

Annual Statement on Research Integrity

Summary Statement

Sheffield Hallam University remains committed to the highest standards of research integrity. Despite significant financial and resource challenges during 2024–25 we maintained core ethics services, delivered essential training, and advanced open research initiatives, including rights retention and sector partnerships. Looking forward, we are preparing for transformative changes in 2026: a streamlined UREC structure aligned to Schools and the Doctoral School, and a new ethics approval process for taught modules. These developments will strengthen governance, enhance compliance, and embed ethical practice across research and teaching, ensuring our research culture remains robust, responsible, and future-ready.

Key Achievements in 2024–25

- Maintained core ethics review services under severe resource constraints.
- Delivered mandatory ethics and integrity training for all doctoral researchers (93% positive feedback in PRES).
- Recruited 21 new ethics reviewers from the doctoral community to mitigate capacity gaps.
- Introduced new guidance on gaining children’s consent for research participation.
- Advanced open research through rights retention policy (88% immediate open access compliance).
- Co-delivered OpenFest, a major sector conference on open research, and launched an open research podcast.
- Joined the UK Reproducibility Network to strengthen research transparency and rigour.

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	Sheffield Hallam University
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)	02/12/25
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/excellence/ethics-and-integrity/integrity-concordat
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Professor Mayur Ranchordas
	Email address: ethicssupport@shu.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 Keith Fildes
	Email address: ethicssupport@shu.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

Policies and systems

Sheffield Hallam's primary ethics and integrity policies are located here:
<https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/excellence/ethics-and-integrity/policies>

These are:

- Research Ethics Policy and Procedures
- Principles of Integrity in Research and Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct
- Policy and Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct Against Doctoral and Masters Research Students

Policies are reviewed by the University's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) at least every two years. This will next take place in December 2025.

The misconduct process is managed by the University Head of Research Ethics, supported by appropriate members of the UREC, Research & Innovation Services and HR.

Accusations of misconduct are generally submitted to a mailbox (ethicssupport@shu.ac.uk) and this can be done so anonymously. Staff and students are also encouraged to raise any concerns relating to research integrity

with their line-manger/supervisor, or any other appropriate colleague or representative, in line with the University's Whistleblowing Policy:
<https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/legal-information>

All University-approved Participant Information Sheets advertise this same email mailbox (and a postal equivalent) for any research participants who have "concerns with how the research was undertaken or how (they) were treated" to contact.

Communications and engagement

At the start of each academic year, two bulk emails are sent.

The first goes to all academic staff (c.1400 individuals), outlining their research integrity responsibilities. The second goes to all Heads of School and research leads (c.25 individuals), reminding them of their additional responsibilities as research leaders.

The most recent communications can be found at the bottom of this page:
<https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/excellence/ethics-and-integrity/integrity-concordat>

A comprehensive resource of training and development for core ethics and integrity topics is in place (pre-recorded) and available permanently on-demand.

Due to resourcing constraints, the usual series of complementary monthly live sessions did not run during 2024/25. It is expected these will resume during 25/26 (although at reduced frequency), with 'hot topic' sessions planned on AI Declarations in Ethics Applications and Gaining Children's Consent for Participation in Research. The pre-recording ethics training sessions were circulated to research staff and made available on our internal ethics site throughout the academic year.

Additional bespoke sessions are also run within Colleges, Institutes and Schools, and with UG and PGT student cohorts. Taught UG and PGT programmes run research integrity and research ethics training as part of the project (dissertation) modules.

Culture, development and leadership

The University has a proud tradition of strong research leadership, which expects the highest levels of integrity from all its community, but is supportive and nurturing in its approach to ensuring this.

Research integrity at Sheffield Hallam is upheld by trust, professionalism, peer-regulation, and the existence of a supportive culture that is conscientious, reflective and where genuine mistakes are permitted if they are admitted and learnt from.

This culture of integrity is underpinned by the values that Sheffield Hallam researchers share. They are individually and collectively responsible and accountable for their research and its consequences. They demonstrate honesty, openness and fairness in undertaking and reporting research. They are aware of expectations regarding practice, and have the courage to stand up for principles and act when integrity is absent or in question. They have respect for research participants, other professionals and the public, and engage with collaborators, colleagues and stakeholders. Above all, they recognise and uphold their position as stewards of their disciplines and role models for the next generation of researchers.

