

**Annual Statement of Compliance with
The Concordat to Support Research Integrity
2020-21**

1. Annual Statement of Compliance

- 1.1 The Concordat to Support Research Integrity, which was revised and republished in October 2019, requires research institutions to comply with five key commitments. These are:
- 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, timely, 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 Since the initial publication of the Concordat in 2012 Queen’s University has demonstrated its commitment by publishing its first statement of compliance in 2013-14. In accordance with the Concordat this, and subsequent annual statements have been presented to the University’s governing body, Senate. All statements are publically available on the University’s website, in particular, the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity webpages <http://www.qub.ac.uk/Research/Governance-ethics-and-integrity/Research-integrity>.
- 1.3 Each annual statement is designed to be read as a standalone report. Therefore, contextual information may not always change from year to year. This is the eighth statement of compliance, covering the period 01 August 2020 to 31 July 2021. Despite the Northern Ireland’s Assembly’s request that people continue to work from home, University staff have demonstrated their commitment to the Concordat through participating in on-line training events. During the year a new corporate plan, Strategy 2030, was developed that embeds research excellence at its core. The University aims to ensure research carried out under its auspices is “founded upon integrity, excellence and ambition” with a core objective that “integrity and rigour pervade all of our research activities”.
- 1.4 The University receives funding from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Medical Research Charities and others. Key funders, and others, are ensuring their terms and conditions require processes to be in place to govern allegations of misconduct in research. More recently expectations have been extended to ensure compliance in areas such as safeguarding, bullying and harassment, due diligence, export control and national security when collaborating internationally, be it in research, education or business.

2. Supporting and Strengthening Integrity

2.1 **People**

- 2.1.1 The University is required to have a named point of contact for people wanting more information on matters of research integrity and also a named point of contact to act as a confidential liaison for whistle-blowers or any other persons wishing to raise concerns about the integrity of research.
- 2.1.2 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 the Director of Research and Enterprise (RE), who is the named point of contact for persons wishing to raise a concern regarding research integrity. The Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team support the PVC-RE, Deans of Research, and Director of RE in the day to day activities required to fulfil the University's commitment to the Concordat. Contact details for research integrity matters are available here: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/Research/Governance-ethics-and-integrity/Research-integrity>.
- 2.1.3 The Dean of Innovation & Impact within the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (MHLS) also provides supports to the integrity agenda as he is the current Chair of the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Committee and is also the Named Person on the Establishment Licence.

2.2 **Policies and Procedures**

The University has in place a range of Regulations and Policies that govern integrity matters. A number of professional support 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 Appendix 1, along with the web addresses.

2.3 **Governance Structures**

- 2.3.1 The University has a robust governance structure in place to oversee research, which is part of the wider corporate governance structures. The Human Tissue Steering Group, chaired by the Dean of Research in the Faculty of 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, Ethics and Integrity Committee (RGEIC) (membership and terms of reference are attached in Appendix 2). As the year ends RGEIC has agreed to extend its terms of reference and membership to incorporate the global compliance agenda into its business.
- 2.3.2 During this year the University's Executive Board, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, received an update on compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The Executive Board have also been apprised of the wider compliance agenda, and the requirements to be fulfilled.

2.4 Research Culture

- 2.4.1 In January 2021, following an extensive period of consultation, the University launched its Research Culture Action Plan (RCAP). RCAP serves as a statement of intent and aims to put Queen's at the forefront of a sector-wide effort to address long-standing concerns with the environment in which research takes place. It addresses explicit 'issues and challenges' with the current research culture and commits to tangible actions aimed at diminishing these in the years ahead. It is jointly owned by the entire research community and will adopt an agile and iterative approach to implementation, informed by regular surveys of staff.
- 2.4.2 When the UK Government published its new UK R&D People & Culture Strategy in July 2021, it recognised Queen's as one of three institutions leading the sector on this front, along with Cambridge and Glasgow.
- 2.4.3 Implementation of the Plan will accelerate in 2021-22 with key actions including the launch of a new institutional Postdoctoral Development Centre, efforts to ensure the full range of contributors to research are rewarded and recognised through e.g. the CREDIT Taxonomy and narrative CVs, a programme of research culture events to keep the conversation going, and the introduction of a new Research Culture Seed Fund.

