvals, sponsorship, data management, open access publishing and public involvement. For PGR students, research integrity principles are embedded within induction, supervision and monitoring processes. HSU recognises the opportunities and risks associated with generative AI and is developing institutional guidance to support its responsible, transparent and ethical use in research. The IREC's membership, as set out in its Terms of Reference, includes academic and professional services staff, together with lay and external representatives, providing independent scrutiny of ethics and integrity matters.

HSU recognises that research integrity is closely linked to research culture. Alongside robust governance, policies and procedures, the University seeks to create an environment in which researchers are supported to collaborate, develop, share good practice and conduct high-quality research. This includes support through Research Centres, the annual research conference, PGR development activities, patient and public involvement initiatives, and emerging open research activities.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

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.

HSU's strategic aims set out our ambition to *'become a first choice partner within specialisms for research and innovation in the health science community'* which involves significantly increasing our research activity and developing our emerging research culture. Our Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) strategy was launched in February 2025 and stresses our commitment to advancing high-quality, impactful research that addresses regional, national, and global challenges. By strengthening partnerships with industry, government, and communities, we aim

to translate our research into practical solutions that benefit society. Work has continued to improve our guidance, training and support throughout the full research lifecycle.

The University's IREC was formally established in November 2025 and takes a strategic overview of research ethics and integrity. IREC introduced the 'Research Ethics Training Proposal' which is a tiered approach to research ethics training for staff, reviewers and students. Some training was delivered in 2025/26, including the UK Research & Integrity Office's (UKRIO) three online ethics and integrity modules. Further training and development is planned for 2026/27. An HSU Responsible AI Use in Research Policy is currently progressing through HSU approval routes with a view to being launched in autumn 2026, informed by an IREC/RIC position paper setting out a risk-tiered approach to AI ethics review. IREC has also led a substantial revision of the Research Ethics Policy and Procedures, separating it into linked Policy, Procedures and Standard Operating Procedure instruments, and has strengthened safeguarding provisions within ethics review documentation. The HSU Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedure launched in March 2026, replacing the previously separate Research Misconduct Policy and Research Governance and Integrity Policy. The policy addresses the issues involved in the proper conduct of research and provides guidance on the standards expected of researchers in line with HSU's Code of Good Practice for Research and the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2025). The process for investigations of alleged research misconduct is based on best practice in the sector and specifically the UKRIO Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research.

An Open Research Working Group was convened in summer 2026 including representatives from across the research team, library services, HR and PGR coordination. Drawing on resources made available from the UK Reproducibility Network, the group aims to assess current open research practices at HSU with a view to develop institutional statements, policy reviews, and integration into core systems. This reflects HSU's commitment to transparency, reproducibility and responsible research practices.

In April 2026, HSU approved and launched two new policy documents. HSU's IP and Commercialisation Policy and Procedures has incorporated the best practice policies for spin-out deal terms as highlighted in the Independent Review of University Spin-out Companies (2023), resulting in HSU being included on UKRI's Spin-outs Best Practice Adoption List. The second new policy document was HSU's Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics, which aligns with the principles of the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA).

In July 2026, HSU received confirmation from Research England that the HSU REF 2029 Code of Practice had been approved with no required changes. This document sets out the policies and processes that underpin HSU's Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 preparations and submission.

In addition, the following RKE policies and procedures were revised and implemented in 2025/26, including:

- Managing Due Diligence in Research Process, based on UKRI guidelines
- Research Centres Policy & Procedures
- Open Access Publication Fund
- Recognition & Remuneration Policy for Research Contributors & Participants which incorporates patient and public involvement (PPI) procedures. Remuneration rates were updated in line with new NIHR recommended rates.
- External Approvals and Research Ethics Review Policy and Procedure
- Research Sponsorship Policy and Procedures

HSU's first cohort of PGRs enrolled in autumn 2022. PGR student numbers have increased from three in 2022/23 to 27 in 2025/26, with 20 new PGRs expected to enrol in autumn 2026. The continued growth of HSU's postgraduate research community has contributed to the development of a vibrant research environment, with increased opportunities for peer learning, interdisciplinary collaboration and researcher development. HSU PGR Student Handbook v3 was updated and launched in March 2025, including new sections on freedom of speech and academic freedom, alignment with the principles of the CoARA, good practice in research data management and IP ownership, and information on approvals required from the Health Research Authority (HRA) and NHS Research Ethics Committees. Furthermore, a project was undertaken in 2026 to agree and document roles and responsibilities across HSU for supporting PGR students.

