

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE
RESEARCH GOVERNANCE & POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT TO COURT
Academic Year 2012/13

1. Introduction

The primary objective of the Research Governance & Policy Sub-Committee is to ensure that the governance and policy context for the undertaking of research within the University is optimal. More specifically, the Sub-Committee is responsible for:

- reviewing governance processes and associated research and related policy extant at both University and the local level, and identifying need for improvement and development including the involvement of external stakeholders;
- establishing systems which accommodate the needs of good institutional governance, that are externally accountable and which take into account the diversity of the institution's research activities;
- ensuring that institutional research governance processes are transparent and are well communicated throughout the University;
- promoting "buy-in" by facilitating dialogue and dissemination of good and consistent practice across the colleges;
- attempting to minimize the burden of governance and policy demands on research staff commensurate with achieving high levels of internal and external confidence in the University's processes.

The Sub-Committee is chaired by Professor Alan Fairlamb, College of Life Sciences, and membership includes staff from across the colleges and the primary areas of research governance activity within the institution, including Safety Services and the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). The Sub-Committee meets three times during each academic year and reports to the University Research Committee (URC) with the minutes of its meetings included with URC papers.

This report summarises the activities of the Sub-Committee during academic year 2012/13.

2. Summary of Sub-Committee Business

(i) Policy Development and Review

The Sub-Committee has instigated and overseen policy developments and reviews in the following areas during the reporting period:

Code of Good Practice in Research: The Code of Good Practice was revised by adding a new section on 'Integrity in reviewing research proposals and articles submitted for publication' and updating the 'Conflict of Interest' section to clarify how such conflicts may arise.

Open Access Policy: This policy was developed by the Library and Learning Centre in response to the rapidly evolving Open Access (OA) agenda highlighted in the previous report to Court and reflected in the ever increasing number of major external funders which are mandating free and open access to the results of the research they fund through either publication in OA journals or deposit in institutional repositories. Given the direction of travel of UK Government and funder policies in this area, the Research Governance & Policy Sub-

Committee and its parent committee will need to continue to monitor and respond to the OA agenda for a number of years to come.

Code of Practice for the Use of Animals in Teaching and Research: Further revision to the Code of Practice for the Use of Animals in Teaching and Research included the provision of additional information and guidance on how the University would exercise oversight of research involving animals in collaborations with overseas institutions. To promote compliance, a question relating to the use of animals in other institutions has been added to the University's Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) and recommended for inclusion in the next update of the Project Registration Form.

(ii) Concordat to Support Research Integrity

Launched in July 2012, the Concordat to Support Research Integrity provides a national framework for good research conduct and its governance. It sets out five commitments that all those involved with research should make and will provide assurances to government, the wider public and the international community that research in the UK continues to be underpinned by the highest standards of rigour and integrity.

The Sub-Committee discussed the five commitments in detail and consider that the University's internal policy framework is broadly consistent with the Concordat, but recognise that there are areas for improvement. In particular, in 2014 the Sub-Committee aims to develop and implement training, in conjunction with the University's Organisational and Professional Development Unit, to support and strengthen the understanding and application of research integrity issues by researchers. This will add value to the Sub-Committee's continuing work to ensure that the University's policy framework is up-to-date with current legislation, ethically appropriate and fit-for-purpose.

Commitment 5 of the Concordat recommends that employers should present a short annual statement to their governing body and that this should include a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken. The Sub-Committee agreed that from the 2012/13 report onwards this statement should be included in the annual report to Court (see section 2(iv)). Consistent with the principles of the Concordat, the annual reports to Court are made publicly available on a section of the Research Governance and Policy Handbook (see section 2(iii)) dedicated to the Concordat¹ in which the Convenor of the Sub-Committee has been identified as the senior member of staff with responsibility for overseeing research integrity.

(iii) Research Governance & Policy Handbook

The University's online Research Governance & Policy Handbook was formally launched on 3 January 2013 by communicating it, via an e-mail from the Convenor, to over 2,700 people (including academic, research and technical staff and postgraduate students), highlighting the Policy Roadmap², which is designed to assist staff and students in identifying the policies that will apply to their proposed research. The Policy checks include: Common Interest and Public Good; Conflict of Interest; Good Practice in Research; Research Data Management; Open Access; Guest Authorship and Ghostwriting; Health and Safety; Data Protection and Records Management; Code of Practice for Non-Clinical Research Ethics on Human Participants; Clinical and Clinically Related Research; and Use of Animals in Research. The communication also highlighted the University's support for the commitments outlined in the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and the policies governing misconduct in research and

¹ <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/rgp/concordattosupportresearchintegrity/>

² <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/rgp/policyroadmap/>

whistleblowing³. Analysis of page views on the Handbook website using Google Analytics indicated that the e-mail had had the desired effect of raising awareness of the Policy Roadmap and related pages in the Handbook, although it was recognised that the Sub-Committee would need to continue to explore ways to promote the Handbook in the future.

(iv) Research Misconduct

The University conducted one formal investigation of alleged research misconduct within the 2012/13 academic year, a case involving collusion which was brought to the University's attention by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council. The University conducted an investigation and the member of staff concerned received disciplinary action.

(v) Reporting to the Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee's remit does not require it to capture detailed information on activities at the local level but rather to satisfy itself, by reviewing higher level evidence, that sufficient rigour exists in the policies and processes operated by the institution. The Sub-Committee therefore receives and considers annual reports from the various areas of research governance operating across the University to ensure that the appropriate policies and processes are in place. Reports for calendar year 2012 were received from: the Ethical Review Committee (Animals)⁴; Tayside Medical Science Centre (TASC) Research Governance Committee; University Health and Safety Committee; and the University Research Ethics Committee. On the basis of the reports submitted, the Sub-Committee agreed that the governance mechanisms appeared to be working well, with appropriate policies and processes in place. However, members agreed that an additional section should be added to the reporting template for calendar year 2013 onwards to gather information on external or internal audits or reviews of the area of research governance activity that have been undertaken to monitor compliance with the area's policies and procedures.

3. Research Councils Funding Assurance Programme Visit

In developing its policies and procedures to support good research governance the University is externally accountable; funders, and the wider academic and user communities, will only have confidence in the research the University produces if the University can demonstrate that it strives to maintain the highest standards of research integrity and excellence. In this respect, RCUK conducted a Funding Assurance Programme Visit on 21-22 February 2013 in which research integrity and ethics was reviewed for the first time. The review noted that the University's research governance policies, readily available through the Research Governance and Policy Handbook, had been actively promoted to staff and postgraduate research students. Following this visit the University was awarded a rating of **substantial** assurance on research integrity; this is the highest rating possible.

Professor Alan Fairlamb
Convener
30 January, 2014

³ <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/rgp/researchmisconductwhistleblowing/>

⁴ Court approved the change of name of this committee to the 'Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee' on 10 June 2013.