Royal College of Art
Postgraduate Art & Design

RCA Research Integrity Report 2018/19

Background

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.

One of the requirements of the UUK Concordat is the HEIs produce an annual research integrity report for their internal governance bodies. The RCA's research integrity report is submitted to the RKEI Strategy Committee each year.

Alongside the introduction of the updated Ethics Policy, the RCA also reviewed its research ethics approval processes. 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. Two sub-committees report to the Ethics Committee, one focussing on research students and staff, co-chaired by the Head of Postgraduate Programmes and the Head of Research Development, and one focussing on ethics in taught MA programmes, chaired by the Deputy Director of Academic Development.

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.

Report on 2018/19 Academic Year

Reports of Misconduct

There were no reports of research misconduct involving research students and staff at the RCA in the 2018/19 academic year.

Applications for Research Ethics Approval

Application for Research Ethics Approval are made using a standard self-assessment form. For research students and staff projects, applications presenting a low risk are assessed by the Co-Chairs of the Research Students and Staff sub-committee, and those presenting a higher level of risk are assessed by the Co-Chairs of the College Ethics Committee.

A total of 105 applications for research ethics approval were received in 2018/19, compared to 21 the previous year. The vast majority of these (98) were graded Green or Yellow (no or low risk), and the small number of applications (7) graded Red or Purple (higher risk, e.g. involving work with children or vulnerable adults, with security sensitive materials, with human tissue, etc.) were assessed by the Co-Chairs of the College's Ethics Committee, and referred for specialist advice where appropriate. A total of 135 staff and research students undertook the Epigeum online ethics training during 2018/19. The vast majority of these (124) were research students, with 11 staff undertaking the training course this year.

Applications for Ethics Approval		
	2018/19	*2017/18*
Total Research Student + Staff applications	105	*21*
Total Research Student applications	97	*18*
Total Staff applications	8	*3*
Purple	1	*1*
Red	6	*2*
Yellow	85	*18*
Green	13	*0*

Epigeum Online Research Ethics Training		
	2018/19	*2017/18*
Research Students	124	103
Staff	11	24
Total	135	127

Reflection and Summary Comments

The substantial increase in the number of research students seeking research ethics approval for their projects is very welcome, and suggests that the introduction of the research ethics policy and approval process has served to raise awareness of the importance of this aspect of good practice in research. It would be good to see a similar increase in take-up among research staff, and also to see numbers of research students and staff completing the online ethics training continue their steady increase.

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Director of Research & Innovation
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