

# University of East London

## Annual statement on research integrity<sup>1</sup>

### Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
<b>1A. Name of organisation</b>	University of East London (UEL)
<b>1B. Type of organisation:</b>  higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)	Higher education
<b>1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2025
<b>1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)</b>	<a href="#">Research Policies   University of East London (uel.ac.uk)</a>
<b>1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity</b>	Name: Professor Matt Bellgard, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Impact and Innovation
	Email address: <a href="mailto:M.Bellgard@uel.ac.uk">M.Bellgard@uel.ac.uk</a>
<b>1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for</b>	Name: Catherine Hitchens, Ethics, Integrity and Compliance Manager

<sup>1</sup> The Annual Statement includes information and direct extracts sourced from the University of East London's internet and intranet pages.

**anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity**

Email address: [C.Hitchens@uel.ac.uk](mailto:C.Hitchens@uel.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

#### **Policies and systems**

##### **Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee (EISC)**

The University's Codes of Practice for Research and Research Ethics, and Staff and Student Misconduct in Research procedure, are UEL's established frameworks for good research practice and ethical conduct.

The University's Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee (EISC), is aligned with [The Concordat to Support Research Integrity, 2025](#), (hereafter termed the Concordat), associated policies, and national and international codes of conduct and guidelines. The Impact and Innovation directorate leads the institutional strategic priority of 'Future Life:' - one of four strategic aims of 'Future Graduate,' 'Future Professional' and 'Sustainability'.

Guided by the University's 10 year strategy, Vision 2028,<sup>2</sup> and the institution's Ethical Framework, EISC places emphasis on equality, diversity, and inclusion, ensuring research and its impact align with these principles.

The below table illustrates the functions which support the University's research environment.

Strategic aim	
Impact & Innovation directorate	Future Life – to increase the economic, social and cultural impact (reach and value) of our activities to the communities we serve'.
The Office for Postgraduates, Research and Engagement (OPRE)	Bringing a pan-university infrastructure together in one team, engaging with researchers, Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs) and a broad range of external stakeholders to facilitate the successful achievement of the Impact and Innovation strategic objectives and related transformational projects.
The Research Ethics Office (REO)	The REO is part of OPRE with responsibility for maintaining compliance with the Concordat and associated policies and procedures. The office manages and administers the ethics and governance review process for research projects. Additionally, the REO oversees EISC, SECs and CRECs, and provides informed guidance on responsible ethical conduct and best practice.
The Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee (EISC)	To uphold the highest standards of rigour and integrity across all disciplines, while prioritising the well-being, dignity and rights of participants and those impacted by research. The ethics committees ensure that research projects are conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal, regulatory and professional frameworks, obligations, and standards <sup>3</sup> .
School and Collaborative Partners Ethics Committees (SEC) and (CREC).	

<sup>2</sup> Vision 2028 is the University of East London's ambitious 10-year strategy, to foster inclusive pathways to career readiness for students of all backgrounds, whilst driving positive change and measurable impact through its research, global partnerships, and innovative educational models.

<sup>3</sup> As specified in Commitment 2 of the Concordat – 'Maintaining the highest standards of research integrity – expectations and compliance.'

### **Research Governance Policies Working group**

A Research Governance Policies Working Group (RGPWG) was formed to undertake a comprehensive review of the University's research governance framework, policies and procedures, update policies to reflect new structures and external drivers, and to address any gaps in policies and procedures. A scoping exercise was conducted with the aim of producing a comprehensive map of research policies, policy owners, gaps and interdependencies.

As a prioritisation for the RGPWG, the University's Code of Practice for Research is currently being reviewed and revised. From this a separate Code of Conduct and an accessible handbook will be created to assist researchers with understanding their responsibilities as investigators, working with integrity and good ethical practice.

### **Guidance on research involving teaching and learning**

There was a lack of clarity amongst UEL lecturers regarding the threshold for seeking ethical approval in studies related to teaching and learning. Centralised guidance was developed and published to outline key principles for lecturers to consider when undertaking projects related to teaching and learning. This included instances where the researcher plans to recruit students as participants or co-researchers for a project involving students in activities beyond their usual engagement with teaching, or reviewing the curriculum and engaging students in the process. The importance of informed consent from students and consideration of the research data was outlined. A self-review for researchers on the components of research governance, and research integrity and ethics, was produced to illustrate the fundamental aspects of rigour, open and responsible research practices and care and respect for the student participants.

### **Freedom of Speech Code of Practice**

The University has revised and published an updated version of the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice. The purpose of the Code is to promote and secure the freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law for:

- UEL members and staff;
- UEL students;
- all persons invited to speak or attend events that are held, organised, funded or branded by the University or that use UEL's premises or digital platforms;

- all events, meetings, all education and research activities, which are held, organised, funded or branded by the University or that use UEL's premises or digital platforms.

UEL values and encourages free expression of opinions, beliefs, and viewpoints from staff, students and guest speakers, including views expressed that could be considered controversial, offensive or contentious. Challenges and debate are central to the pursuit of knowledge and UEL is committed to being an inclusive University where all members of its community respect the rights and freedoms of individuals, and the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.

