Annual Statement of Compliance with
The Concordat to Support Research Integrity
2018-19

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   As part of its commitment to and compliance with the Concordat, the University is required to produce an annual statement to Senate on its progress to enhance and embed research integrity, across the Institution. The University was an early adopter, publishing its first annual statement for the year 2013-14. Subsequently, this is the sixth statement of compliance, covering the period 01 August 2018 to 31 July 2019. All statements are available through the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity website   http://www.qub.ac.uk/Research/Governance-ethics-and-integrity/Research-integrity. It should be noted that each annual statement is designed to be read as a standalone report. Therefore, contextual information may not always change from year to year.

1.3   The University receives funding from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Medical Research Charities, amongst others. As part of the funding terms and conditions it is necessary that the University has in place and provides relevant assurances to govern good research practice, for the investigation and reporting of unacceptable research conduct, and bullying and harassment.

1.4   One of the minimum requirements to comply with the Concordat is that the University has a senior member of staff to oversee research integrity. The University's Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) for Research and Enterprise is the senior academic lead on research integrity matters. The PVC is supported by the three Faculty Deans of Research, and Dean of Innovation & Impact within the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences. The University's Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team, which is part of the Research and Enterprise Directorate, are responsible for the daily activities required to fulfil the University's commitment to the Concordat.

2. Supporting and Strengthening Integrity

2.1 Policies and Procedures

The University has in place a range of Regulations and Policies that govern integrity matters. A number of professional support services directorates are involved in developing, implementing and maintaining these Regulations and Policies. A full list of relevant documentation to support research integrity can be found in Annex 1, along with the web addresses.

2.2 Governance Committees

The University has a robust governance structure in place to oversee research, which is part of the wider corporate governance structures.

2.2.1 The Human Tissue Steering Group, chaired by the Dean of Research in Medicine Health and Life Sciences enables the Designated Individuals (DIs) and Persons Designated (PDs) to meet two to three times per year to review and approve policies, procedures and standard operating procedures and consider the findings of local premises and/or audits of individual's holdings. The University's Human Tissue Steering Group reports to Research Governance and Integrity Committee.

2.2.2 The Research Governance and Integrity Committee and the University Research Ethics Committee have both been responsible for the development, implementation and updating of University policies pertinent to their area to ensure the good conduct of research across the University. Subsequently, as the 2018-19 academic year was drawing to a close it was carefully considered, agreed and approved by the Research and Postgraduate Committee that these two Committees should merge. Therefore, from 2019-20 academic year the University will have a Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity that shall include lay persons, post-doctoral staff, research staff from each of the three Faculties and the Faculty Deans of Research. The membership and terms of reference are available in Annex 2.

2.2.3 The University's Research Systems Policy Group meets a twice a year and Research Data Management is a standing item of business for this Committee.

2.3 Research Ethics – Human Research

2.3.1 The Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) has had an operational Faculty Research Ethics Committee for the past two years. The Committee's first year of operation was as a pilot, its second as a fully integrated committee drawing representation from across the Faculty. This model for the consideration of ethical issues within research projects has improved efficiency for academics, it has increased the timeliness of the decision making process, enabling researchers to move forward with their research. The Faculty REC model has also improved the consistency of decisions. This has been made possible as the process is managed by the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team. The Faculty REC has four lay members who give of their time once a month to participate in REC meetings. Owing to the success of the Faculty REC model in EPS the Research and Postgraduate Committee agreed that the model should be implemented, incrementally, across the University's two remaining Faculties, commencing in the first instance with Medicine, Health and Life Sciences.

2.3.2 During 2018-19 the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (MHLS) convened a working group of representatives from each of its four Schools to review the operating procedures and application paperwork, used within EPS, to determine what revisions, if any, were required to make these appropriate for use within MHLS. During the

course of the year these documents were adapted before approval of their use was sought from the Faculty's Executive Board in June 2019. As the year ends membership for the new Faculty REC has been agreed enabling the Committee to become operational from September 2019.

