

# 2024-2025: annual statement on research integrity

## Section 1: Key contact information

| Question                                                                                                                                          | Response                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1A. Name of organisation                                                                                                                          | Birkbeck, University of London                                      |
| 1B. Type of organisation:<br><br>higher education<br>institution/industry/independent<br>research performing<br>organisation/other (please state) | Higher Education                                                    |
| 1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)                                                                                          | 11/12/24                                                            |
| 1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)                                                                         | <a href="#">Research integrity - Birkbeck, University of London</a> |
| 1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity                                                                                    | Name: Professor Lucy Mazdon                                         |
|                                                                                                                                                   | Email address: l.mazdon@bbk.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 Sarah Lee                                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                   | Email address: sarah.lee@bbk.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

#### Introduction:

As stated in the College's Research Integrity Code of Practice, honesty, openness, accountability and integrity are vital qualities for any academic researcher in any academic discipline.

At Birkbeck all research is carried out in a climate where high standards of personal conduct are encouraged and expected. Everyone engaged in research, no matter what their level of experience, is expected to act with the highest standards of integrity. To foster and maintain its research culture, Birkbeck expects all researchers to:

- maintain open and honest professional standards
- exercise accountability in research
- ensure leadership and cooperation in research groupings
- take special account of the needs of inexperienced researchers
- ensure training and supervision for researchers
- plan and conduct research in accordance with the requirements of funders and all relevant College and external codes of practice, legislation and regulatory bodies
- follow best current ethical practice
- exercise care and respect for participants in research projects
- ensure data is stored, shared, preserved and disposed of appropriately and responsibly
- document and making available research data
- ensure the results of research are openly accessible
- acknowledge the contribution of others
- take appropriate measures to protect intellectual property
- take action if research misconduct is suspected

- manage any conflicts of interest in line with the College policy.

This statement is part of the College's commitment to further strengthen our research integrity.

The College recognises that there is still a body of work to be done to ensure that all our policies and procedures relating to research integrity, research ethics and research misconduct are effectively communicated to our researchers. Best practice in this area is constantly evolving and the College cannot 'rest on its laurels' in assuming that all researchers are aware of latest developments at all times.

Training is an essential part of this work. At the student level, all UG, PGT and PGR students receive relevant training in questions of ethics and integrity as a core part of their research methods modules, and through workshops etc. which are run to support the process of writing dissertations. At the PGR level, this is complemented by generic training and information sessions which are run by BGRS (the Birkbeck Graduate Research School). It is compulsory that all PGR students receive additional training in research ethics and integrity.

To summarise our key activities over the last three years:

Over 2022-23 the College undertook a major restructure, transitioning from a 5 School/16 Department structure to a 3 Faculty/8 School model. As a part of this all governance arrangements and committee memberships have been reviewed, including our ethics and integrity processes. In practice, the outcome of this review has led to minimal changes with each Faculty maintaining a Faculty Ethics Committee as will those Schools where the number of ethics applications justifies this (in practice this will be our Business School, our School of Psychological Sciences and our School of Social Sciences), as was the case in our School and Department model. The most significant change is that the academic membership of our College level Ethics Committee will be increased from 5 to 7 members to ensure we have effective academic representation. We view this change as positive. Other changes which result from the restructure mean that Faculty Ethics Committees will from now have consistent Terms of Reference and there will be a requirement for all members of Faculty Ethics Committees to go through the same basic training to ensure they are fully up to date with changes to internal processes and the latest guidance. Alongside the restructure we have managed to complete the work on our Research Integrity Framework and that work on that has moved on to consider how we can most effectively translate the framework into our systems and processes to ensure that it's a useful and effective tool.

We began the 2023-24 academic year with a watching brief to ensure our new systems and processes bedded in effectively and that our ethics processes continued to function effectively, an issue which was compounded by a change to our ethics forms system which did not roll out as smoothly as we would have hoped.

From May 2024, we had a new Researcher Training Manager in post who met with all the School Ethics leads to discuss training needs and to begin work to

comprehensively review, and where necessary refine, our approaches to training in this (and other) areas. One of the first outcomes from this work has been the creation of an improved suite of training materials for students to complete before they begin work in our Babylab and Toddlerlab.

## **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.

Over the 2024/2025 academic year our primary focus has been on work to promote a positive research culture.

We have made the following progress in each of the following key areas:

- Policies and systems

Our standard process is that our ethics policies are reviewed against sector best practice on a regular timeline (normally every two years) and the next review is due in 2025/2026 so changes to policy in this period were predominantly small housekeeping changes, although we did begin the work to add AI elements to our existing ethics approval guidance and paperwork at the start of the 2025/2026 academic year.