The Freedom of Speech Code of Practice delineates how the institution will uphold the principles articulated in its Freedom of Speech Statement, ensuring the protection and promotion of freedom of speech and academic freedom within the University's community, and for visiting speakers, guests and other visitors. Clarifying the definitions of freedom of speech and academic freedom is essential to ensuring students and staff feel confident expressing their views within legal boundaries.

The University has established principles that underpin and support its commitment to freedom of speech and academic freedom. UEL is dedicated to providing every member of its community with the knowledge to raise concerns about freedom of speech and academic freedom, with the assurance that the institution is committed to addressing concerns promptly and effectively.

A Freedom of Speech Advisory Group has been formed, tasked with reviewing and advising on governance arrangements related to freedom of speech and academic freedom. The group will undertake an audit of institutional policies to identify and evaluate those with implications for free speech and will consider the development of appropriate training and information resources to support its implementation.

#### **Declarations of Interest policy**

The University's Declaration of Interests Policy (DOIP) brings together the conflict of interest elements from a range of policies and procedures. This includes the explicit terms of the contracts of employment for all staff, Financial Regulations and the Personal Relationships Policy. The DOIP has been reviewed and updated, and provides a framework of responsibilities and reporting, by which UEL staff and governors can disclose interests which may conflict with those of the University. The DOIP is not intended to be a deterrent to prevent staff from undertaking external activities or being involved in academic engagements in the course of their professional commitments, but to ensure that external activities and actions are managed appropriately. UEL staff should understand their duty to declare actual,

potential or perceived conflicts of interest, and be held accountable for their conduct.

### **Policy on Public Interest Disclosure**

The University is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability and adheres to the Public Interest Disclosure Act, 2013. UEL's Policy on Public Interest Disclosure (PPID) has been reviewed and updated and is published on UEL's public facing website. The purpose of the policy is to provide advice to staff about how a public disclosure should be made and assurance that the person is under the protection of the Public Interest Disclosure Act. UEL staff can report wrongdoing, serious malpractice and impropriety, should the disclosure necessitate recounting to the University, in the public interest, without fear of victimisation, ill-treatment or reprisals, A definition of 'Whistleblowing' is given in the PPID, and explains the types of concerns that can be raised and how the University will respond to the matter being raised.

### **Generative AI policy**

The University has a Generative Artificial Intelligence Usage Policy. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that Generative AI (Gen AI) technologies are utilised in a manner that is consistent with UEL's values and ethical principles. The policy provides a framework for the responsible and ethical use of Gen AI at the University, and emphasises transparency, ethical considerations, responsible data usage, and compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. UEL will keep abreast of emerging policies, procedures and guidelines regarding Gen AI. The institution's Gen AI policy is being reviewed each semester and updated, as necessary, to reflect the rapid advancements in Gen AI technologies and regulatory frameworks.

### **REF Code of Practice**

In support of developing UEL's REF2029 Code of Practice, which is critical to underpinning UEL's REF2029 submission and securing permission to participate from Research England, the work on developing the significant responsibility for research (SRR) identification framework for UEL's REF2029 is entering the consultation phase.

At high level, the proposed approach involves researchers applying for one of two Research Time Allocations, with applications delivered via an Expression of Interest (Eoi), which is then reviewed by a proposed new group, the University Research Excellence Panel.

In parallel with this, in order to ensure that UEL's REF2029 performance is optimised, work is underway to rationalise the Units of Assessment (UoAs) which UEL submits to.

### **Public and Community Engagement (PCE) - strategy**

Building on the activities of academic year 2024-25, UEL has developed and is implementing a Public and Community Engagement Strategy.

Central to the strategy is UEL's ongoing commitment to working in sustained, partnership with the communities we serve, seeking to create and deliver interventions for public engagement, knowledge exchange and participatory research projects. This harnesses UEL's expertise to address inequalities wherever they are found, and benefit our stakeholders in the communities we serve.

UEL's intention is that public and community engagement with research will be strategically driven by research institutes and research centres, all of which are supported to deliver, engage, connect and fund – through internal and external funding mechanisms – their engagement. The facilitation of partnerships between relevant internal and external organisations is a key feature of the public and community engagement function, strategically permeating the boundary between internal and external environments, organisations and networks.

Preparatory work has begun on the development of public and community engagement policies. The first of which is a community research remuneration policy. As new and revised policies are being implemented across the research function, inclusion of public and community engagement is incorporated, where appropriate. This maintains an embedded and aligned approach to engagement, whilst enabling specific policies to be developed to address gaps.

### **Researcher Development Programme (RDP)**

Extensive engagement with PGRs, supervisors, and research staff, identified areas where research policies could be improved, particularly the Supervision Framework and the Research Conduct Framework. The policies were reviewed, ensuring that they are in accordance with current research practices, regulatory expectations, and researcher feedback. 1-2-1 support meetings were introduced and improved alignment of training sessions with UEL's ethics processes. These measures have helped researchers navigate policy requirements more effectively and with greater confidence.

