

RCA Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2023/24

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	Royal College of Art
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)	Senate (date TBC)
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.rca.ac.uk/research-innovation/research-ethics/
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Dr Emma Wakelin, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research & Innovation emma.wakelin@rca.ac.uk
	Chris Mitchell, Deputy Director, Academic Development chris.mitchell@rca.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	Susan Hamilton, Head of Research Development ethics@rca.ac.uk
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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
The Royal College of Art (RCA) is committed to upholding the highest standards of research integrity and ethical conduct in all its research activities. Key to this is establishing and maintaining an institutional culture and environment that facilitates research integrity, supported by policies and processes that are proportionate, appropriate to our culture and values, and the activities that we carry out. The RCA's Research Ethics Policy is intended to support research activities undertaken by RCA academic staff and research students, enhancing research and research methodologies by encouraging careful consideration of and rigorous solutions to any ethical challenges that arise in the course of a research project. The Research Ethics Policy was reviewed in 2024, to ensure it continues to meet the good practice set out in the UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity and in the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) Code of Practice for Research. A revised version will be published in the 2024/25 academic year, reflecting changes to the staff and student ethics review process, following the introduction of the Research Ethics Review Network. The Research Ethics Committee is co-chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation and the Deputy Director, Academic Development. The Committee meets termly, and reports to the Research & Innovation Committee (which reports to Senate). The Taught MA Ethics Sub-Committee, chaired by the Deputy Director of Academic Development, reports to the Ethics Committee. A decision was made to dissolve the Research Staff & Students Sub-committee to form the Research

Ethics Network, which has expanded the current ethics review panel and allowed more research staff and students to engage in ethics and research integrity issues. The Network will report into the Research Ethics Committee, providing a written update each term.

In 2017-18, the RCA introduced Epigeum online training to all research staff (including doctoral supervisors) and to MRes and first year PhD students, and this offering was expanded in 2023-24 to include eight courses under the titles 'Research Ethics in Practice' and 'Becoming an Ethical Researcher'. All research staff and research students are expected to have undertaken the Epigeum course prior to submitting a request for research ethics approval to the Ethics Committee. Additional research ethics training is also provided to research students through the College's MRes and doctoral training provision and to research staff through Research Supervisor training. Training on topics under the research integrity banner, such as Research Data Management and Open Access, are also delivered by the RCA's RKE Academy.

To ensure that the RCA keeps up to date of best practice related to research integrity, it is a member of a number of external bodies, including UKRIO and ARMA.

A full list of RCA's policies and codes of practice can be found at the following link:

<https://www.rca.ac.uk/more/organisation/policies-and-codes-of-practice/>

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

A decision was made to dissolve the Research Staff & Students Sub-committee to form a Research Ethics Network, expanding the current ethics review panel and allow more research staff and students to engage in ethics and research integrity issues. Following a call for academic staff and doctoral students to join the Network, it was launched in June 2024 with an introductory training session for members of the Network.

The following policies were approved and published on the RCA website in 2024:

- [Research Misconduct Policy](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy](#)

The RCA's Due Diligence and Risk Assessment process for Research and Knowledge Exchange projects was updated to reference the Safeguarding Policy. The Research Ethics policy is in the process of being updated, and a revised version will be published in 2024/25.

A report on Responsible AI in Art and Design in Higher Education was presented to the Research Ethics Committee, investigating the responsible use of AI within art and design in higher education, including best practices, ethical implications, and associated challenges. Further work on this will continue in 2024/25.

Epigeum online training for research staff and students is continuing, and has been further expanded further. Eight courses are now available under the titles 'Research Ethics in Practice' and 'Becoming an Ethical Researcher'.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

Following the successful introduction of the Research Ethics Network in 2023/24, the Network will continue to review research ethics applications from staff and students in the coming year, and to exchange knowledge and share good practice about research ethics. Other plans include inviting external speakers to deliver sessions on research ethics, and undertaking a review of the online research ethics application process for staff and students, with a focus on continuous improvement of the existing online process.

The RCA is currently implementing a Research Information System (RIS) which is scheduled to go live in 2024/25. The system will enable the tracking and management of research activity, and will support the ongoing monitoring of compliance with the research ethics policy and process. Ethical considerations and approvals have been embedded into the research project lifecycle in the RIS.

Future plans for ethics training involves encouraging academic staff and doctoral students to undertake a refresher course, in addition to offering enhanced ethics training.

The RCA continues to be a subscriber of the UK Research Integrity Office and regularly engages with their online events and training sessions. We also continue to engage with the Association for Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) Special Interest Groups on research ethics and integrity.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

The RCA is committed to the highest standards of integrity, probity and accountability in the conduct of research, in accordance with the principles of the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* (2019).

The RCA Research Misconduct Policy and Procedure was approved and published in 2024. It is intended to address allegations of research misconduct and was developed in line with the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* (2019) and the UK Research Integrity Office's (UKRIO) *Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research* (2nd edition). The Research Misconduct Policy and Procedure sets out the RCA's expectations and requirements for staff and research students regarding good practice in research to ensure that research conducted at the College is of the highest standards of integrity, and also outlines the actions to be taken when concerns are raised about the conduct of research undertaken under the auspices of the RCA.

Related guidelines and procedures can be found in the follow policies (add links):

- [Staff Disciplinary Policy](#)
- [Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Policy](#)
- [Financial Regulations](#)
- [Counter-Fraud Policy](#)
- [Anti-Bribery Policy](#)
- [Anti-Money Laundering Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Public Interest Disclosure \(Whistleblowing\) Policy](#)
- [Research Ethics Policy](#)
- [Academic Regulations](#)

Staff and students are encouraged to get in touch with ethics@rca.ac.uk or with the Co-Chairs of the Research Ethics Committee if they have any questions.

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				
Falsification				
Plagiarism				
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations				
Misrepresentation (eg data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)				
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)				
<i>Other*</i>				
Total:				
*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.				
There were no formal investigations of research misconduct in 2023/24.				