Template: annual statement on research integrity

If you have any questions about this template, please contact: RIsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk.

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	AECC University College
1B. Type of organisation: **higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)**	Higher Education Institution
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	24/01/24
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.aecc.ac.uk/research/research-integrity/
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Dr Julie Northam
	Email address: jnortham@aecc.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 Julie Northam
	Email address: jnortham@aecc.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

AECC University College (AECC UC) is strongly committed to the principles of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and has been a signatory of the Concordat since October 2017.

This statement covers the academic year 2022/23 in relation to research misconduct covering both staff and students and confirms that there were no allegations of research misconduct received.

The Head of Research is responsible for overseeing all aspects of research integrity at AECC UC and is the first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity. The Head of Research and Deputy Vice Chancellor are responsible for embedding principles of good research culture. The University College's Executive Team or the Clerk to the Board of Governors are the primary contacts for whistle-blowing procedures.

We are committed to conducting all research activity at the University College with the highest standards of rigor and integrity. This commitment is reflected in our Research Misconduct Policy, and our Research and Ethics Policy and Procedures.

We are committed to fostering and supporting a research culture that is

underpinned by research integrity, responsible research conduct, ethics, compliance, and governance across the full spectrum of our research activities and fully recognize our responsibilities to researchers and the wider 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.

AECC UC's strategic plan 'Fit for the Future', sets out our ambition to *'become a first choice partner within specialisms for research and innovation in the health science community'* which involves significantly increasing our research activity and developing our emerging research culture. As such, work has begun to improve research infrastructure with the appointment of two dedicated research posts: Research and Knowledge Exchange Manager in May 2023, and Head of Research in September 2023. These are the first posts dedicated to developing the research and knowledge exchange (RKE) infrastructure and support available at AECC UC. As part of these new appointments, plans are in development to improve our guidance, training and support throughout the full research lifecycle (please see further detail below).

Development work is underway on a new online ethics platform that aims to make our ethics process more robust and transparent. As part of this work, academic colleagues were provided with training on this system, and conducting ethical reviews.

Multiple new RKE policies and procedures have been implemented to-date including a process for Managing Due Diligence in Research, based on UKRI guidelines, a Publications Policy including Open Access procedures, a Recognition & remuneration policy for research contributors & participants which incorporates patient and public involvement (PPI) procedures and the introduction of an Institutional Open Access Fund.

Our first cohort of post-graduate researchers (PGRs) completed their first year of study in 2022/23.

The University College's Research and Innovation Committee which reports to the Academic Board, has recently been reviewed and restructured. Standing agenda items will include matters of research ethics and integrity and will be discussed on a quarterly basis.

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.

With the introduction of the two new posts mentioned above, a thorough gap analysis was completed, with ethics and integrity comprising one area of the analysis. An action plan was produced following this analysis to be undertaken in academic year 2023/24, and includes the following planned developments:

- A comprehensive review of ethics and integrity policies and processes to ensure our processes are as robust and efficient as possible

- Implement training around ethics and integrity as part of a larger training and development package for RKE

- To better communicate our processes and policies around ethics and integrity to raise awareness and understanding, and to have a dedicated space on our staff webpages for ethics and integrity where all guidance and policies will be located. A new institutional website will also allow better public access to our policies and procedures and information on our RKE activity

- To produce a Code of Good Research Practice

- To explore a subscription to the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO)

- To produce a process for informing funders of research about misconduct investigations

- To implement ethics and integrity audits

- Training for supervisors of PGRs by Solent University, our awarding body for

research degrees

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.

AECC UC has the following relevant policies/processes relating to research integrity:

Research Misconduct Policy and Procedure – currently under review (Jan 2024)
This policy and procedure applies to all AECC University College staff and postgraduate research students undertaking research under the auspices of the University College. The document sets out AECC UC's principles around research integrity, advice on concerns about research integrity, and confidentiality and data protection. It sets out the process by which allegations of research misconduct can be reported, the process of investigation, and that the principle of no detriment shall apply to both the complainant and the respondent.

Research Ethics Policy and Procedures – currently under review (Jan 2024)
This document covers all major areas for ethical consideration including responsibilities of researchers, students, supervisors and panels, research ethics

principles, research ethics definitions, informed consent, the research ethics application and review process. Schools have independent research ethics panels which report to the Institutional Research Ethics Committee. This document is currently under review to standardise the process across Schools.

Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures – currently under review (Jan 2024)

This policy sets out how to raise concerns in the event someone believes that wrongdoing or malpractice is taking place within the University College. The policy applies to governors, students, those contracted to supply services to the University College and to everyone who works for the University College. The policy sets out how whistleblowers will be protected and the action that will be taken on any member of the University College's community who discriminates against anyone who raises a concern under this policy. Concerns can be raised by emailing clerk-whistleblowing@aecc.ac.uk.

The following policies and procedures also set out the expectations, policies and procedures around academic integrity for our staff and students:

- Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure (due for review Spring 2025)

- Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures (due for review Spring 2024)

- Student Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedures (due for review Spring 2025)

- Academic Appeals Policy and Procedures (postgraduate research degree students) (currently under review Jan 2024)

- Postgraduate Research Student Handbook (currently under review Jan 2024)

- Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy (due for review June 2024)

- Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure (due for review May 2024)

- Data Protection Policy (due for review Oct 2024)

- Staff Code of Conduct (due for review Sept 2025)

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

*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]