## Systems

The University has employed three systems<sup>4</sup> to integrate compliance and eligibility verification into standard operational and support workflows, to minimise the risk of errors or requirements being overlooked. The University's systems also identify common support needs, and informs policy development and capacity-building initiatives.

### **Grant Management System (GMS)**

The Research and Development Support (ReDS) team have adopted service management technologies to support and promote research integrity. A Grants Management System (GMS) has been introduced, consisting of Pre-and Post-award modules, and transforms the grants ecosystem at UEL by enhancing user access, data quality, reporting, compliance, and decision-making. The GMS offers a structured, transparent, efficient, and collaborative platform to enable UEL's researchers, and ensure more effective and accessible research support. It facilitates a transparent and well-governed research funding management that extends throughout the entire project lifecycle.

The Pre-award module of the system helps researchers develop quality assured proposals through structured workflows, institutional approvals, and embedded guidance on funder requirements and ethical standards. The Post-award module of the system provides real-time access to budget management, contract monitoring, and project milestones, supporting responsible financial stewardship. In addition, the GMS includes robust monitoring and reporting tools, allowing the University's research office and academic leaders to track proposal success rates, compliance risks, and the progress of the project. Both the Pre-and Post-award modules are live, and the Post-award module will be integrated into UEL's new Finance system once its implementation is complete. The full implementation of both modules will not only significantly improve grant management processes, but will also raise awareness and support a strong research culture and environment.

A further system provides a structured, transparent and accessible platform for storing, managing and sharing research datasets. Datasets uploaded into the platform become long-term research assets that can be reused by other researchers, promoting collaboration, validation, and the extension of existing work. The research assets must adhere to licencing, permission and data privacy requirements, before they can be uploaded into the system.

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<sup>4</sup> The systems have not been named to avoid endorsing or advertising specific external providers.

A clinical trial reporting database<sup>5</sup> has been installed on UEL servers. The system is specifically designed to collect data in the setting of research and is a secure web platform for building and managing online databases and surveys. The web application is a streamlined process for rapidly creating and designing projects and offers a vast array of tools that can be tailored to suit a wide range of data collection strategies. Research participants can input data, confidentially and anonymously, if required, into the database, which is stored securely on UEL's server.

## Communications and engagement

### **Impact & Innovation (I&I) newsletter**

Throughout 2024–25, OPRE has continued a monthly publication of the *Impact & Innovation Newsletter*. Distributed via the internal intranet and shared across all UEL schools and institutes, the newsletter serves as a central platform for research communications. The newsletter shares policy updates, highlights researcher profiles, promotes events, and provides training resources to support best practice in research conduct.

### **Public and Community Engagement (PCE) – knowledge exchange activities**

Public and community engagement and knowledge exchange activities are regularly shared in the I&I monthly newsletter. These articles are gathered throughout the month and are designed to showcase initiatives throughout UEL's research community. Flagship events and the Year of Health focused activities (UEL's themed year of activities for 2025) are disseminated through central university communications.

Over the past academic year, the newsletter has evolved to include dedicated sections for both the RIX Inclusive Research Institute and People and Community Engagement. There has been shared research and engagement themed stories and articles contributed by researchers and professional services staff, across a variety of media and research publications.

The I&I newsletter has played an important role in strengthening research communications and engagement, helping to foster a culture in which research achievements are celebrated, developments across disciplines are more widely known, and opportunities to contribute to policy and procedural initiatives are clearly communicated.

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<sup>5</sup> As above, the system has not been named to avoid endorsing or advertising the external provider.

In the coming academic year, 2025-26, the newsletter will form part of a broader strategy to enhance UEL's research communications both internally and externally. This will include raising the external profile of UEL's research, increasing awareness of opportunities for researcher engagement with the media, and expanding the reach and visibility of researcher profiles within the University campus.

### **Research Hub**

During 2024–25, the Office for Postgraduates, Research and Engagement (OPRE) began developing a Research Hub; a central space on UEL's intranet designed to support researchers at every stage of their career. The Hub will provide access to training resources, Research Excellence Framework (REF) and ethics guidelines, funding application support, best practice, policy information, and frequently asked questions.

The Hub is being developed around the needs and priorities of researchers. Focus groups, surveys, and ongoing conversations with UEL researchers have informed the Hub's design to ensure it is practical, relevant, and user focused.

As of July 2025, the *Impact* section of the Hub is now live. This includes a wide range of resources to assist researchers to understand research impact, enhance and evidence their own impact, and prepare for REF Impact Case Study submissions. Over the next six months, development will continue to expand the Hub to include the full range of UEL's research services.

### **Public and Community Engagement (PCE) – external networks**

Strategic engagement has been enabled through UEL's membership of external stakeholder networks. Aligned to a focus on addressing health inequalities, UEL is part of the Newham Centre for Health and Care Equity research and practice-based centre, comprising of universities, community organisations and Newham's public health team. UEL has representation on both the Delivery and Advisory boards. As part of this initiative, a Researcher's Respond series has continued with UEL hosting events themed around sustainability, climate challenges and Newham's 'Just Transition'. This has enabled council teams, researchers and representatives from the voluntary and community sector to form relationships and share knowledge, whilst exploring future opportunities for joint funding bids and collaborations.