2.3.3 There are plans to roll-out the initiative to the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences in 2020, though this shall require additional resource with the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team to achieve this change.

2.4 Research Ethics – Animal Research

2.4.1 The Animal Welfare Ethics Review Body (AWERB) normally meets six times per annum. It is comprised of academic staff who are active project licence holders, student representatives who are also personal licence holders, at least one lay member to the University, the named training and competency officer, named veterinary surgeon and two named animal care and welfare officers (NACWO). The Home Office representative and QUB Licence Holder are also in attendance at the meetings.

2.4.2 AWERB made its an annual report to the University Research Ethics Committee in 2018-19. As a signatory to the Concordat on Openness on the use of Animal in Research the AWERB annual report is then received by various committees within the research governance structure before being submitted to Senate. The University also maintains a publically available website dedicated to the use of animals in research www.qub.ac.uk/sites/AnimalResearch/. Statistics of animal use are openly available on the site and detailed by species.

2.5 Human Tissue Act Compliance

2.5.1 The University's Anatomy licence was identified for inspection by the Human Tissue Authority. This inspection was conducted on 30 July 2019. Feedback at the close-out meeting was positive and the University awaits the final report, which will be published on the Human Tissue Authority's website in due course.

2.5.2 The University requires that anyone working with human tissue must receive training prior to commencing work and that this be renewed and updated every three years. During 2018-19 11 training sessions were conducted. This figure does not include induction programmes and/or annual health and seminars conducted in Research Centres which are also used to address HTA compliance.

2.6 Data Management

2.6.1 Commitment 1 of the Concordat requires the University to maintain '*the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research*'. A significant process to support this commitment is through good Research Data Management. The University's Research Data Management Policy requires researchers to comply with all relevant funder requirements, of which the common requirements include:

   a. Preparation of a Data Management Plan (DMP) either during the application process or at the outset of a research project.
   b. Publishing data underpinning published research findings in an online repository.
   c. Including an access statement in published research outputs stating how the underpinning data can be accessed.
   d. Retaining data generated during a research project for a minimum of 5 years.

e. Storing research data in a safe, secure, backed-up location and paying due regard to any legal or ethical concerns arising from the collection and management of research data.

2.5.2   During 2018-19 the University's Research Policy Office supported good data management through the delivery of training on 'Introduction to Research Data Management'. During this year three training sessions were made available with 50 attendees. The training also contained input on GDPR from the University's Information Compliance Unit.

2.5.3   Staff in the Research Policy Office assist researchers with the preparation of Data Management Plans to support grant applications to various funding bodies. They work in conjunction with the University's Research and Development Team, which forms part of the Research and Enterprise Directorate. A total of 11 Data Management Plans were reviewed by the dedicated team within the Research Policy Office during 2018-19.

2.5.4   The University's Research Data Manager operates as a curator to the Queen's University Active Data Storage Cluster and for datasets uploaded to institutional PURE repository. The Active Data Storage Cluster has been designed to support curation and management of large datasets. However, where a genuine need can be demonstrated, the facility can be available for all Queen's researchers. Currently 44 projects have data management supported through this facility, with 11 projects approved in 2018-19. The storage facility has recently been increased to support the growing number and size of requests.

2.5.5   The University's PURE repository provides an important data management tool for archiving and publishing research data. Currently 195 datasets have been validated and are hosted on PURE.

2.6   Training and support to researchers

2.6.1   The Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team provides support to academics, researchers and postgraduate students with navigating the required governance and ethical approvals needed to conduct certain types of research. Very often this is done through face-to-face contact and/or responding to telephone and email queries.

2.6.2   However, a core value of the Team's work has been to equip the research community through training, to ensure that there is comprehensive understanding of legislative requirements. At the commencement of each academic year the Team are involved in the induction programmes for post-graduate students, both corporate and local inductions within the Schools and Research Centres.

