

Swansea University Annual statement on research integrity 2023-24

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	Swansea University
1B. Type of organisation: higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)	Higher Education Institute
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	16 Oct 2024
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	Research Integrity: Ethics and Governance - Swansea University
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Prof Helen Griffiths (Pro Vice Chancellor; Research & Innovation)
	Email address: pvcresearch@swansea.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: Mrs Anjana Choudhuri
	Email address: researchintegrity@swansea.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

- **Policies and systems:** The University is committed to creating a culture of good research practice and maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research. The University Research Integrity: Ethics and Governance policy framework outlines the institutional approach to research integrity and provides the underpinning policies on research ethics & governance. This framework is reviewed annually with amendments to existing policies and addition of new ones created in an academic year. The University has, in recent years, implemented an online system to assess and approve all research ethics applications. This system categorises research risks in an application into low, medium and high risk. The University is expecting to set up a monitoring system in future years to monitor all high-risk research. A Task and Finish group with university wide membership was set up to develop a guidance for Gen AI on Research and Innovation. Information generated from the T&F is being used to draft the guidance.
- **Communications and engagement:** Apart from providing access to a free online training on research integrity the University promoted research integrity in 2023-24 through its many in-house seminars/webinars on ‘Good Research Practice and Preventing Research Misconduct’, ‘Effectively assessing undertaking and Security Sensitive Research’, ‘Good Clinical Governance and Practice’, ‘Working with Human tissue’ etc. The University Research Integrity Manager sends out to Faculty Ethics contacts for further dissemination, regular communications received from the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), UK Committee of Research Integrity (UKCORI) and UK Research & Innovation (UKRI). Communication and meetings on Trusted Research with members the Research Collaboration and Advisory Team (RCAT) is also organised at regular intervals. Free online training on Export Control from the Higher Education Export Control Association (HEECA) is provided to research active staff.
- **Culture, development and leadership:** Leadership for the area is provided by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & Innovation) who is supported by the Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor (Research Culture) and the Ethics Leads from the three Faculties.
- **Monitoring and reporting:** Monitoring of research integrity is done by the University Research Integrity: Ethics & Governance Committee which has the overarching institutional responsibility. The Faculty ethics and

integrity sub-committees provide a written report, once every term to the University committee. The University committee also receives regular reports from other areas like research governance, Animal research (AWERB) and Human Tissue. Any sub-committees set up to review referrals to the university research integrity committee also report their findings to this committee.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

New policies, practices, initiatives, training, developments, during 2023-24:

1. Ethics assessment online system: The online ethics assessment system (Infonetica) was rolled out to all the faculties in the University.
2. New and revised policies and strategies:
 - New Policies and strategies drafted: Research Publication policy, a suite of policies on Cyber security, University digital strategy, research culture action plan are some of the new policies and strategies were drafted in AY 2023-24.
 - Revisions to old guidance and policies: Revisions were undertaken for the 'Guidance on Ethical Review' and the 'Policy on handling allegations of research misconduct' to bring them in line with UKRI, UKCORI and UKRIO requirements.
3. Training: The University participated in the pilot for the new UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) online training. Regular Training and guidance to academic staff on 'Security sensitive research' is being provided alongside maintaining a database/teams site for all Security Sensitive research within the University.
4. Research culture: Swansea University is committed to developing an inclusive, open, and responsible Research Culture. We uphold our institutional commitment to provide an environment that enables our researchers, professional support colleagues (research enablers) and our collaborators to deliver and undertake excellent, responsible research and innovation. In December 2021, the University appointed its first Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research Culture, who, after 3 years, was succeeded by a new DPVC for Research Culture. The DPVC Research Culture is supported by the Research Culture Manager. In response to the community feedback gathered in 2023, a high-level Research Culture action plan with 5 core areas of focus was developed. A Research Culture implementation group has been set up with the responsibility to deliver to the action plan. The progress of this action plan will be monitored by the Research, Innovation & Impact Committee (RIIC).
5. Trusted Research and Research Security: The University is raising

awareness amongst its researchers of the requirements of the Trusted Research and is developing its procedures on due diligence. Representatives of the Research Collaboration and Advisory Team (RCAT) have visited the University several times during 2023-24 and have held briefing sessions with Senior academics. The online module on 'Export Control' was made into a 'mandatory' training modules within the Research Integrity training. Researchers are being offered access to the online training on Research Security and Export Control from the Higher Education Export Control Association (HEECA).

6. Research Governance: The Research Governance sponsorship portal via Infonetica online system was made operational. All Healthcare Sponsorship projects for the length of the project would be supported through this portal. Monitoring, Quality Assurance and project sponsorship support visits continued throughout 2023-24, and the Swansea University Sponsorship Oversight Committee produced policies to aid and guide researchers.
7. Human Tissue: the University webpages providing researchers information on working with Human Tissue were updated during the year and the set of new HTA SOPs were published that reflected the separation of the HTA research licence from Swansea Bay Health Board. These SOPs align with SU policies and enhance compliance with the Human Tissue Act (HT Act) and Human Tissue Authority (HTA) guidance. The Engineering East Sports Science Department was prepared for inclusion as a new satellite site on the HTA research licence by aligning them with the new CORE SOPs and best practice. Input was provided to the development of the research governance and sponsorship pages of the online ethics assessment system to ensure that correct information was made available to the SU Sponsorship Oversight Committee (SUSOC). The adoption of the online system has significantly improved oversight of research activities involving human tissue samples, allowing the Human Tissue Governance Officer to track an individual's involvement in human tissue research and track where samples are stored. Internal audits of all licensed collections have been completed, and a new collection has been added to the licence in the past year. During 2023-24, SUSOC also launched regular Sponsorship Support Visits (SSVs) for REC-approved studies. The Human Tissue Governance Officer (HTGO) attended all SSVs for studies involving human tissue to ensure compliance with HT Act. Five new Persons Designated (PDs) were added to the HTA licence to support the Designated Individual (DI) & HTGO in ensuring compliance. New signs for ULT freezers were produced to signpost them in several buildings across