UEL is a member of the London Anchor Institution Network (LAIN) working with the network on knowledge exchange activities in collaboration with the Royal Docks Centre for Sustainability (RDCS). Being part of this network provides opportunities for anchor institutions across London to explore joint work and expand reach for UEL's academic and engagement work with and through this network.

PCE staff are members of the London Higher Civic Network which enables civic and community engagement professionals from London's HEIs to convene to share best practice and civic focused initiatives across London's boroughs. UEL's PCE colleagues are active participants of this network, contributing to the shape and theme of the network's discussion topics and themes. Through this network, UEL has contributed to sector-based responses to national and regional government consultations, including the Greater London Authority (GLA) London Plan.

This outward facing work benefits UEL's research community through connecting academics, research centres and institutes to these networks, inviting them to share research, disseminate findings and contribute to policy and practice developments across organisations.

UEL has re-engaged with TELCO Newham Citizens, and as one of their partner organisations, UEL benefits from access to TELCO'S learning, training and development programmes, and networks and UEL'S work together with TELCO to encourage, promote and support research collaborations. TELCO are also key in establishing relationships with the voluntary, community, statutory and faith sectors in underrepresented boroughs across north-east London.

### **Researcher Development Programme (RDP)**

The University significantly expanded communication and engagement initiatives, focusing on community and public engagement. Notable activities included:

- The Annual PGR Conference, featuring panels on impact, ethical engagement, and interdisciplinary research;
- Monthly Researcher RDP sessions, incorporating workshops on research impact, participatory approaches, and communication strategies;
- Targeted seminars for disciplines such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), Health, Education, and Social Sciences, ensuring integrity and engagement principles are tailored to different research contexts.

### **Culture, development and leadership**

#### **Impact First**

In March 2025, three Impact & Innovation 'Impact First Townhalls' were held across the University's campuses: Docklands, USS, and Stratford. Led by Professor Matt Bellgard, Pro-Vice Chancellor of Impact and Innovation, researchers discussed how the I&I directorate continues to put its *Impact First strategy* into practice and

how researchers can contribute to driving a vibrant, compelling, and inclusive research environment.

During the sessions, Professor Bellgard provided an overview of the ongoing progress in developing UEL's research culture. Highlights included the Affiliates Programme; an initiative designed to foster connections between UEL schools and Research institutes. The townhalls were highly interactive and the responses revealed the diverse perspectives and experiences within the I&I community,

The townhall sessions emphasised the University's shared values, including its commitment to generating positive impact, the desire, curiosity and passion that drives researchers' work, and the importance of being part of a strong research environment. The townhalls provided an opportunity for researchers from different disciplines to engage and explore potential collaboration to build the I&I portfolio.

Key issues arising from the I&I townhalls were the importance of designing and implementing clear *impact pathways* in research and identifying the key enablers of impactful research as collaboration, investment, and passion.

### **UK Centre for Artificial Intelligence in the Public Sector**

The UK Centre for Artificial Intelligence in the Public Sector, an innovative collaboration between the University of East London and the London Borough of Newham, was shortlisted for the 2025 Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards in the Public/Public Partnership category.

Launched in September 2024, this partnership is focused on pioneering Artificial Intelligence (AI) research, training, and solutions tailored for the public sector. By leveraging AI to address complex challenges faced by local government, the centre aims to foster innovation and deliver technology-enhanced solutions that meet the needs of the community. The key objectives of the partnership include:

- Promoting the use of AI to improve services across various council sectors, such as temporary accommodation, local economy, social care, and climate change mitigation;
- Ensuring the ethical and effective deployment of AI through comprehensive governance and compliance frameworks;
- Contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in areas such as Arts and Culture, Youth Engagement, Sustainability, Health Inequalities, Economic Inequalities, and Data Economy or Cybersecurity.

The partnership's initial focus will be on addressing the challenge of temporary accommodation in Newham. By utilising existing data, the partnership will develop a predictive model to forecast housing demand and trends in homelessness. Additionally, an AI system will be explored to optimise the procurement and allocation of appropriate temporary accommodation properties.

Through collaboration between researchers, industry experts, and public sector professionals, the centre is well-positioned to offer innovative insights as other councils and public institutions embark on their own AI initiatives.

### **Policy Impact, Participatory Research and the Capital Investment Fund**

In late 2024, researchers were invited to apply for two new funding calls; the Policy Impact and Participatory Research (PIPR) Scheme and the Capital Investment Fund (RCIF). The funding was disbursed via an application-based, competitive scheme. The calls were run in support of the Impact and Innovation directorate's mission to enhance UEL's research culture and the researcher experience, in response to the inaugural Research Culture and Environment survey, that took place at the beginning of 2024.

The PIPR scheme was developed to support team-based and collaborative approaches to delivering impactful research. There were two strands to the initiative:

- Participatory research: where the beneficiaries (research end-users, communities and the wider public) of the research are involved in co-creating the research undertaken.
- Policy Impact: where applicants are asked to propose how they can translate their research into meaningful policy change.

