RCA Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2021/22

Section 1: Key contact information

1A. Name of organisation	Royal College of Art
1B. Type of organisation:	Higher Education Institution
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	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, Director of Research & Innovation emma.wakelin@rca.ac.uk
	Corinne Smith, Director of Academic Development Office corinne.smith@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	Christie Walker, Head of Research Development ethics@rca.ac.uk

Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken

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2A. Description of current systems and culture

The RCA refreshed and updated its Research Ethics Policy in 2017, ensuring it met 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. The RCA became a UKRIO subscriber in 2016.

A new Ethics Committee was established in 2017/18, co-chaired by the Director of Research and Innovation and the Director of Academic Development. The Committee meets termly, and reports to the Research & Knowledge Exchange Strategy Committee (which reports to Senate). The Research Staff & Students Ethics Sub-Committee, co-chaired by the Head of Postgraduate Programmes and the Head of Research Development, and the Taught MA Ethics Sub-Committee, chaired by the Deputy Director of Academic Development, report to the Ethics Committee.

In 2017/18, the RCA introduced the Epigeum online "Ethics: Good Research Practice" training course to all research staff (including doctoral supervisors) and to MRes and first year PhD students. 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.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

New guidance on the following areas was produced for research staff and students:
- Good practice guidance on incentive payments for project participants
- Research data management guidance and good practice (with information about how this relates to good research conduct)

- Draft Responsible Investment Policy (to be approved and published in 2022/23)

The digital ethics application and approval process was streamlined and updated in 2021/22, with updated templates for consent and participant information forms published.

Epigeum training for research staff and students is continuing, but further in-person training is being reviewed. It has been challenging to offer in-person training due to a variety of external factors.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

The RCA is developing a separate Research Misconduct Investigation Procedure, to be approved and published in 2022/23. The RCA's Whistleblowing Policy has also covered research misconduct, but a new procedure will be developed to address research misconduct specifically, using good practice set out in UKRIO's Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research (which is currently in the process of being updated).

Given the progress achieved over the last few years in the ethics and research integrity space, there has been a proposal to dissolve the Research Staff & Students Sub-committee to form an Ethics Network and Review Panel which will expand the current ethics review panel and allow more research staff and students to engage in ethics and research integrity issues, including being involved in developing new good practice guidance.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

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

The RCA has referred those who wish to raise concerns, complaints or allegations about research being conducted by the RCA or its researchers to the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy. However, given the increase in research activity and resulting ethics applications, the Ethics Committee has recommended that a separate RCA Research Misconduct Investigation Procedure be developed, which will be approved and published in 2022/23.

https://www.rca.ac.uk/more/organisation/policies-and-codes-of-practice/public-interest-disclosure-whistleblowing-policy/

The RCA has recently introduced the anonymous Expolink reporting system for making whistleblowing allegations, and the possible use of this system (or a similar system) will be explored for research misconduct allegations related to the upcoming Research Misconduct Investigation Procedures. This should provide a degree of confidence for staff and students who wish to report misconduct within the RCA.

Information about the current Whistleblowing Policy is available on the external RCA website as well as internal intranet sites. Staff and students are encouraged to get in touch with ethics@rca.ac.uk or with the Co-Chairs of the Ethics Committee if they have any questions.

The Screening Panel for the research misconduct allegation made in 2021/22 made recommendations for the RCA to develop further good practice with regards to PhD interviews to ensure there are published ethical guidelines in relation to background intellectual property, access to privileged information, and the conduct of the selection process and interview panel, that is made available to PhD interview panels and PhD interviewees. This will help to ensure that interviewers and interviewees have a shared understanding of the interview process and outcomes for a PhD interview.

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	1			
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)				
*Other**				
Total:				