Good practice in research integrity is embedded through staff and doctoral development training programmes; as well as through research leadership, line management and doctoral supervision.

Monitoring and reporting

The PhD and Staff ethics application approval figures for 24/25 are:

Year	No Human	Low Risk	All Other	IRAS	Given Elsewhere	Total
24/25	97	186	142	9	19	453
23/24	88	226	166	7	20	507
22/23	111	200	165	13	13	502
21/22	90	219	197	11	17	534
20/21	67	233	186	7	7	500
19/20	64	215	171	10	9	469
18/19	64	214	168	17	11	474
17/18	68	230	125	18	13	454

The number of applications in 24/25 fell by 11%. This is a reflection of the overall 20% shrinkage of our academic workforce over the past two years, and not a disengagement with ethical processes.

While not centrally recorded, the number of UG and PGT applications per year are in the thousands (there are c.8000 Y3 projects and c.10,000 from PGTs; category approvals do enable the grouping/collective review of many of these).

Ethics and integrity training is mandatory for all first-year doctoral researchers. Approximately 100 doctoral students completed the relevant online module as part of their induction programme. In the most recent doctoral experience survey (PRES), 93% of PGRs agreed their understanding of research integrity had developed during their doctoral training (only 2% disagreed, 5% gave neutral responses).

There is a standing report to the University's quarterly Research and Innovation Committee on research ethics and integrity. Misconduct cases are monitored by the Chair of UREC and Research & Innovation Services.

Monitoring of open research is undertaken systematically. The University's REF open access compliance levels are considerably above average; 70-80% (varying quarterly figures) of in-scope outputs were compliant (85-95% after exemptions), compared with the UK average of 61% (80% after exemptions; Research England report)

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.

Despite financial and resource pressures, we delivered key initiatives to uphold integrity and advance open research. Ethics administration and review continue to function thanks to the exceptional dedication of colleagues, but delays in approval are increasing. A recruitment drive in April for new reviewers from the doctoral community saw an additional 21 reviewers added to our pool, which helped mitigate other losses.

The University Research Ethics Committee continues to monitor risks associated with research and innovation in a challenging higher education environment, where resource pressures have impacted service capacity. We are committed to mitigating these risks through strengthened governance and proactive measures. To support this, the University must invest in a modern research ethics management system to replace the current Converis platform, which is outdated and inefficient. A new system will improve compliance for students, researchers, and staff, reduce administrative burden, and enhance risk management across all research activities. In the interim minor modifications to the existing Converis system are being supported, particularly to enable updates to application forms relating to the evolving AI and freedom of speech agendas. Plans are also being explored to move the 18,000 annual student applications from paper-based to MS Forms as an interim measure, in lieu of a management system for these.

The UREC produced a new guidance document on the topic of Gaining Children's Consent/ Assent for Participation in Research, which can be found here:

<https://www.shu.ac.uk/-/media/home/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice/guidance-on-gaining-childrens-consent.pdf>

The University is now an active member of the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN). We also co-delivered a major three-day OpenFest open research conference (in partnership with University of Sheffield) and produce an open research podcast: <https://libguides.shu.ac.uk/c.php?g=709195&p=5247223>.

Sheffield Hallam was the first university in England to introduce a rights retention policy for publications. This was introduced for papers on 15 October 2022 and widened to include book chapters on 1 January 2024. 88% of eligible publications are now made available open access immediately (without embargo), with half of those being via the rights retention route and the other half via gold open access.

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.

Severe resource constraints during 2024–25 meant our priority was maintaining essential ethics services and minimizing delays in approvals. Core training and development for the research community continued, despite limited capacity. Looking ahead, 2026 will mark a major transformation in research ethics governance. A new UREC structure aligned to Schools and the Doctoral School will streamline oversight, strengthen compliance, and enhance support for researchers. Alongside this, a new taught-module ethics approval process will embed ethical practice into applied learning, ensuring students develop the skills to conduct research responsibly. These changes will move us beyond maintaining core services toward a future-proof model that safeguards integrity and enriches the research experience.

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.

Case Study 1: Expanding the Ethics Reviewer Pool through Doctoral Engagement

Context

Ethics review capacity was under pressure due to resource constraints, creating risks of delays and uneven workloads. At the same time, doctoral students needed opportunities to develop skills in research governance and academic citizenship.