Researchers were invited to submit funding proposals through an application based competitive scheme. Demand to the PIPR scheme was unprecedented and proposals were reviewed against the PIPR criteria using a fair and transparent process. In total, six proposals were funded under the Policy Impact strand and four proposals under the Participatory Research strand.

### **Mock Research Excellence Framework**

In support of UEL's Vision 2028 goals, the second Mock Research Excellence Framework (REF) of the current cycle (REF2029) has been completed.

In support of UEL's Researcher Development mission and moreover, in order that researchers can constructively use the feedback to inform the development of

future outputs, the results of the reviews will be relayed to researchers in September 2025.

As part of the Mock REF, a high number of potential REF2029 Impact Case studies have been identified. Work is now underway to develop these case studies and support the lead researchers to maximise their Impact and gather supporting evidence.

### **Public and Community Engagement (PCE) - developments**

PCE colleagues are part of the Research Development Concordat Working Group, contributing engagement and knowledge exchange themed modules to the researcher development programme. How To Public and Community Engagement training is part of the PGR development programme. A Community of Practice for Participatory Research and Policy Development, meets once a month for academics of all stages to explore research collaborations, share knowledge between schools, centres and institutes and identify opportunities for joint funding bids.

PCE works closely with the Impact team, to identify ways to strategically develop Impact Case Studies for REF2029. PCE is facilitated through academic and operational leads, and each case study is reviewed and suggestions for community engagement, policy development, knowledge exchange and research dissemination are provided by both strands. Introductions are made internally and externally to facilitate the implementation of recommended activities, with academics being supported to deliver the same.

### **Researcher Development Programme (RDP)**

A major shift this year was the restructuring of 1-2-1 sessions and generic ethics lectures into small-group Ethics Labs and monthly themed workshops. This change improved attendance, discussion quality, and the personalisation of support.

Research culture was promoted at all levels by offering:

- Methodology Masterclasses (e.g., Mixed Methods Research, Advanced Thematic Analysis, Constructivist Approaches);
- Weekly Thesis Writing Support Group, fostering peer accountability, citation ethics, and transparent reporting;
- Pioneering Researchers strand, supporting advanced PGRs with leadership and engagement training;
- Community and Policy Impact sessions, enabling researchers to link their work with societal needs while maintaining ethical standards.

The holistic programme nurtures a culture of integrity and excellence, while actively encouraging peer collaboration, reflexivity, and responsible research practices.

## **Monitoring and reporting**

### **Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee (EISC)**

EISC, along with its subsidiary School Ethics Committees (SECs) and Collaborative Partner Research Ethics Committees (CRECs), hold validation and approval from the University's Academic Board.

EISC, SECs and CRECs, submit annual reports outlining their research activities, including sample reviews of ethics applications for moderation. The ethics committees assess their current research ethics and governance processes and specify any adverse events that have occurred during the academic year. The annual review confirmed that the ethics committees were consistent in their assessment of research ethics applications and understanding of the University's research policies and guidance.

The REO conducted an annual audit of applications submitted to EISC, selecting a random subset of approved research projects and requesting committee members to evaluate the ethics application forms. Auditors generally agreed with the conclusions of the original reviewers, highlighting that the original reviews were well-considered, provided clear direction and complied with established protocols.

However, a couple of areas for consideration in reviewing ethics application forms for academic year 2025-26, included acknowledging power dynamics when researchers are conducting projects with those who are in an unequal relationship with the investigator, and enhanced data protection training regarding the confidentiality of data, particularly with activities involving focus groups.

The REO compiled its annual progress report, which requires UEL researchers to provide a report on their current projects which have obtained ethical approval. The researcher's progress report provides the EISC with updates on the project's recruitment, amendments, non-completion of projects, and any adverse events or reactions. No adverse events or reactions were reported for the academic year.

### **Public and Community Engagement (PCE) - reporting**

Quarterly reports are created, responding to the annual business plan metrics and institutional KPI's, and are submitted to the Planning team. Monitoring of progress against the actions included in the Public and Community Engagement Strategy are reviewed quarterly and included in the Board of Governors report. Monitoring is

managed by manual processes, with ongoing plans in place for digitised data management systems to be implemented.

### **Researcher Development Programme (RDP)**

To maintain accountability and continuous improvement, the RDP implemented robust monitoring systems:

- Attendance and completion dashboards for research integrity modules workshops, and key milestones;
- Post-session feedback analytics to track satisfaction and learning outcomes, informing improvements to the RDP;
- PGR Culture & Integrity Survey, capturing researcher perceptions of integrity, supervision, and research culture;
- Reporting of anonymised case studies and near-miss scenarios to integrate lessons into future training.

The combined measures ensure that integrity and positive culture are not only well-communicated, but actively embedded in the day-to-day practices of UEL's research community.

### **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.

## Changes and developments during the period under review

### Training and conferences

The University promotes high quality, impactful outputs and ethically responsible research. Comprehensive training is delivered to all stakeholders to assist compliance with UEL's policies, procedures and processes, enhancing the researcher's understanding of responsible research conduct and encouraging continuous improvement. Training courses are delivered to ensure that all researchers comprehend the values, standards and behaviours that are critical for maintaining the integrity, accountability and quality of research projects supported by the University.