HSU has also made commitments to several external best practice initiatives including:

- Subscribing to the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and implementing mandatory training for all ethics panel members via the UKRIO introduction to integrity online module.
- Signing the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) agreement.
- Signing the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA).
- Signing the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE)

Manifesto for Public Engagement.
- Joining the University Policy Engagement Network (UPEN).
- Committing to the Knowledge Exchange Concordat.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

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.

The formal establishment of IREC in 2025/26 has provided improved institutional oversight of ethics and integrity, creating a forum through which policies, training needs and emerging issues can be considered consistently across the University.

A thorough gap analysis of the HSU RKE infrastructure was completed in 2023/24, with ethics and integrity comprising one area of the analysis. An action plan was produced following this analysis, and includes the following planned developments:

- A comprehensive review of ethics and integrity policies and processes to ensure our processes are as robust and efficient as possible - ongoing
- Implement training around ethics and integrity as part of a larger training and development package for RKE – training has been provided in 2025/26 with more planned in 2026/27, particularly regarding responsible AI use in research
- To better communicate our processes and policies around ethics and integrity to raise awareness and understanding, and to have a dedicated space on our staff webpages for ethics and integrity where all guidance and policies will be located. An internal 'RKE Hub' was launched in January 2024 which includes improved guidance on ethics for staff and PGR students. A new institutional website will also allow better public access to our policies and procedures and information on our RKE activity - complete
- To produce a Code of Good Research Practice - complete
- To produce a process for informing funders of research about misconduct investigations –addressed in the new Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy
- To implement internal ethics and integrity audits. This responsibility is included in the terms of reference for IREC and implementation is being planned. Development of a risk-based approach to internal ethics and integrity auditing is being progressed alongside the ethics system review, informed by IREC's forward workplan – ongoing
- The current ethics application system (REAP) is not yet used consistently across all Schools, with some continuing to manage applications by email.

Options for a single institutional platform are under evaluation in 2026/27, which will support more consistent data capture and reporting. - Ongoing

- To update and strengthen our Postgraduate Research Handbook, which includes guidance on ethics and integrity - complete
- Training for supervisors of PGRs by Southampton Solent University, our awarding body for research degrees – most staff have already received training with this action ongoing
- Implementing an annual review of our compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity
- Participation as a pilot institution in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 People, Culture and Environment pilot exercise in 2024/25 – complete. Participation in the exercise provided an opportunity to reflect critically on HSU's research culture, identify strengths and areas for development, and embed lessons within strategic planning.
- To assess open research practices and develop institutional statements, policy reviews, and integration into core systems – ongoing

The growth of HSU's research portfolio and PGR student population continues to increase the importance of scalable and proportionate ethics, governance and integrity systems. For example, in 2026/27 we are reviewing HSU's ethics management and review system with a view to embedding an IT solution across the University.

2D. Case study on good practice (optional)

Please describe an anonymised brief, exemplar case study that can be shared as good practice with other organisations. A wide range of case studies are valuable, including small, local implementations. Case studies may also include the impact of implementations or lessons learned.

Establishing institutional oversight of research ethics and integrity

In 2025/26, HSU formally established the IREC to provide strategic oversight of research ethics and integrity across the University. Prior to this, ethics review activity was primarily undertaken through School-level arrangements. IREC is chaired by a Professor, with a lay member acting as Vice-Chair, and reports to the RIC ensuring institutional oversight and integration with broader research governance. Membership includes academic and professional service representatives from across the University, together with lay members and external representatives, providing independent perspectives and expertise.

