

IFS annual statement on research integrity

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
Name of organisation	Institute for Fiscal Studies
Type of organisation	Independent research organisation
Date statement approved by Trustees	14 February 2025
Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Peter Levell, Deputy Research Director Email: peter.l@ifs.org.uk

Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture.

Description of actions and activities undertaken

Description of current systems and culture

- *Policies and systems:*

IFS has a Code of conduct for research integrity. The document sets out the policy and procedures of the Institute with respect to the promotion of good practice in academic research, and the investigation of allegations of academic misconduct.

- *Communication and engagement:*

All new starters in research teams receive information and training on research integrity as part of the induction process. The Code of conduct is mandatory for all staff to read annually. Compliance is monitored by our Metacompliance platform, which records which staff have read the document, and sends automatic reminders as necessary. New researchers also undertake training sessions on research skills, which include ethical considerations and good practice. Training on ethics is an important part of the induction process, and IFS has a dedicated intranet page with resources to support researchers at all stages of their careers. Completion of specific training is required for those who are conducting research with human participants. The training is provided by the Protecting Human Research Participants (PHRP) online platform.

- *Culture, development and leadership:*

IFS places great emphasis on ensuring research is conducted in accordance with all appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards, and in line with the principles set out in the Code of conduct. A senior member of staff, at Deputy Research Director level, is tasked with acting as Research Integrity Champion for IFS. The IFS audit committee (a subset of the Trustees) is fully on board with ensuring that research is carried out to the highest standards, and receives regular reports setting out the steps taken to meet those standards, and reviewing any risks that may remain. The last review took place in July 2024.

IFS researchers work in small teams, where the standards, values, and behaviours expected of researchers at all levels are regularly reinforced. We have a system of close line management for all staff, and components of research integrity are key to the performance evaluation/development framework in place at IFS, such as delivering high-quality research, communicating with and helping other staff, and contributing to an open and respectful working environment. As part of the ongoing quality assurance processes, all researchers are expected to participate in the regular presentation of new research ideas in internal seminars, and early stage research through research breakfasts and work-in-progress seminars. All outputs, formal and informal, are subject to review by senior staff before they are released. The system of feedback is 360 and all researchers regardless of their seniority level are encouraged to review and comment on the work of others, to help them learn the standards expected.

- *Monitoring and reporting:*

Progress with research projects is regularly monitored in Sector meetings, senior management meetings, and biannual meetings between Sector heads and the Director, attended by the Head of Finance and Head of Research Services. IFS has a clear procedure setting out the steps to be taken in cases where any academic misconduct is suspected. All staff are made aware of the procedure.

Changes and developments during the period under review

Over the last year, IFS has implemented a system of academic mentorship from senior, often external, academics. This is in addition to the internal mentorship and line management procedures that are embedded at IFS. The aim of this exercise is to ensure that researchers have access to independent advisers, who can help them not only with the direction of their research and the methods they use to conduct their research, but also the more general professional development aspects of their experience at IFS, to ensure that additional support or training is made available to staff that need it.

We have rolled out training on journal submissions and refereeing, to encourage good practice amongst junior researchers in contributing to peer review of others' research. This is now part of our annual training programme, which is available for all researchers as they advance in their careers

Where permitted and feasible, we now make data available on our website. Such data may underlie graphs, interactive tools, or tables in published reports. The aim is to encourage transparency and reproducibility.

Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

We are conscious that the capabilities of generative AI tools are evolving rapidly. We encourage our staff to become AI literate and to understand when such tools may appropriately be used, and what the limitations are, particularly with regard to academic integrity. We will follow developing policy and practice in this area and produce further guidance for staff.

We continue to refine the process of 'interim' and 'wrap-up' project meetings, to include consideration of any issues relating to research integrity. Such meetings happen informally, but the added structure is intended to ensure that institutional policy and practice is reinforced, and any learnings are captured.

We are in the process of updating our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion policy to become the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity policy, which will be subject to Trustee approval in 2025

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

IFS has in place the following policies and processes:

- Code of conduct for research integrity which sets out the procedure for investigating allegations of misconduct (last reviewed July 2024)

- Public Interest Disclosure/Whistle-blowing Policy, (last reviewed June 2024)
- Dignity at work policy, which incorporates bullying/harassment policies (last reviewed October 2023)
- Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity policy (currently under review)
- Safeguarding policy (last reviewed June 2023)
- Ethics guidance (last reviewed November 2024)

Since the beginning of 2023, each policy has been placed in a rota for review and each will be reviewed regularly.

The Director regularly reminds staff (through the forum of bi-weekly staff meetings) of these policies, and encourages staff to talk to their line managers, staff reps, or Trustees about any issues they have concerns about, and to consider whether they amount to matters they should report.

An annual survey is sent to all staff to elicit views and comments on a range of issues, including concerns about misconduct of any sort either within IFS or at external venues (e.g. conferences that they have to attend as part of their professional life). The results of the survey are considered by the senior management team and discussed with the staff reps, and improvements are sought collaboratively. Any changes to processes or policies are then communicated to the wider staff group.

Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken

Type of allegation	Number of allegations			
	No of allegations reported	No of formal investigations	No upheld in part after formal investigation	Number upheld in full after formal investigation
Fabrication	0			
Falsification	0			
Plagiarism	0			
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	0			
Misrepresentation	0			
Improper dealing with allegation of misconduct	0			
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)	0			
<i>Other</i>	0			