### Researcher Development Programme (RDP)

This year has seen significant growth and development in UEL's research integrity and positive research culture initiatives. Across all levels of researchers from early-stage PGRs to senior academics, the RDP has delivered over 190 workshops, and an array of seminars, forums, and training sessions. These ranged from research integrity and ethics to methodology, data management, academic writing, community engagement, and leadership development. The University's approach combined updated policies, enhanced communication channels, targeted training, and rigorous monitoring, to ensure that all researchers were suitably trained and aware of the importance of upholding rigour and integrity and operating to high ethical standards.

The 2024-25 academic year opened with an expanded Researcher-Ready Launch Week that combined policy briefing, milestone mapping, skills tasters, and social welcome events across schools. UEL induction was spread over several short, interactive sessions, so new PGRs could absorb key information in stages. Highlights included: navigating key systems and the doctoral timeline; how to submit an application for ethical approval; data protection essentials; supervision expectations and communication agreements, and an integrity Q&A clinic. 8-week check-in and writing clinics were delivered for new starters and short drop-in demonstrations on key deliverables. Regular forum sessions enabled PGRs to raise supervision quality, data access, culture and career development questions directly.

In January 2025, two new innovations were implemented to build progression, confidence and leadership capacity on the RDP:

- Each participant identifies at least one *Integrity Development Goal* e.g., reproducible data workflow and community co-design protocol.

- Cross-cohort peer mentoring pairs: early stage with later stage researchers brought together for mutual accountability. Workshops were linked to monthly themes, such as Mixed Methods, Impact & Policy, Rigorous Qualitative Analysis and Co-Produced Research.

The RDP aligns with the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) 2025. This framework articulates the skills, behaviours, and attributes of effective researchers and underpins the RDP strategic approach to supporting PGR development across all stages. The RDF is utilised to guide the design of workshops, development goals, and peer learning initiatives, ensuring that each activity supports reflexivity, research integrity, and real-world impact.

### **REF training sessions**

Over 20 training sessions and workshops on REF in 2024-25 have been delivered on topics including:

- Understanding the REF review criteria and writing high quality/REFable outputs;
- Producing high quality abstracts and choosing where to publish;
- Impact: what it is, why it matters, how to do it and how to evidence it;
- Impact: what it is, what it means in REF2029, why it matters, how to do it and how to evidence it;
- REF 2029 Refresher Workshop;
- UoA lead training.

### **Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee (EISC)**

Training sessions, workshops, and seminars have been delivered throughout the academic year. The University's research integrity and ethics training is grounded in the principles of the Concordat, with the objective of ensuring that all researchers understand the core values, standards and behaviours essential for upholding research integrity, demonstrating accountability and producing quality research. Each training session addresses the implications of research misconduct and emphasises researchers' individual responsibilities in meeting ethical, legal, regulatory and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.

The Ethics, Integrity and Compliance Manager (EICM), receives regular training on research integrity and ethics through a range of formats, including webinars, seminars, workshops, online training courses, and conferences, such as those provided by the [UK Research Office \(UKRIO\)](#) and the [Association for Research Managers and Administrators \(ARMA\)](#). This ongoing professional development informs the EICM's work, enabling the delivery of accurate, current advice to

researchers and ensuring alignment with the University's expectations for good research practice. Drawing on this expertise, the EICM has led multiple training sessions as part of the Researcher Development Programme, including comprehensive and induction focused offerings. In addition, the EICM has designed and delivered bespoke sessions for specific schools and departments, promoting core principles of research integrity, ethical compliance, and the responsible conduct of research.

The EICM, members from UEL's ethics committees and professional services staff members completed the UKRIO pilot 'Introduction to Research Integrity'. The course was used to introduce the concept of research integrity and its principles, assist delegates in understanding the requirements and their responsibilities to research integrity, championing good research practices and embedding a positive research culture in the UEL research community.

For academic year 2025-26, where appropriate, the REO will deliver selected research integrity and ethics training sessions and workshops that move away from a 'traditional classroom based' style, towards adopting a practical approach for sessions where a fluid, accessible, format may be more effective to support engagement and learning outcomes.

### **Research and Knowledge Exchange conference and Networking events**

As part of the University's commitment to fostering a healthy research culture, OPRE hosted the annual Research Conference in 2025 under the theme '*Future Health: Research to Drive a Just Transition for a Healthy and Sustainable Future*'.

The conference spanned two days, beginning with a twilight session that brought together researchers, residents, healthcare professionals, community leaders and policymakers. This session focused on sharing approaches to community involvement in shaping research and health services. The full-day conference followed with presentations from over 50 researchers representing all UEL schools and disciplines.

Feedback on the Research Conference from colleagues was positive, with particular enthusiasm for the opportunity to network across departments. Building on this, the University is developing a proposal for a programme of mini-conferences, open events designed to bring together colleagues with shared research interests and challenges from across UEL. These events will provide opportunities to present work and engage in roundtable discussions and are expected to begin in Autumn/Winter 2025.

