

# Annual Statement of Compliance with *The Concordat to Support Research Integrity 2020-2021*

## 1. Essential Information:

- Date of Approval by Governing Body: 30 November 2021
- Link to previous Annual Statements: n/a
- Contact Details for clarification/further information: Dr Noel Purdy, Director of Research and Scholarship ([n.purdy@stran.ac.uk](mailto:n.purdy@stran.ac.uk))
- Period covered: 1 August 2020 – 31 July 2021

## 2. Annual Statement of Compliance

Universities UK published the revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity in October 2019. This version had been substantially reworked from the initial Concordat published in 2012, placing a greater emphasis on the responsibilities of individual researchers and also on those who fund research. The key commitments remain essentially unchanged:

1. Upholding the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research
2. Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards
3. Supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers
4. Using transparent, timely, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct when they arise
5. Working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.

Full details of the College's commitment to the highest standards of research integrity can be demonstrated on its Research Integrity webpage: *[insert URL]*

Each annual statement is designed to be read as a standalone report. Therefore, contextual information may not always change from year to year. This is the first statement of compliance, covering the period 01 August 2020 to 31 July 2021. Despite the COVID-19 global pandemic Stranmillis University College has continued to deliver on its commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

Researchers at Stranmillis University College receive funding from a wide range of funding organisations, research councils, government departments, public and voluntary sector organisations. It is therefore essential (and often part of the funding terms and conditions) that the University College has in place and provides relevant assurances to govern good research practice, for the investigation and reporting of unacceptable research conduct, and bullying and harassment.

### **3. Summary of Activities undertaken to support research integrity 2020-2021**

In terms of developing a sustainable and ethical research culture, a series of key staffing appointments have helped to create a strong foundation for a sustainable research culture at Stranmillis: including a Senior Leadership post of Director of Research and Scholarship in January 2015 (who reports 3 times a year to the College's Governing Body), a post of Research Office Finance and Development Officer in April 2015, a post of Research Impact Coordinator in August 2015, and most recently the appointment in 2019 of a full-time Research Fellow to the College's Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement, established in 2018. In 2021 the post of Research Fellow was made permanent, which further reflects the commitment of the University College to sustainable research integrity. During 2020-21, the College has extended its research assistant register, which allows research assistants to be appointed to specific research projects as the need arises.

The appointment of a Director of Research and Scholarship reflects the College's commitment to developing a sustainable research culture (a key element of successive College-wide Corporate Plans), and led to the development of a comprehensive new Research Strategy in 2015, revised and updated in 2017 and 2019.

*A new Code of Ethics in Research and accompanying Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research* were instituted in November 2015 and updated in February 2018 and again in June 2021, providing clear guidance for staff/student researchers. A thorough review led to revised procedures, forms and associated paperwork for internal ethics applications which have ensured robustness and efficiency. The small pool of experienced ethics reviewers has been extended from 6 to 12 members with regular training provided. When completing an ethics application, applicants must confirm that they have read the College's *Code of Ethics in Research*.

Over the next five years, the College remains committed to extending our reputation as a national and international centre for high-quality, practitioner-focused educational research and scholarship through 5 key objectives of its current Research and Scholarship Strategy: [1] To engage in research and scholarship of the highest quality [2] To develop a rich, vibrant and supportive research and scholarship infrastructure characterised by the highest standards of integrity [3] To attract excellent staff and to develop and empower their careers [4] To ensure that our research has an impact on our teaching but also beyond academia yielding broader economic, social and cultural benefits. [5] To extend our national and international reach by engaging in collaborative partnerships and disseminating our research and scholarship.

During the 2020-2021 academic year, research activity was carried out almost entirely online. The main activities in relation to research integrity were the revision and updating of the College's *Code of Ethics in Research and accompanying Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research* (approved in

June 2021), the development and approval of an implementation plan for the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* (December 2020), and the development of additional guidance for staff in the form of an online training video in relation to online research activity, which included a section on research ethics and integrity.

Additional support was provided to research-active staff through College funding for part-time doctoral studies, an internal research mentorship programme, regular online lunchtime seminars and training workshops, and funding to present at national and international conferences (all of which were conducted online in 2020-21).

#### **4. Information on allegations of research misconduct 2020-2021**

The University College's *Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research* were revised and updated in June 2021.

There were no allegations of misconduct in research received during the 2020-2021 academic year.