Our most significant systems upgrade is a "soft launch" of the UK RIO research integrity training with our PGR and staff cohorts, which sits alongside a knowledge library of ethics resources, organized by theme, available to all staff via the college intranet and contextualized to link to college policies and other key information. We have embedded one aspect of the UKRIO training, research integrity and AI, in our research induction training on AI that is compulsory for all research staff.

In addition, to build capacity for PGR leads in using their subject expertise to support their students we have centralized some non-subject-specific aspects of postgraduate research guidance, such as wellbeing, writing literature reviews and research engagement. The focus is on agnostic rather than generalist support, drawing on expertise from the schools and faculties to develop resources that translate across disciplines rather than

- Communications and engagement

Following the appointment of our Researcher Training Manager (funded by our Wellcome Institutional Funding for Research Culture award), 2024/2025 saw us undertake a comprehensive review of our complete staff training offer, and

significant time and work was put into building mechanisms to collate our full training offer into one place for ease of access and raise awareness of the resource. This includes the UK RIO research integrity training.

- Culture, development and leadership

Much of work to develop our research culture and leadership has been undertaken through our Wellcome Institutional Funding for Research Culture award, which, in addition to the work on training outlined above has included a dedicated Research Development post working with colleagues from communities who are historically excluded from HE to apply for funding in the Health space, bridging salary support for PhD students (recently submitted) and post docs, and well as funding designed to support researchers to engage with communities outside HE in questions of health research, and funds to support initiatives to bud the research culture within Faculties.

We have also allocated funding to staff carrying out research projects to support institutional wellbeing, which in turn will contribute to the collaborative development of a research culture manifesto (or manifestos) that encompass key issues including the impact of fertility treatment in the workplace, navigating eco-anxiety in research and enabling practices for reaching underserved communities in research participation.

Other funds from this award have been allocated to work around co-production of research that puts underrepresented and historically excluded groups at the heart of research planning from the point of inception. In addition to a range of discrete projects we are developing a hybrid training programme that draws on Birkbeck's heritage of community leadership and widening participation to support researchers in both practical and theoretical questions around participatory research including volunteer management and engagement, safeguarding and effective facilitation.

- Monitoring and reporting

The Wellcome IFRC project has an evaluation framework which is built in and will be reviewed at the end of the award in 2026 including questions for all engaged staff on whether they feel that their contributions are valued at Birkbeck and whether they see themselves represented at the College. This complements and extends data available from other sources such as CEDARS.

## 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.

Work has progressed well across 2024/2025 and moving into 2025/2026 our attentions are turning to more effective communications and understanding the evaluations from our Wellcome Institutional Funding for Research Culture projects to define next steps.

Our full policy review is also due in 2025/2026 and may also identify other areas where work is required.

## **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.

N/A

## 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.

Our research misconduct and whistleblowing policies are both listed on [Research integrity - Birkbeck, University of London](#) where details of the confidential liaison contact can be found.

Our bullying and harassment policy can be accessed here: [Staff dignity at work policy - Birkbeck, University of London](#)

All these policies are drafted in consultation with sector good practice guidance (for example, from UKRIO for the Research Misconduct procedure) and are regularly reviewed (normally every 2-3 years from research misconduct, every 4-5 years for bullying and harassment). When a need is identified to review these procedures more regularly the review will happen as defined by that need rather than the regular schedule.

Whenever we undertake a research misconduct investigation (at any stage) we review what has happened, the outcomes, and our procedure to identify any helpful learnings and to build into the review.

We are currently running an 'enhancing research culture' programme for senior research and research-adjacent staff. This has so far involved two training days delivered by external partners in consultation with the Researcher Training Manager: the first was on psychological safety and creating an environment where staff feel able to challenge and raise questions, and the second on academic rigour and anti-bullying practices in relation to power. The latter has been commissioned as a train-the-trainer resource that will be held in-house, and we plan in the coming months to convene planning and reflection sessions to combine findings from both sessions and develop deliverable strategies and further training support for a safe and inclusive research culture.

**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                                                  | 0                               | 0                                                | 0                                                |
| Falsification                                                                                  | 0                                                  | 0                               | 0                                                | 0                                                |
| Plagiarism                                                                                     | 1                                                  | 1                               | 0                                                | 1                                                |
| Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations                                    | 0                                                  | 0                               | 0                                                |                                                  |
| Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history) | 0                                                  | 0                               | 0                                                | 0                                                |
| Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct                                                | 1                                                  | 0                               | 0                                                | 0                                                |
| Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)                               | 0                                                  | 0                               | 0                                                | 0                                                |
| <i>Other*</i>                                                                                  | 0                                                  | 0                               | 0                                                | 0                                                |
| <b>Total:</b>                                                                                  | 2                                                  | 1                               | 0                                                | 1                                                |

**\*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]*