2.6.3   The team are also actively involved in induction programmes for the Contract Researchers, which occur three times per year. Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity has become part of the teaching and education programme on some degree programmes. Members of the Team have been invited as guest lecturers to post-graduate students in the Schools of Psychology, Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences, Nursing and Midwifery, Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and Natural and Built Environment.

2.6.4   Face-to-face talks are also provided to the supervisors of post-graduate researchers (three times per year) and a new format of talk has enabled greater engagement across disciplines.

2.6 Transparency in Research

2.6.1 The University is a sponsor of research conducted in the health and social care sector. It has co-sponsored a limited number of Clinical Trials of Investigational Medicinal Products (CTIMPs) with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Following correspondence from the Chairman of the Science and Technology Committee the University worked closely with the Trust to ensure that all CTIMPs that it had been involved with as co-sponsor had reported their results. At year end work continues to correct the EudraCT database to ensure the sponsoring organisation is correctly specified.

2.6.2 As the reporting period comes to a close the Health Research Authority has issued a consultation regarding transparency in health and social care research. The University welcomes the aspirations to improve the registration of studies, reporting of research findings and ensuring research participants are informed of the results.

3. Allegations of Misconduct in Research

3.1 All allegations of misconduct in research are considered under the University's Regulations Governing an Allegation of Misconduct in Research, last amended June 2018. This ensures a fair and transparent approach, which is in keeping with Commitment 4 of the Concordat. The procedure for the investigation of an allegation contains an initial screening stage. This allows the allegation to be reviewed to determine whether it relates to misconduct in research or if it should be considered under a different process. Where the screening determines an allegation should be reviewed using these Regulations the matter progresses to Stage 1. This stage involves talking to relevant personnel and review of evidence relevant to the allegation. For example, and depending on the nature of the allegation, documentation, electronic files, email correspondence and laboratory notebooks can be requested and reviewed by the Screening Panel.

3.2 During 2018-19 the University received four allegations relating to staff and PGR students. Table 1, below, provides details regarding the allegations received. In addition to these new allegations, one investigation remained open from 2017-18, owing to complex circumstances.

Table 1: Allegation of Misconduct in Research received during 2018-19

Staff / Student	Faculty	Nature of allegation	Stage reached	Time taken to completion
Student	AHSS	Plagarism	1	24 working days
Staff	MHLS	Manuscript modified and authorship listing amended without consultation	1	71 working days
Staff	MHLS	Authorship	1	67 working days
Staff	MHLS	Plagarism	1	14 working days

3.3 All four of the allegations received were investigated under Stage 1 of the Regulations, whereby a senior academic manage was appointed to review the allegation with the Head of Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity, or their nominee. None of the allegations were upheld.

3.4   The allegation of plagiarism was against a PhD student and related to unpublished work. Following this allegation, it was agreed that the Regulations Governing an Allegation of Misconduct in Research be amended to ensure only published work by PhD students should be considered under these Regulations and that the University's General Regulations covering Academic Offences should be followed in the case of unpublished work.

3.5   This is the first year that the time taken to complete investigations into allegations has been captured. Where practical an initial investigation should be completed within 20 working days, however, many allegations are complex in nature and involve multiple staff members (some of whom have left the University) and this results in an extended investigation times.

4.   <u>External Engagement</u>

4.1   The Head of Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity continues to be actively involved in the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum. A member of the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team attended the 6th World Conference on Research Integrity in May 2019 and learning from this meeting shall be incorporated into research integrity training delivered to staff and students during 2019-20 academic year.

4.2   A working group was convened to develop a co-ordinated University response to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity was issued for consultation. A University response was submitted and the Institution awaits the final document.

4.3   During 2018-19 the University recommended its subscription to UK RIO. Two delegates attended UK RIO's conference on May 2019. Attendance at the UK RIO meeting developed networks and provided the opportunity to learn practices from a variety of organisations and understand more fully national priorities.

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Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team
Research and Enterprise
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