## **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.

### **Reflections on progress and plans for future developments**

#### **Concordat to Support Research Integrity 2025**

In academic year 2025-26, the University will work towards implementing the refreshed Concordat 2025. The overarching principles of the Concordat and the researcher, employer and funder responsibilities will be addressed. Research integrity, governance, ethics and culture will be applicable to all fields of research, whilst being sensitive to 'different disciplinary norms'. Changes in legislation, such as the Freedom of Speech Act, 2023, advancements in research governance, emerging technologies, fostering research culture, trusted research and researchers' responsibilities to abide by recognised frameworks and standards will be monitored and addressed.

Where necessary, UEL will seek advice to ensure that the University maintains the Concordat's framework, upholds professional codes of practice, and adheres to procedures, agreed protocols and best practice in the sector, to enhance and support responsible research practice.

The future developments given below will seek to fulfil compliance with the refreshed Concordat and promote a research environment that values research integrity and operates in accordance with expected ethical, legal, regulatory and professional frameworks, obligations, and standards.

#### **Code of Practice for Research**

For academic year 2025-26, the RGPWG will seek to establish a research governance policy framework which has a robust approach to risk management and maintain an up-to-date, comprehensive suite of policies and related procedures.

The draft Code of Practice for Research and accompanying handbook will be circulated to the relevant stakeholders for review and submission to the appropriate committees. The Code and handbook are required to establish and maintain effective research governance by reviewing, developing and implementing comprehensive policies, procedures, and processes. The review is vital for compliance with national and international codes of practice, concordats

and regulations, and to impart effectual and practical guidance on research governance, to deliver high-quality and impactful outputs. UKRIO's revised and updated Code of Practice for Research and other relevant Codes will be consulted for guidance.

Additionally, from the University's suite of policies, several will be reviewed, revised or appropriate guidance will be drafted, this includes the subjects of Authorship, Artificial Intelligence in Research, Staff and Postgraduate Research Student Misconduct in Research Procedure, Trusted Research and secondary data analysis. A procedure library that is visible to internal and external stakeholders will be developed to provide a clear articulation of UEL's research governance framework.

### **Intellectual Property**

A revised Intellectual Property policy and process is in development to ensure that UEL is abiding by legal regulations and is consistent with other higher education institutions. The Intellectual Property policy will be publicised to the University's research community and included in the Code of Practice for Research.

### **Researcher Development Concordat**

The University signed a Letter of Commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, otherwise known as the Researcher Development Concordat (RDC) in October 2023. A Gap Analysis was subsequently undertaken and a public Action Plan published in December 2024 ([uel-concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers-action-plan.pdf](#)) based on its findings. The RDC sets out conditions in the form of obligations that are required to create an exceptional culture for researchers, and the Action Plan sets out to improve the working practices and career development of its research community. The RDC is a core element of strengthening UEL's research environment and culture, in accordance with REF 2029, to provide significant opportunities for career progression, and develop a research community that works collaboratively to drive research forwards.

### **Trusted Research and Innovation**

To protect the UK's intellectual property, sensitive research, people, and infrastructure from potential theft, misuse and exploitation, and in line with the UK Government's legislation, UEL has subscribed a due diligence tool, to undertake assessments of organisations involved in research partnerships, collaboration agreements, and commercial contracts. The University seeks to review the security of research to manage perceived, potential and actual risks associated with research collaborators, particularly research partners. The University will conduct a due diligence review, including an audit of research partnerships and project governance.

### **Modern Slavery Act Statement**

The University has a Modern Slavery Act Statement and a Modern Slavery policy, and is committed to combatting all forms of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking. UEL is continuously improving its approach to ensure that the University operates in an ethical and sustainable manner.

UEL's maintains a Modern Slavery Act Working Group (MSAWG) with representatives from the institution's legal, governance, procurement and HR teams. The group is tasked with identifying areas of concern within the University's business and supply chains, and to determine the most effective ways to address the risks. The MSAWG maintains a Modern Slavery Action Plan and it is the responsibility of the MSAWG to ensure continued compliance with the Modern Slavery Act. The MSAWG also produces an annual Modern Slavery Act Statement, which is submitted and approved by the University's Board of Governors.

As stated above under 'Policies and Systems', the University has a Policy on Public Interest Disclosure in place. Staff and students are aware that they can report actual or suspected incidents of modern slavery, without suffering unfavourable or detrimental treatment. UEL provides information and training to all staff members. This is to ensure that staff have an appropriate level of understanding of the risks of modern slavery and how to report any concerns or issues.

For academic year 2025-26, modern slavery risk registers under the University's Finance department and Office for Compliance, Governance and Legal Services (OCGLS) will be amalgamated, as part of a coordinated approach. In addition, there will be a focus on raising awareness of modern slavery amongst students and ensuring that support mechanisms are in place.