the campuses. In June, the University hosted a seminar on Human Tissue in Research & Sustainable Biobanking, which resulted in increased researcher engagement, greater awareness of the new CORE SOPs, and a policy change to reduce ULT freezer temperatures from -80°C to -70°C , enhancing sustainability and reducing energy costs. A new Teams user group was created to serve as an easy-to-access, central hub for staff and students involved in human tissue research. This site enables staff and students to upload their contingency plans, review the latest HTA Manual, SOPs, templates, and forms and access security-sensitive documents that cannot be hosted on the public website. Using of private channels for licensed collections to upload site files, provides immediate oversight.

8. Animal research: Swansea University's AWERB continues to actively review all research activities that involve protected animals (as defined by ASPA) and are interventional (i.e. involve capture, handling, contact and /or confinement). This ensures full compliance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA) and provides reassurance to the establishment that there is a process in place to prevent unauthorised activity. The AWERB meet regularly to discuss any pending project licences that require review, any updates provided by the Home Office and the current research activities within the establishment. The committee consists of the establishment licence holder, the Named people, a lay member and academic experts from the relevant faculties.

9. Faculty updates:

- Faculty of Science and Engineering: In 2023-24, the Faculty has updated its Canvas portal to include all contact information and links to the faculty website. Minutes from the FSE ethics committee meetings were also uploaded. The website holds more detail <https://www.swansea.ac.uk/science-and-engineering/research/fseethics/> The website links applicants to the ethics system, provides links to external resources and provides additional information with regards to the committee's remit and the process for applying for an ethical approval.
- Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences: The Faculty developed a dedicated Research Integrity, Ethics and Governance module on the FHSS CANVAS research Hub: <https://canvas.swansea.ac.uk/courses/51822>

The Faculty trialled a 7-day turn-around for low-risk Infonetica applications in FHSS. This has sped up things to a degree.

- Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences: The online ethics assessment system (Infonetica) has ensured that communication and engagement are transparent across the University. All Research projects are now screened ethically in the same manner.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

- Due Diligence and Trusted Research policy and processes: The University has developed some guidance on due diligence and trusted research. The Senior Leadership Team have recognised the requirement of robust processes and policies for the area and a discussion to strengthen this area and its requirements in 2024-25 through the professional services redesign is being considered.
- Monitoring of high-risk research: A monitoring process for all high-risk research using the online ethics assessment system will be agreed and set up in 2024-25.
- Research Integrity training: the University is considering research integrity training options for staff and students and discussing best possible ways of providing this within budgetary constraints.
- Guidance on Gen AI on Research & Innovation: The responses from a Task and Finish group on Gen AI in R&I has been collated and a guidance is being drafted for approval in 2024-25.
- Human Tissue: Looking ahead, the Engineering East Sports Science Department will be officially added as a new satellite site on Swansea University's HTA licence, following the compliance processes established for the Medical School, which remains the Hub site. The rollout of new signs for liquid nitrogen Dewars in ILS1 and ULT freezers in ILS2 is ongoing, with additional signs for Dewars planned for the near future. The LMS tender process remains in draft but is anticipated to significantly enhance compliance and sample tracking once finalized. Plans for future include adding private channels to the new Teams user group and establishing digital site files for historical licensed collections.
- Future developments across the 3 Faculties (2024-25): The Faculty Ethics Leads along with PVC Education and DPVC Education met to discuss developing a system and a policy for projects submitted for university wide marking without an ethical approval. The policy would address how such projects should be handled so that there is consistency and transparency

across the University. A system for monitoring such projects that may or may not require an ethical approval would be developed post discussions with the University Quality and Systems team so that relevant approvals could be accessed by the markers who are then able to establish if an ethical approval was granted.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

- The University has a 'Policy on Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct' The policy is freely available to access via the University Research Integrity webpages. [Research Misconduct - Swansea University](#)
- A confidential email address researchmisconduct@swansea.ac.uk can be used by anyone wishing to register a complaint regarding inappropriate research practices.
- The Pro Vice Chancellor (R&I) is the 'named contact' for the University to receive an allegation.
- The Faculty Ethics Leads also work as 'Research Integrity Advisors' and assist with handling queries and providing support to researchers in the Faculties.

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	1	No formal investigation		
Falsification		No formal investigation		
Plagiarism	1	No formal investigation		
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations				
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)	2	No formal investigation		
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)				

<i>Other*</i>	1			
Total:				
*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.				
1 Authorship dispute (Category: Other)				