



Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2022/23

Introduction and Context

De Montfort University (DMU) has a responsibility to ensure that all research conducted under its auspices is undertaken ethically, responsibly and with integrity. DMU is a signatory of the UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity, and part of the commitments made as a result is to publish an annual report concerning how the institution meets those responsibilities.

Research Integrity Developments and Activities

Research at DMU covers a wide spectrum of disciplines, and so our researchers are faced with an equally wide array of ethics and integrity challenges. Faculties provide support and subject specific guidance for researchers, including ethical considerations (<https://www.dmu.ac.uk/research/ethics-and-governance/research-requiring-ethical-approval.aspx>) and at the university level DMU Research Services provides support for a wide array of challenges across the lifetime of a research project.

DMU has a robust ethics review and approval process for undergraduate, post-graduate and staff research projects. The DMU ethics processes are handled, for each faculty, by Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FREC), meetings of which are held quarterly. FRECs report to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) which provides guidance on ethical research practice and standards and is responsible for the development and review of policy, procedures and guidelines for ethical review of research at DMU.

Everyone at DMU contributes to the research culture. From undergraduate students learning the steps required to follow a project from conception to completion, to early career and post-graduate researchers taking their first steps as professionals, to experienced career academics whose expertise is vital to the development of a vibrant and successful research community. The kind of research we support says a lot about the kind of institution we want to be, and so it is imperative that research at DMU is conducted with the utmost integrity.

The following key activities were undertaken in 2022/23 to engender and support a culture of research integrity at De Montfort University:

1. DMU continually reviews and improves its policies and guidelines to ensure they are fit for purpose. The following policies and guidance documents received review and revision, or else were created during 2022/23:
 - a. UK GDPR Guidance for Researchers (<https://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/research-documents/uk-gdpr-and-research-v0.3-final.pdf>)
 - b. DMU Gender Equality Plan (GEP) (<https://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/research-documents/gender-equality-plan-final.pdf>)
 - c. Lone Worker Guidance for Conducting Research in the Field (<https://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/research/lone-worker-guidance-for-researchers.pdf>)

- d. Policy statement on the Responsible Use of Bibliometrics (<https://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/research-documents/rb-statement-final-version.pdf>)
2. The DMU Research Ethics Code of Practice (ReCOP), is also subject to continuous review and improvement, but warrants highlighting due to the significant improvements over the 22/23 year, including guidance regarding the submission of amendments for already approved applications, and clarification of the university governance after some structural updates.
3. Faculty and University-wide Ethics and Integrity Webpages are subject to continual improvement. Faculty pages typically include information relating to the ethics approval processes, and discipline-specific advice for staff and students, and they link-out to university resources on broader questions of research integrity. The university page on Research Integrity can be found here: <https://www.dmu.ac.uk/research/ethics-and-governance/why-is-research-integrity-and-ethics-important.aspx> and the Research Integrity and Ethics resources are found here: <https://www.dmu.ac.uk/research/ethics-and-governance/research-integrity-and-ethics-resources.aspx>
4. The development and deployment of the Block Ethics approval process, allowing for greater engagement in the ethics process from undergraduate and post-graduate taught module leaders were deployed in early 2023. A module leader might apply for a Block Ethics Approval if their students are conducting very similar or identical projects which are of low risk. Block approval allows the Faculty Ethics Committee to grant approval for all the research activity in a module, if it continues to be of low risk and derives from a limited set of defined data collection methods, for a period of three years. This development has been positively received by academic staff and has greatly streamlined the approval process for undergraduate and post-graduate taught projects. A review of the compliance with block approval requirements is scheduled for before the start of the 2024/25 academic year.
5. The continued development and support of the Worktribe ethics module, deployed in 2021. As the use of the ethics module matures at the institution, it has been rolled out to an even wider range of stakeholders in the 2022/23 year. Notably, *all* DMU ethics approval processes are now handled through the Worktribe ethics module – including all module-level undergraduate and taught master's ethics approval processes, and the new block ethics approval processes. This means that ethics approval processes across the university are more transparent, consistent, more dynamic and accessible than before.
6. DMU continues to be a member organisation of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), and we have engaged regularly with the online webinar and training offered by them.

Reflecting on Progress

The above improvements, developments and events are the major milestones in support of research integrity during the 2022/23 academic year. 2022/23 saw a great many efforts to achieve consistency and transparency across the board for research at all levels. Day-to-day support for staff and students at the university, however, comprises majority of the efforts towards achieving a culture of research integrity and so to that end the close collaboration between staff and students, faculty ethics committees, research and innovation officers in faculty and central university research governance has been pivotal in fostering a positive and vibrant research culture.

Investigations of misconduct during academic year 2022/23

DMU has in place a Misconduct in Research – Investigation Procedure which sets out a procedure for allegations of research misconduct to be investigated in a fair, objective and confidential manner, by implementation of a three-stage process: (i) preliminary consideration, (ii) screening and (iii) formal investigation. Informal resolution (without the need for formal investigation) may be appropriate for allegations that are not considered of a serious nature. This document clearly states that: "Allegations of research misconduct are potentially serious both for the university and the Respondent and such allegations will be investigated fairly, objectively, confidentially and in accordance with the principles of natural justice." (section 2.1).

As per the DMU standard policy review schedule, the Misconduct in Research Investigation Procedure has been reviewed is subject to updates which commenced in 2023 and is to be published in 2024 with an updated version of the document.

Staff Cases:

No staff cases of research misconduct were reported during the 2022/2023 academic year.

Research Student Cases:

One case of student misconduct was reported during the 2022/2023 academic year. The student admitted to the fabrication of results and the Academic Offense Panel imposed a failure in the component (with a mark of zero). The case was first raised on the 11th of November 2022 and the outcome (expulsion) was communicated on 13th December 2022. Following a review by the OIA, a new Panel was convened, and the date of the hearing was 19th April 2024.