### **Researcher Development Programme (RDP)**

For 2025-26, the RDP is reshaping the PGR development framework to ensure inclusivity and future-readiness. Based on extensive feedback, the next academic year will be structured around four core UEL PGR Development Themes:

- Research Expertise – critical thinking, research design, subject knowledge and methodology;
- Professional & Personal Growth – wellbeing, time management and resilience;
- Collaboration & Engagement – research communication, teamwork, impact and academic networking;
- Career Planning & Leadership – academic and non-academic career pathways, mentoring and leadership skills.

Each theme will align with the RDP key phases of doctoral study; such as research ethics and integrity, progress reviews, academic writing, critical thinking and research impact.

This new structure aims to equip PGRs with the necessary skills to thrive as researchers and future leaders, ensuring they are not only successful in their doctoral journey, but also vital contributors to academic and professional fields.

### **Online training courses**

Following on from the successful pilot of the UKRIO 'Introduction to Research Integrity,' the course will be offered widely to UEL's research community. The course will be advertised throughout the University and the new material will assist researchers to understand the five commitments of the Concordat, how research integrity affects their work, how to act in accordance with high ethical standards, how to recognise and report misconduct in research and how to promote a healthy research culture.

The University also subscribes to other research integrity and ethics providers, and their courses will be used to assist with the principles for research integrity, research by design, planning ethical research, responsible research practices and research impact. The courses are aligned with the Concordat and the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, featuring case studies and discipline-specific content, and a structured framework to support the professional and career development of researchers. The courses will be made widely available to UEL's research community.

### **Research Culture survey**

The value of involving researchers in establishing the priorities to enhance UEL's research culture, is central to UEL's modus operandi. This is in keeping with a wider mission to champion a participatory research culture. To this end, the findings of UEL's first Research Culture survey are being utilised to inform UEL's research culture enhancement strategy. This is currently in development, but the plans include:

- Establishing a holistic, comprehensive researcher development programme, inclusive of mentoring;
- Improving awareness of research integrity and open access;
- running researcher support, collaboration building and seed funding schemes;
- Developing and implementing an enhanced research-time, allocation framework;

- Fostering interdisciplinary connections, via networking events and workshops.

The research culture survey will be run on an annual basis to assess the effectiveness of the actions undertaken and the implemented initiatives.

#### **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.

*[Please insert response]*

## 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.

### Staff and Postgraduate Research Student Misconduct in Research procedure

The University's Staff and Student Misconduct in Research Procedure was amended, in academic year 2023-24 in accordance with guidance from the revised Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research, published by the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) in March 2023. As this is a key policy, the Staff and Student Misconduct in Research Procedure will be reviewed again in 2025-26, in accordance with the Concordat 2025.

UEL's clear and transparent Procedure assists in conveying to researchers, including PGRs, their individual obligations, and the principles and benchmarks that they must uphold in their research pursuits.

The University's Codes of Practice for Research and Research Ethics and Research Ethics Handbook, also include the principles of the UEL Staff and Student Misconduct in Research Procedure. The Codes and the Research Ethics handbook state that all researchers should familiarise themselves with the Procedure, as well as the misconduct procedures and codes of practice and policies for collaborative partnerships.

The implications of research misconduct are covered in all research integrity and ethics training sessions, informing researchers of their individual responsibilities in adhering to appropriate ethical, legal, regulatory and professional frameworks, obligations and standards, as required by statutory and regulatory authorities, and by employers, funders and other relevant stakeholders. For academic year 2025-26, as per the Concordat 2025, this commitment will be emphasised in forthcoming research integrity and ethics training sessions and workshops.

A complaint of misconduct in research was made against a PGR Student<sup>6</sup>. The allegation was reviewed and it was deemed that the student failed to meet ethical and professional obligations. The student was advised to discuss the principles and importance of professional conduct and ethical practices with their supervisor. The student's actions were considered as discourteous, rather than misconduct in research, and the case was dismissed.

The University has not conducted any Stage 2 investigations during the academic year.

The Ethics, Integrity and Compliance Manager (EICM), Catherine Hitchens, is the named first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity. The contact details for the EICM are kept up to date and are publicly available on the University's internet.

The University has a Policy on Public Interest Disclosure<sup>7</sup> which gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers for publicly disclosing concerns, according to certain specified categories. Any disclosure should be made to the University Secretary from the Office for Compliance, Governance and Legal Services (OFCGLS).

The University has a Dignity at Work and Study policy and process (bullying and harassment policy). UEL is committed to providing staff and students with inclusive working and learning environments, which are free from bullying, harassment, unlawful discrimination and victimisation. The policy promotes the respectful

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<sup>6</sup> . As the details of the case cannot be fully anonymised the information is omitted.

<sup>7</sup> As mentioned above under 'Policies and Systems'.

treatment of staff, students and visitors within the institution, and the values of dignity and respect must be upheld by all members of the University's community.

As part of the institution's ongoing commitment to transparency and accountability, UEL has signed the 'Can't Buy My Silence' pledge. Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) will not be used to restrict or deter individuals from disclosing experiences of harassment, abuse or misconduct.

### 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 <sup>8</sup>			
	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	1	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			

<sup>8</sup> Undergraduate and taught master's misconduct in research allegations and investigations are not included in this table, this is managed at school level.

<b>Total:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
*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.				
<i>[Please insert response if applicable]</i>				