**Hartpury University: Annual statement on research integrity**

**Section 1: Key contact information**

| Question | Response |
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| **1A. Name of organisation** | Hartpury University |
| **1B. Type of organisation:**<br><br>**higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)** | Higher Education Institution |
| **1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)** | 18/11/26 |
| **1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)** | https://www.hartpury.ac.uk/university/research-innovation/research-governance/ |
| **1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity** | Name: Professor Stephen Draper |
| | Email address: Stephen.Draper<br><br>Stephen.Draper@hartpury.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: Rosie Scott-Ward |
| | Email address:<br><br>Rosie.Scott-Ward@hartpury.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** |
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| Research at Hartpury University takes place in the context of its academic structure, with research managed within Departments. The governance of the research uses this structure along with that of the formal committee structure, in particular the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and the Ethics Committee, reporting to Academic Board and Corporation.<br><br>The Code of Research Practice provides a framework for the highest standards of personal conduct in research. These minimum standards are applicable to all researchers and those who support research in addition to their professional or funding body requirements and legislation.<br><br>The University's policies and guidance relevant to research, its governance, research integrity and ethics are available from the University's governance web page: Research governance \| Hartpury University<br><br>University policies applicable to wider matters of institutional governance are available from: Policies, regulation, and information \| Hartpury University & Hartpury College<br><br>Staff and postgraduate students are made aware of relevant policies and processes when they join the University as part of their induction, and updates are communicated through heads of schools and departments, as well as through general communication mechanisms, where relevant. Specific aspects of research governance, good practice or other requirements are highlighted on a project-by-project basis as needed, and within delivery for modules that embed research, so that they can be actively addressed in research design or delivery, as appropriate.<br><br>The University's Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Research Misconduct serves to ensure institutional attention and that relevant actions can be taken if allegations of research misconduct arise overseen by a senior member of staff. The Procedure provides some flexibility in the way in which an allegation might initially be raised, in order to allow staff, researchers, students and others to feel comfortable in reporting potential instances of misconduct. Whilst providing this flexibility, the Procedure requires a full written statement of the allegation to be received by the named senior member of staff to ensure that the process is transparent, timely, robust and fair. |

The environment for research is created and sustained by the culture and behaviours of our researchers, those who support them, and the wider institution. Whilst seeking excellence and applicability in what we do, we are also conscious of the need to enable and encourage good practice in research, as embodied in the Code of Research Practice. We seek to ensure that our research vision, strategy, operational plans, resource deployment and performance monitoring all take account of our commitment to research integrity and do not introduce inappropriate or perverse incentives. This is achieved through a variety of mechanisms including targeted annual continuing professional development in research integrity and ethics for staff and students.

**2B. Changes and developments during the period under review**

No allegations of research misconduct were investigated under the University's Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research during 2025/26.

The University continues to monitor research governance and research integrity matters across both staff and student research activity. During the year, a small number of cases relating to failures to obtain required ethics approval or to complete institutional research registration processes were identified within taught student research projects. In accordance with the University's Code of Research Practice and Academic Regulations, these cases were managed through the relevant academic misconduct and student disciplinary procedures rather than the formal research misconduct process, as they did not meet the threshold for investigation as allegations of research misconduct.

While these matters did not constitute formal research misconduct cases, they highlight the continued importance of maintaining awareness of ethics approval, project registration and research governance requirements. Lessons arising from these cases have informed ongoing training, guidance and communication activities for students and supervisors, alongside continued efforts to strengthen compliance with institutional research governance processes. The Hartpury Code of Research Practice and the Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research were introduced between 2020 and 2022 and apply across the University. As elements of the research integrity framework also apply to the wider organisation, including the Further Education College and commercial operations, these policies were approved by Hartpury Executive and are implemented across all parts of the organisation. Both documents are subject to biennial review to ensure continued alignment with regulatory requirements and sector expectations.

We continue to provide research integrity training for all academic staff and research students through compulsory online training events and all postgraduate students (taught and research) receive research integrity training as part of their induction to Hartpury. The principles of research integrity and ethics are embedded within the delivery of undergraduate modules that include research

activities. Alongside these training events, the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee regularly holds staff briefings to ensure staff are up to date with developments in this area.

All taught programmes are subject to regular ethical review on a biennial basis. This sits alongside the robust processes already in place for all dissertation and project modules. In addition, any substantive changes to programme or module content, delivery, assessment, learning activities or professional practice requirements that may affect ethical considerations trigger an earlier review, ensuring ethical oversight remains current, proportionate and responsive to evolving practice.

An annual audit of low-risk ethics applications is undertaken by the Ethics Committee, with findings used to inform targeted staff development and guidance. Where areas for improvement are identified, these are followed up directly with individual staff members and their line managers to support good practice and continuous enhancement of ethical review processes.

