

# Template: annual statement on research integrity

If you have any questions about this template, please contact:  
[RIsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:RIsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk).

## Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
<b>1A. Name of organisation</b>	Stranmillis University College, Belfast
<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>	26/11/2025
<b>1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)</b>	<a href="https://www.stran.ac.uk/research/research-integrity/">https://www.stran.ac.uk/research/research-integrity/</a>
<b>1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity</b>	Name: Prof Noel Purdy OBE
	Email address: n.purdy@stran.ac.uk
<b>1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity</b>	Name: Prof Noel Purdy OBE
	Email address: n.purdy@stran.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

Universities UK issued the revised *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* in October 2019. This edition, which significantly updated the original 2012 document, placed greater emphasis on the responsibilities of individual researchers as well as those of research funders. The five key commitments remain 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.

Further information about the College's commitment to these principles is available on the Research Integrity webpage:

- <https://www.stran.ac.uk/research/research-integrity/>

As each annual statement is intended to stand alone, some contextual detail necessarily recurs from year to year. This fifth statement of compliance covers the period 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025.

Stranmillis University College continues to secure research funding from a diverse range of sources, including research councils, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland government departments, and community and voluntary organisations. Given this diversity, it is vital, and often a condition of funding, that the University College maintains robust assurances regarding good research practice, the handling of research misconduct, and the prevention of bullying and harassment.

The College upholds high standards of research integrity through a suite of comprehensive policies (such as the *Code of Ethics in Research* and the *Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research* both of which were updated in June 2024 and are available on our [research integrity webpage](#)) and supporting systems, including the Ethics Application process. Core messages relating to research integrity are routinely communicated via staff emails, briefings and lunchtime seminars.

Oversight of research ethics sits with the Research and Scholarship Committee, chaired by the Director of Research and Scholarship. Any allegations of misconduct would be managed in line with the published Regulations; to date, no such cases have arisen. The *Research and Scholarship Strategy* continues to guide the College's strategic development of research activity and the ongoing strengthening of its research culture.

## **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.

Stranmillis University College continues to invest in building a sustainable and ethically grounded research culture. Over the past decade, a series of strategic staffing appointments has strengthened the institutional infrastructure that supports high-quality research. These include the creation of a Senior Leadership role (Director of Research and Scholarship in January 2015), reporting to the Governing Body three times per year; the establishment of a Research Office Finance and Development Officer post in April 2015; the appointment of a Research Impact Coordinator in August 2015; and, in 2019, the recruitment of a full-time Research Fellow within the Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU), founded in 2018. The Research Fellow post was made

permanent in 2021, signalling the University College's long-term commitment to maintaining a strong foundation for research integrity.

During 2024–25, the College again renewed and re-advertised its part-time Grade 4 research assistant and Grade 7 research fellow registers, enabling the flexible appointment of part-time research assistants and fellows to project-specific roles. Several outstanding new colleagues were recruited through this mechanism over the year, and the system has continued to function well in meeting project needs.

The creation of the Director of Research and Scholarship role has been central to advancing the College's corporate commitment to a sustainable research environment, a priority reflected consistently in successive Corporate Plans. This leadership has supported the development and ongoing refinement of the Research and Scholarship Strategy, originally introduced in 2015 and subsequently revised in 2017, 2019, 2022 and, most recently, June 2025, when it was approved by the Governing Body.

Clear ethical frameworks have been established through the *Code of Ethics in Research* and the *Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research*, instituted in November 2015 and updated in February 2018, June 2021 and most recently June 2024. These updates have been accompanied by a comprehensive review of ethics procedures, documentation and internal processes, enhancing consistency, efficiency and assurance. The College's pool of experienced ethics reviewers was further refreshed during 2024–25, with appropriate training provided for all new reviewers. Applicants submitting ethics applications are required to confirm that they have read and understood the Code of Ethics in Research.

Looking ahead, the College remains committed to strengthening its position as a recognised national and international hub for practitioner-focused educational research. The 2025–2028 Research and Scholarship Strategy outlines five strategic objectives:

- [1] to produce research and scholarship of the highest quality, demonstrating originality, significance and rigour;
- [2] to enhance the vitality and long-term sustainability of the research environment;
- [3] to recruit, develop and support excellent staff throughout their careers;
- [4] to ensure that research informs teaching and extends its reach beyond academia, generating broader societal, cultural and economic benefits; and
- [5] to broaden national and international engagement through collaborative partnerships and the dissemination of research.

The current Strategy reaffirms the College's commitment to maintaining the highest academic, professional and research integrity standards through robust ethical policies, procedures and staff training aligned with the approved Code of Ethics in Research.

No cases of research misconduct were reported or investigated in 2024–25.

Throughout 2024–25, the College continued to benefit from the expertise of its two visiting professors, Professor Lynn Ang (UCL) and Professor Adam Boddison OBE (APM). Both visited Stranmillis twice during the academic year, meeting with staff across the College and offering guidance on emerging initiatives, including the development of research clusters/hubs, sabbatical frameworks and support for early-career researchers.

Research-active staff were further supported through several development mechanisms, including College-funded part-time doctoral study opportunities, an internal research mentorship scheme, a series of lunchtime seminars and training workshops, and financial assistance to present at national and international conferences.

## **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.

The 2024-25 academic year was extremely successful for research across the University College with a total of over £530k in secured income from a wide range of different projects/funders. In terms of the research ethics procedures, the new 2024 Code of Ethics was embedded in our applications and has proven effective. Research ethics and integrity remain centrally important to our research and scholarship activity in the College as evidenced in our 2025-28 Research and Scholarship Strategy. The low level of QR funding received from the Department for the Economy continues to hinder progress in supporting the research infrastructure across the University College.

## **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.

The College has its own *Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research* which were reviewed and updated in June 2024. See [link](#).

These regulations provide clear guidance on the steps to be taken should an allegation of research misconduct arise, outlining the underlying principles, relevant definitions, roles and responsibilities, procedural stages and possible outcomes.

Staff are routinely directed to the Research Integrity webpage, where all core policies and supporting documents are accessible. Research ethics and integrity are embedded in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, with all students receiving research methods instruction that includes a mandatory session on ethical principles and practice.

There were no allegations or investigations of research misconduct during the 2024–25 reporting period.





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

**\*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]*