RESEARCH WITH PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Plymouth University: Assurance statement on compliance with the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* (2016 for uploading to web)

Background

In 2012 Universities UK published the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. As a signatory, Plymouth University is committed to maintaining and promoting the highest standards of integrity and probity in scientific research. This activity is implemented by the Research Support and Development team and progress is reported to the Research and Innovation Committee. As a condition of funding, HEFCE require that as a signatory the University demonstrates compliance in the form of an annual assurance statement, which is subject to audit.

One of the requirements of the Concordat is a short annual statement to the Board of Governors that:

- provides a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues;
- provides assurances that the processes in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair, and continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation;
- provides a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken.

This is that statement, and it is structured under these 3 heads.

1. 2015/16 actions and activities to support research integrity:

1.1 Staff development

The four year external review of the European Commission HR Excellence in Research Award was undertaken at the start of 2015/16. The review was not only successful and allowed the University to retain the award, but reviewers commended the quality of the work we do.

Research governance and quality training opportunities have continued to increase, 121 staff attended the sixteen sessions that were available, these included; introductory and advanced research ethics, working with human tissue under licence, advice sessions on insurance and submitting ethical review applications, research integrity and achieving high quality research.

An e-learning package on data protection was developed and rolled out to all staff.

1.2 Regulatory assurances

The Research Governance Officer has continued to support researchers in securing US assurance registrations; the Federal Wide Assurance (FWA) for the Protection of Human Subjects (Department of Health and Human Services-DHHS) and the Assurance on Animal Welfare (National Institutes of Health – NIH). These assurances demonstrate on going compliance with US Federal standards. Project staff have completed specific training to meet with these regulations and complied with Institutional Review Board requirements and monitoring.

1.3 Staff resources

The role of Research Governance Specialist has been broadened to meet the increased regulatory compliance required by the Health Research Authority (HRA) Approval Programme and is the recognised signatory as Sponsors Representative on behalf of the University of Plymouth. As a result of this it has been necessary to increase training opportunities to improve researcher understanding of the HRA Approval and IRAS process; to ensure legal compliance across the University. The Research Governance Specialist is part of a working group set up by the HRA, where Sponsors Representative's from across the country are providing feedback and allowed to influence the implementation of the HRA Approval Programme as it moves forward. The Research Governance Specialist is the designated administrative coordinator contact for the Federal Wide Assurance for the Protection of Human Subjects, to assist the Vice Chancellor and acts as an Independent Ethics Advisor on an International study to support cross-Faculty working.

1.4 Reviews and Audits

1.4.1 Reviews

A Research Governance Refresh Task and Finish Group supported the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research) in reviewing the University's research governance structures, policies, systems and processes in the light of the more complex and

far ranging nature of questions of academic conduct and integrity. The group met on four occasions and brought together a diverse range of stakeholders. The group compiled a list of issues/drivers for change and identified 4 work packages which taken as a whole will deliver improvements.

- An Integrated 'cradle to grave' approach to grant application and management.

- New Research Integrity and Governance architecture.

- Establishment of a new Research Register to safeguard our academic community internally and externally to allow our researchers to conduct their work untrammelled.

- Once these structures were in place, a programme of awareness raising and training on the rationale for these changes so as to effect a more sustained culture change.

The four work packages will be implemented during 2016/17 as agreed by Research and Innovation Committee in June 2016.

1.4.2 Audits

The audit of research data, data storage and ethical approval processes carried out in 2014/15 identified a number of agreed actions. The actions were implemented between September 2015 and August 2016, details below.

Action	Implementation
Secure storage space Introduce central storage facility for all researchers, possibly cloud	Individual storage space delivered through Collaboration project (OneDrive for Business). Phase 2 (PU sites) to be deployed Q4 2016
Raise awareness of encryption levels required	Delivered through guidance Q4 2015
Complete questionnaire to gather information on data held by researchers	Delivered through Jisc RDMS project Q3 2016
Consult with Jisc to identify potential solutions to data storage issues	On-going. Archival storage is being delivered through Jisc RDMS project.

Awareness of Research Data Management Practices Develop and widely communicate a RDM summary sheet which sets out good practices to adopt.	Data security compliance to be incorporated into risk assessment of research funding proposals Data management 'good practice' to be built into all research-related training – Q4 2015
Raise awareness of page summarising RDM requirements of major research-funding bodies (Libguide).	Guidance on data management 'good practice' to be consistent and visible from Research, Library & IT websites. New RDM Libguides delivered Q4 2015
Review of ethics approval and monitoring processes and responsibilities.	The review was completed in May 16. The actions from the review are currently being implemented by UREC and the Research Governance Refresh Task and Finish Group.

2. Research misconduct

2.1 There is policy guidance in place that gives complete coverage for staff, postgraduate research and postgraduate taught students on matters of research misconduct and the processes therein remain appropriate for the organisation.

3. Formal investigations

3.1 There has been no formal investigation into research misconduct involving staff in the last year.

3.2 There has been one of postgraduate research misconduct (fabrication of data), the case not upheld.