Implementation

We launched an initiative to recruit doctoral researchers (Year 2 and above) as ethics reviewers. Recruitment was framed around academic citizenship emphasizing that ethics review is a shared responsibility, as others review their applications too. Twenty-one PGR students were trained and mentored, and allocated only to applications requiring three reviewers, acting as the third “lay” reviewer under supervision. This safeguarded quality while enabling skill development.

Impact

- Increased reviewer capacity, reducing pressure on senior academics.
- Enhanced doctoral students’ understanding of research ethics and governance.
- Provided structured mentoring, building confidence and competence in ethical review.
- Strengthened the culture of shared responsibility across the research community.

Lessons Learned

Targeted recruitment and mentoring can successfully expand reviewer capacity while supporting researcher development. Framing participation as academic citizenship resonates strongly with doctoral researchers.

Case Study 2: Embedding Equity in Ethics Review Workload

Context

Ethics review responsibilities were unevenly distributed, with some researchers submitting multiple applications but rarely contributing to reviews. This created inefficiencies and undermined fairness.

Implementation

We introduced a policy promoting equity in ethics review workload: researchers submitting three ethics applications annually are expected to review three in

return. This principle of reciprocity was communicated as part of academic citizenship and integrated into ethics governance processes.

Impact

- Improved fairness and workload distribution across the research community.
- Increased reviewer engagement and capacity, reducing delays in approvals.
- Reinforced ethics review as a core element of academic responsibility.

Lessons Learned

Clear expectations and transparent policies foster a culture of fairness and shared responsibility. Linking review obligations to submission activity ensures sustainability and strengthens research integrity practices.

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.

Misconduct Policies:

- Principles of Integrity in Research and Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct
- Policy and Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct Against Doctoral and Masters Research Students

<https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/excellence/ethics-and-integrity/policies>

The policies were reviewed in September 2023. Minor changes were made. In the ethics policy this related to improving advice regarding intersections with HMPPS procedures and clarification about what constitutes an 'approved' reviewer. In the misconduct policies these were based on providing more assurance (around process, presumption of innocence etc.) and better support to those accused of research misconduct. The next review of these is in process, with publication expected in December 2025.

Whistleblowing Policy:

<https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/legal-information>

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	1	1	0	0
Falsification	0	0	0	0
Plagiarism	3	3	0	0
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	2	1	0	0
Misrepresentation (e.g. data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)	1	1	1	0
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	0	0	0	0
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)	0	0	0	0
<i>Other*</i>	4	4	1	0
Total:	11	10	2	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.**

The levels of verified research misconduct remain low overall, however, this academic year we observed a notable shift in the nature of allegations. A total of 11 allegations were reported, leading to 10 formal investigations, the majority of which related to the misuse of Artificial Intelligence (AI), primarily suspected use of AI tools by postgraduate researchers to generate written work without appropriate disclosure or adherence to integrity standards. This trend reflects the rapid development and widespread availability of AI technologies, which have outpaced the ability of universities to respond with clear guidance and training.

In line with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, we have acted quickly to mitigate these emerging risks by introducing:

- [Guidance for staff and students on AI & Research Integrity](#) (policy document)
- [Checklist for AI Use in Research](#) to support responsible practice
- [Dedicated AI in Research webpage](#) providing resources and FAQs

While these measures represent significant progress, further work is needed to embed understanding and good practice. We plan to deliver targeted training for researchers on safe and ethical AI use, promote transparency and accountability in AI-assisted research, and continue monitoring developments to update guidance proactively. These actions will help ensure that AI is used responsibly and in alignment with research integrity principles.

The reporting of allegations continues to demonstrate that our system is accessible and that research integrity remains a high priority for our researchers. Lessons learned from misconduct cases are discussed by the University Research Ethics Committee and published on the University's external ethics website. Historical comparison shows that whilst investigations have increased in number, they reflect emerging challenges rather than systemic issues: one investigation in 2022–23, one in 2021–22, three in 2020–21, three in 2019–20, two in 2018–19, and none in 2017–18.

While cases have increased, they reflect emerging sector-wide challenges rather than systemic issues. Our proactive measures ensure Sheffield Hallam remains a leader in responsible research practice

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