

Queen's University Belfast

Annual Statement of Compliance with The Concordat to Support Research Integrity

2015-16

1. Annual Statement of Compliance

- 1.1 Universities UK issued the Concordat to Support Research Integrity in 2012 with the expectation that Research Organisations would comply with five key commitments:
- i. "Maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research;
 - ii. Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards;
 - iii. Supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers;
 - iv. Using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise;
 - v. Working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly."
- 1.2 Queen's University Belfast is required to produce an annual statement to Senate on its progress to enhance and embed research integrity, across the Institution. This is the third such statement and covers the period 01 August 2015 to 31 July 2016. All statements are available through the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity website to support transparency <http://www.qub.ac.uk/Research/Governance-ethics-and-integrity/Research-integrity>.
- 1.3 The University receives funding from Research Councils UK (RCUK) and as part of the funding terms and conditions it is important the University provides assurance to them that procedures are in place to govern good research practice, and for the investigation and reporting of unacceptable research conduct.

2. Supporting and strengthening Integrity

- 2.1 Training delivered to staff and students promotes key elements and raises the profile of research integrity. Throughout the University, Schools address good research practice through local induction programmes to their Postgraduate Students and via modules delivered within specific degree programmes. The Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team (Research and Enterprise Directorate) support the delivery of relevant modules. The Team, along with the Graduate School are involved at a corporate level with the identification, development and delivery of a variety of training courses, covering topics such as research ethics, consent for research, critical thinking and academic writing courses, and project management skills. Courses are delivered by maximising internal capability and utilising the skills and knowledge of academic, research and academic support staff, or, when necessary, utilising external expertise.

- 2.2 In 2014-15 the University's research ethics processes were subject to review by the University's Internal Auditors, Deloitte, and by its own University Research Ethics Committee. The combined findings have revealed a variety of formats and forums used to consider research ethics matters within individual University Schools. The forums used to consider the ethical review of research projects either involved a formal School Research Ethics Committee or using existing research, postgraduate or management committee structures within the School. The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) commenced a process of identifying best practice and the development of a standard model to apply across the University, notwithstanding some disciplinary level differences. UREC has considered that a more uniform Faculty Research Ethics Committee structure might be best for the delivery of the ethical review and has focused its efforts on creating processes and developing documentation that will facilitate this purpose. The Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences has agreed to pilot the proposed system during 2016-17. The outcome of the pilot will then be evaluated to ensure that it enhances research processes, before approval is sought to implement the initiative University wide.
- 2.3 As a signatory to the Concordat on Openness on the use of Animal in Research the University maintains a publically available website dedicated to the use of animals in research www.qub.ac.uk/sites/AnimalResearch/. The statistics are openly available, broken down by species used. Research integrity and good governance of animal research is integral to the work in this area. The website hosts the University's new Regulations Governing the Use of Animals in Research, approved by Senate in April 2016, and the Animal Use Policy. There are also links to the Department of Health Personal and Project License applications for use by researchers.
- 2.4 Each year the Research Governance and Integrity Committee approve a programme of audits which randomly sample research involving human tissue, health and social care patients or clients, clinical trials of investigational medicinal products, or projects funded by Research Councils. The aggregated findings of these audits are then presented as part of an audit review to the Research Governance and Integrity Committee, providing assurance to the University that legislation is being adhered to, along with the requirements of local regulations or policies.
- 2.5 The University's Regulations Governing an Allegation of Misconduct in Research were reviewed during 2015-16, as were the Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences. The main purpose of this review was to expand the Regulations to encompass allegations made against postgraduate research students, recognising them as an integral part of the research effort at the University.
- 2.6 During the year, the University moved to new Faculty led structures. Each Faculty has a Dean of Research and Dean of Postgraduates to strategically lead on these elements for their Faculty. The revised Regulations Governing an Allegation of Misconduct in Research have incorporated the research integrity role of the Deans.
3. Allegations of Misconduct in Research
- 3.1 During 2015-16 the University received one allegation of misconduct in research against a staff member, requiring the University's Regulations Governing an Allegation of Misconduct in Research to be invoked. Following an initial screening process that involved interviewing relevant parties and a review of all the available evidence, it was determined there was no substantive case to answer. The individual was, however, asked to undertake additional training to enhance knowledge and understanding of good research practice.

3.2 Within the Postgraduate student body there was one allegation of misconduct in research regarding plagiarism. In accordance with the Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences (including Research Misconduct) the case was considered by an Academic Offences Committee. This case emanated from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and the student was asked to withdraw from the University.

4. External Engagement

4.1 The University continues to engage with external bodies and organisations in the delivery of programmes to enhance research integrity. In 2015-16 two events are noteworthy i.e. a training session presented in collaboration with the Academy of Social Sciences and a workshop presented in collaboration with the publisher Elsevier.

4.2 In November, the Graduate School hosted an Academy of Social Sciences event which considered the five generic ethics principles for social science research. The event was open to academics and post graduate students and involved colleagues from the Office of Research Ethics Committees Northern Ireland, Ulster University and representatives from the Academy.

4.3 The Research and Enterprise Directorate supported the Dean of Research within the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences to deliver a workshop on publication ethics, facilitated by Elsevier. The workshop focused on the important elements of publishing research, and the integrity that must be integral to the writing and reviewing processes. The workshop was open to staff and postgraduate students and attracted over 100 attendees. Elsevier has agreed to deliver the workshop in the other two University Faculties, which will take place during 2016-17.

End.