

Research Integrity Annual Report 2024-25

LSTM is a subscriber to the Concordat on Research Integrity. We are required to compile an Annual Report following the headings set out below. This Report will be discussed at Research Integrity and Governance Committee and shared with LSTM Executive as well as UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), as per the terms of our membership.

This report covers the period 01 August 2024 – 31 July 2025.

A. Key Contact Details

Professor Hilary Ranson hilary.ranson@lstmed.ac.uk	Pro Vice Chancellor of Research Culture & Integrity Chair of Research Integrity & Governance Committee
Denise Watson denise.watson@lstmed.ac.uk	Head of Research Governance, Ethics & Integrity
Lindsay Hunt Lindsay.hunt@lstmed.c.uk	Research Compliance Officer Coordinates Research Integrity Working Group & Research Integrity Champions

B. Summary of actions and activities to support research integrity (RI)

1. Research Integrity Strategy

The Research Integrity Working Group (RIWG) has been operational since 2021, with objectives to raise the profile of RI issues, identify and address policy gaps and escalate any problems. A RI Strategy was developed, led by Pro Vice Chancellor for Research Culture & Integrity, with input from across senior leadership. The Strategy includes 16 specific objectives spanning training, sample management, data management, open research, equitable partnership.

Research Integrity & Governance Committee is overall responsible for the implementation of the RI Strategy, with RIWG responsible for reviewing the proposed changes resulting from implementation of the strategy and ensuring the implementation continues to meet the needs of LSTM's diverse staff and students.

2. Research Integrity Champions

- a. RI Champions initiative continued with the following steps to spread awareness and increase engagement:
 - Four RI Champions drop in events were held altogether engaging over 40 staff and students
 - Departmental meetings now have a standing agenda item for RI Champions to share specific messages with their departments on a quarterly basis
 - Messages via screens around LSTM providing good practice messages
 - Instigating a collaboration between other Champions initiatives to pool efforts to raise awareness and maximise engagement; first group event is planned for Autumn 2025.
- b. RI Champions took on a new role based on an update to LSTM Publication Policy, which includes a provision for an Authorship Dispute Panel, formed of RI Champions, to support resolution of

authorship issues. In Autumn 2024, RI Champions received bespoke authorship training provided by UKRIO. To date this panel has been used on a single occasion to address an authorship dispute.

3. Training

- a. All new starters attending 'LSTM Welcome Event' access an introductory presentation on research integrity at LSTM.
- b. Two core modules are mandatory for Principal Investigators of LSTM-sponsored studies. Role-specific compliance with mandatory training is being monitored by Learning & Development with high levels of compliance across LSTM.
- c. In 2024-25, a programme of five research integrity workshops was rolled out. Eleven workshops were attended by 44 colleagues joining in person or via Microsoft Teams. A high proportion of attendees were PhD students and Early Career Researchers.
- d. PhD and Masters course programmes include an introductory session on research integrity; three such sessions were delivered this year.
- e. LSTM research integrity training content was adapted for use at one of our key partner institutes, the Malawi Liverpool Wellcome Centre (MLW). The MLW Clinical Research Support Unit hosted two training sessions attended by 70 participants, field research assistants, nurses, researchers and data personnel. It is intended that these initiatives will be built upon over the next 12 months with more targeted training and expanded RI Champions network. MLW seeks to strengthen institutional awareness of Research Integrity and ensure that ethical conduct, transparency, and accountability remain at the forefront of research operations.
- f. We plan to expand RI training across all LSTM Hubs in due course.

4. Research Culture

- a. Organisational change: 2024/2025 saw the conclusion of a major period of transformation across our research enabling teams and the resulting structure is facilitating engagement between research and professional services teams. A good example is the development of the Research Integrity Action Plan which required engagement across the organisation and reflection on obstacles to embedding agreed policies and processes. By identifying 16 distinct goals, and breaking these down into specific, timebound objectives, we hope to increase accountability and transparency.
- b. Research Culture priorities for 2024-25 will focus on four main areas: making it easier to get things done; strengthening two way dialogue between LSTM Executive and staff; increasing connectivity across LSTM and; supporting professional development. Activities planned include:
 - Further development and roll-out of our Current Research Information System (CRIS), which will act as a strategic enabler for LSTM's research ambitions. It will keep real-time, accurate data in one place, reducing manual reporting, streamlining workflows and supporting strategic decisions
 - A completely new and revised institutional website including a Virtual Academy for Education, Research and Enterprise
 - A revised format for our staff forum to provide more opportunities for staff to input into decision making across LSTM

- Reintroduction of a weekly seminar series, showcasing current research and findings from across the institution
 - Clearer progression pathways for technical staff
 - More support to facilitate research staff submitting fellowship applications
 - A programme of positive action and support for BAME early career researchers
- c. In 2023 a series of training aimed specifically at Research Group Leaders, was introduced. This was expanded in 2024 into 16 sessions under three themes: Creating a positive culture, delivering results, and supporting others. Research Committee have agreed the minimal level of engagement expected and feedback will be used to adapt the programme.

5. Animal Research

- a. LSTM is a signatory of the Concordat on Openness in Animal Research. AWERB is working toward collating information on metrics of animal use at partner international sites for transparent reporting, in line with the ethos of the Concordat
- b. LSTM Animal Welfare Ethical Review Board (AWERB) is engaged in an on-going discussion with the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) regarding joining the association, specifically relating to the Herpetarium. Benefits would include knowledge exchange and training on handling and care of venomous snakes, for instance.
- c. LSTM AWERB has reviewed the recent UKRIO framework 'Obtaining Materials from Sentient Animals' which provides clear guidelines about ethical decision-making. AWERB is currently assessing the effects of the framework upon LSTM-led projects in partner countries, and will report any formal decisions on further action to the relevant internal Committee.