Hartpury University Ethics Committee continued to oversee a substantial volume of ethics activity during 2025/26, with total applications rising from 802 to 882. This growth was driven by a 40.2% increase in research-related applications, predominantly low-risk, partially offset by an anticipated reduction in teaching applications following the introduction of biennial ethical review for taught provision.

The Committee received 882 applications across research and teaching activities, comprising 248 (28.1%) research applications requiring full committee scrutiny, 589 (66.8%) low-risk research applications, 40 (4.5%) teaching applications requiring full review and 5 (0.6%) low-risk teaching applications. A total of 81.9% (n=203) of research applications and 87.5% (n=35) of teaching applications had been approved by year end, with seven research applications remaining under review. First-time approval rates improved across most applicant groups compared to the previous year, including undergraduate, postgraduate, postgraduate researcher and staff applications, suggesting that ongoing staff and student development activities are continuing to strengthen the quality of submissions received by the Committee.

As part of the Committee's annual quality assurance processes, an audit of 50 low-risk applications was undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of departmental screening arrangements. Of the applications reviewed, 22.0% (n=11) were identified as not meeting the criteria for low-risk review, representing a small improvement on the previous year's audit (25.0%). Common issues identified included insufficient detail regarding data management, incomplete application forms, unclear approaches to consent, anonymisation and risk assessment, and weaknesses in survey design. Targeted staff development activities are planned to support staff and students to address these deficits.

Monitoring of ethics compliance within taught modules demonstrated continued improvement. Across undergraduate dissertation and research project modules, 95.6% (n=526) of students had a recorded ethics submission, with the proportion of missing applications reducing from 5.3% in 2024/25 to 4.4% in 2025/26. Compliance within postgraduate research modules remained high, with 85.7% (n=85) of students having a recorded ethics submission. Collectively, these findings demonstrate continued strengthening of ethical review processes,

enhanced awareness of ethics requirements and ongoing improvement in research governance across the institution.

**2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments**

The volume and complexity of work undertaken by the Ethics Committee continues to grow. Overall ethics activity increased by 10% in 2025/26, driven by a substantial increase in research-related applications, while maintaining timely review processes and high levels of compliance across taught and research provision. Encouragingly, first-time approval rates improved across a number of applicant groups, suggesting that recent staff and student development initiatives are having a positive impact on the quality of submissions received. To ensure the Committee remains able to respond effectively to increasing demand, additional capacity has been introduced, including the appointment of Deputy Chairs.
Looking ahead, we will review the research integrity and ethics training provided to staff and postgraduate students, refresh guidance and support resources, and continue to monitor ethics processes to identify opportunities for improvement, efficiency gains and the effective use of digital solutions, while maintaining robust ethical oversight and high standards of research integrity. A priority for 2026/27 will be strengthening awareness of the responsible use of AI in research. We will deliver dedicated staff and student development sessions and embed consideration of AI, research integrity and ethical research practice within relevant modules to support the transparent and accountable use of emerging technologies. As highlighted above, all policies are regularly reviewed and subject to full committee scrutiny.

**2D. Case study on good practice (optional)**

**Section 3: Addressing research misconduct**

| **3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct** |
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| The University has in place a Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research. The Procedure is based on the guidance produced by the UK Research Integrity Office and also draws on a number of other institutions' procedures. The Named Person for allegations of research misconduct is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Rosie Scott-Ward, Rosie.Scott-Ward@hartpury.ac.uk. Advice in relation to research policies, integrity and research misconduct is available from the Pro Vice Chancellor (Education, Research and Knowledge Exchange), Prof Stephen Draper, Stephen.Draper@hartpury.ac.uk.<br><br>The key policies and guidance related to research governance and conduct with the date of issue / adoption of the current versions are listed below:<br><br>• Hartpury Code of Research Practice (v.3)<br><br>• Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research (v.3)<br><br>• Research Governance Standard Operating Procedures (v.2)<br><br>• Intellectual Property Policy (v.4)<br><br>• Code of Professional Conduct (June 2025)<br><br>• Financial Regulations (June 2026)<br><br>• Public Interest Disclosure Procedure ('Whistleblowing') (January 2026)<br><br>The University commits to engage constructively with other relevant organisations in their investigation of an allegation of research misconduct, and to alert other relevant organisations to potential cases of research misconduct of which it becomes aware. |

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| The University creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct by embedding relevant procedures and policies including discussion of sector developments and emerging issues within induction and annual research integrity updates. This includes signposting of key contacts who can provide informal guidance in matters relating to research governance and misconduct. |

**3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken**

| **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* | *0* | *0* | *0* |
| Falsification | *0* | *0* | *0* | *0* |
| Plagiarism | *0* | *0* | *0* | *0* |
| Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations | *0* | *0* | *0* | *0* |
| Misrepresentation (e.g. data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history) | *0* | *0* | *0* | *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* |
| *Other** | *0* | *0* | *0* | *0* |
| **Total:** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **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.** |
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| NA |