One of IREC's first initiatives was the development of a tiered research ethics

training framework for staff, ethics reviewers and students. The committee has also provided oversight of emerging challenges and opportunities in the research environment. During 2025/26, this included reviewing the developing Responsible Use of AI in Research Policy, being taken forward through the Research & Innovation Committee, and considering the implications of AI use for research ethics review processes. This work has helped identify where existing ethics review procedures may need to evolve to support the responsible, transparent and ethical use of AI in research.

The establishment of IREC has improved institutional coordination and consistency in the oversight of research ethics and integrity, creating a dedicated forum through which policies, training needs and emerging issues can be considered across the University. Key lessons learned have included the importance of balancing institutional consistency with proportionate processes that reflect the needs of a small but rapidly growing research environment.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

Please provide:

- 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.

HSU seeks to foster a culture in which concerns can be raised safely and without fear of detriment. The Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy explicitly includes protections for complainants and respondents and is based on UKRIO best practice. Multiple reporting routes are available, including the Director of Research, whistleblowing procedures, line management structures, Human Resources, and student support mechanisms. Concerns relating to bullying, harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct may be raised through processes described in the University's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy and Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure. These policies provide reporting routes, protections against victimisation, and support mechanisms for staff and students. Staff and students are encouraged to discuss concerns informally where appropriate and guidance is available through institutional policies, training and online resources.

HSU has the following relevant policies/processes relating to research integrity:

Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedure – March 2026
This policy and procedure applies to all HSU staff and postgraduate research students undertaking research under the auspices of the University. The document sets out HSU's principles around research integrity, advice on concerns about research integrity, and confidentiality and data protection. It sets out the process by which allegations of research misconduct can be reported, the process of investigation, and that the principle of no detriment shall apply to both the complainant and the respondent.

Research Ethics Policy and Procedures – December 2024
This document covers all major areas for ethical consideration including responsibilities of researchers, students, supervisors and panels, research ethics principles, research ethics definitions, informed consent, the research ethics application and review process. Schools have independent research ethics panels which report to the Institutional Research Ethics Committee. This document has been reviewed to standardise the process across Schools.

Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures – May 2025
This policy sets out how to raise concerns in the event someone believes that wrongdoing or malpractice is taking place within the University. The policy applies to governors, students, those contracted to supply services to the University and to everyone who works for the University. The policy sets out how whistleblowers will be protected and the action that will be taken on any member of the University's community who discriminates against anyone who raises a concern under this policy. Concerns can be raised by emailing whistleblowing@hsu.ac.uk.

The following policies and procedures also set out the expectations, policies and procedures around academic integrity for our staff and students:

- Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure (due for review autumn 2028)
- Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
- Student Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedures
- Academic Appeals Policy and Procedures
- Postgraduate Research Student Handbook
- Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy
- Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Data Protection Policy
- Code of Conduct for Staff

List of Acronyms	
CoARA	Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment
DoR	Director of Research
DORA	Declaration on Research Assessment
ELG	Executive Leadership Group
HRA	Health Research Authority
IREC	Institutional Research Ethics Committee
NHS	National Health Service
NIHR	National Institute for Health Research
PGR	Post-Graduate Research
PPI	Patient and Public Involvement
REAP	Research Ethics Application System
REF	Research Excellence Framework
RIC	Research & Innovation Committee
RKE	Research & Knowledge Exchange
UKRI	UK Research & Innovation
UKRIO	UK Research & Integrity Office

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

Please complete the table on 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 submitted.

An organisation's procedure may include an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. These allegations should be included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column.

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*			
Falsification	*0*			
Plagiarism	*0*			
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	*0*			
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)	*0*			
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	*0*			
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)	*0*			
*Other**	*0*			
Total:	**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.**
[Please insert response if applicable]