6. Equity

- a. In 2022, LSTM adopted a Consensus Statement led by LSTM-based authors on equitable partnership within international collaborations involving low and middle income countries (LMICs) ([PMC34647323](#)). Compliance with the Consensus Statement at LSTM is not currently monitored but, as part of LSTM's project to update our research information systems, we are actively discussing ways to incorporate this at the conception and publication stage of research projects partnering with LMICs. Steps have further been taken to promote this by sharing information on how to adopt the Statement and good practice examples at department meetings.
- b. An Equitable Partnerships Guidance Document is being developed, led by a research team with input from Research Integrity Working Group. The implementation of this document will be managed by then new Partnership, Engagement and External Relations Committee. Additionally, indicators of equitable partnership in practice will be captured on LSTM's research management system PURE, currently in development.
- c. Guidance on decolonising research, education and employment practices have been developed and shared with all researchers. A handbook aimed at increasing racial literacy across the organisation is available to all staff and students.
- d. Funding from the Wellcome Trust Institutional Funding for Research Culture has enabled us to increase the support for research management services across our global hubs. Capacity assessments were conducted in partner organisations in Kenya, Malawi, Cameroon and Zimbabwe and two very well received training programmes in Research Administration and Management were completed, followed by a *train the trainers* event to sustain the learnings. To enable shared leanings across the partnerships we have recently supported the establishment of Communities of Practice for cohorts of professional services teams and are establishing resource packs to reduce redundancy during project start up.

7. Reproducibility

- a. LSTM joined UK Reproducibility Network. Actions bringing more awareness of Open Research practices will follow this coming year as this has been identified as a gap.
- b. A new Senior Research Data Manager was appointed in January 2025 and is taking forward improvements in central research data management.
- c. A working group has been established to transition to Electronic Laboratory Notebooks (ELNs) platforms to meet LSTM's diverse research needs.

8. Artificial Intelligence

- a. LSTM Legal & Governance has compiled an interim guide to support staff and students when using AI, while a comprehensive framework will be released in coming months. Colleagues from IT, computer science, research data management, research integrity and research governance contributed to the guidance.

9. UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool

- a. LSTM continues to review its progress against the UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool.

C. Statement on process for dealing with research misconduct

As there have been no new cases of misconduct, the process has not been tested in practice.

The Policy for Handling Misconduct Allegations is under review.

D. Statement on formal research misconduct investigations

There were no formal research misconduct investigations in 2024-25.

E. Statement on what the institution has learned from any formal investigations of research misconduct

There were no cases of misconduct to learn from.

Two separate concerns were raised about grant application submission and authorship on a manuscript relating to a diagnostic tool, and the fact finding stage of the investigation initiated. While neither crossed the threshold of misconduct, important lessons were learned and changes to our policies, guidance documents and training have been made as a result of these.

F. Statement on how the institution creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct

Conducting research to the highest ethical standards, embedding equity in all our partnerships, and seeking to influence others to do the same, are key behaviours underpinning LSTM's values ([Vision, mission and values | LSTM \(lstm.ac.uk\)](#)). The use of Reading Panels to assess the quality of papers (thereby reducing the reliance on unfair metrics), the introduction of workshops to informally discuss concerns over questionable research practices, the commitment from LSTM Executive to make research integrity training mandatory for all staff, regardless of seniority, work of the Research Integrity & Governance Committee and the Research Integrity Working Group and Research Champions, all speak to LSTM's commitment to

value research quality over quantity and create an environment in which all are empowered to question poor practice.

Results from the CEDAR survey indicated a concerning level of mistrust in Our Freedom to Speak Up portal and this led to the implementation of a new, externally managed, anonymous reporting platform called Vault; we hope that this, plus the introduction of Research Integrity Champions will increase the level of reporting of questionable research practices enabling us to identify areas that need action. The Champions will also serve to increase awareness of misconduct, provide advice, flag questionable practices and increase visibility of support and resources promoting adherence to the principles of research integrity.

G. Gaps identified and being addressed

1. Policies are not currently accessible via the website, to be remedied. The new website is not yet published.
2. A programme of internal monitoring of LSTM-sponsored studies conducted by Research Governance, Ethics & Integrity Office is to be continued and expanded focussing on high risk studies. This will be particularly relevant when the Human Challenge Facility opens in 2025.
3. Expand training programme to be inclusive of staff based in Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal and Zimbabwe.
4. Establish links with LSTM KEF (Knowledge Exchange Framework) group to build research integrity into public engagement and dissemination work.
5. Research data management is being considered as gaps in this area are detrimental to data integrity.
6. Improve package of online resources providing guidance on research integrity.
7. Policy on data and sample archiving is not fit for purpose and needs updating
8. Implement a unified system, and guidance, for use of electronic lab notebooks.

Compiled by Lindsay Hunt, Research Compliance Officer with input from Professor Hilary Ranson, Pro Vice Chancellor of Research Culture & Integrity

Authorised by Denise Watson, Research Governance & Integrity Manager

Shared with Research Governance & Integrity Committee: 16 September 2025

Shared with LSTM Executive Committee: 30 October 2025