2.5 Research Ethics – Human Research

- 2.5.1 Currently the University has two Faculty Research Ethics Committees – one in Medicine, Health and Life Sciences the other in Engineering and Physical Sciences. As the Faculty RECs are considered sub-committees of RGEIC the Chair for each Faculty REC provides regular updates around activity and areas for wider consideration. An annual report is also prepared by each Faculty REC and any amendments to Standard Operating Procedures are notified to and/or approved by RGEIC.
- 2.5.2 In January 2021 the University registered both Faculty RECs with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), enabling them to be Institutional Review Board (IRB) registered.
- 2.5.3 As the year ends funding has been secured to recruit an additional Research Ethics Officer. This will enable the roll out of the Faculty REC model to Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences during 2021-22.

2.6 Research Ethics – Animal Research

- 2.6.1 The Animal Welfare Ethics Review Body (AWERB) normally meets six times per annum. It too makes an annual report to RGEIC. As the University is a signatory to the Concordat on Openness on the use of Animals in Research the AWERB annual report is also presented to the University's governing body, Senate. The Annual Report can be found on the University's dedicated webpages for animal research www.qub.ac.uk/sites/AnimalResearch/. Statistics of animal use are openly available on this site.
- 2.6.2 Project and personal licence holders have received regular updates and training throughout the year. Work has been undertaken to develop new procedural operating procedures and ensure licensing arrangements are accurate.

- 2.6.3 Under the University's Policy on the Ethical Approval of Research, studies not governed by the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 also require ethical consideration. As such studies are small in number, it was agreed to merge the sub-committees of the Faculty RECs in MHLS and EPS to create the Animal Welfare Ethical Review Sub-Committee. AWERB are kept apprised of studies considered by this subcommittee, the Chair of which is also a member of AWERB

2.7 Human Tissue Act Compliance

- 2.7.1 The University's Human Tissue Steering Group are responsible for the oversight of compliance with the Human Tissue Act. Chaired by the Dean of Research in the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences, it meets at least twice a year to oversee the programme of audits, consider and approve policy and ensure that adverse events are managed in correctly. The Steering Group requested that the training register be reviewed to ensure all relevant staff and student's training was current.
- 2.7.2 It is a requirement that anyone working with human tissue samples must be trained on the legislative framework governing this work prior to commencing any work with human tissue samples. During 2020-21 ten training session were delivered using MS Teams and 114 staff and students attended these virtual events.

2.8 Global Research Partnerships

The University has continued to respond to the increased expectations set by Funders in terms of compliance in areas such as safeguarding, bullying and harassment, due diligence, export control and national security when collaborating internationally, be it in research, education or business. Work continues to ensure policies and procedures are in place and that staff - academic, research, professional support services are cognisant of their responsibilities in this space.

2.9 Data Management

- 2.9.1 The provision of research data management (RDM) support to Queen's researchers is the responsibility of the Open Research Team in Library Services. Library Services also subscribes to DMPonline, a tool produced by the Digital Curation Centre at the University of Edinburgh, which helps researchers write data management plans (DMPs). Over the course of the academic year 2020-21, the team received approximately 76 enquiries via the dedicated RDM email account. These included researcher requests for assistance with the preparation of DMPs to support grant applications to various funding bodies. Approximately 40 DMPs were reviewed by the Open Research Team.
- 2.9.2 Throughout 2020-21, the team delivered a range of training courses. RDM content was incorporated into relevant courses where appropriate. Training was provided to more than 1000 researchers, either on an ad hoc basis when requested, or, as part of the Staff Learning and Development and Postgraduate Research Development programmes. Approximately 10 one-to-one RDM training sessions with researchers were also facilitated by the team.
- 2.9.3 The Senior Systems Analyst (High Performance Computing Support) in Information Services manages the University's Active Data Storage (ADS) service that 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 81 research projects have data management supported through this facility, with 25 projects approved from 2020 to date.

- 2.9.4 An Open Research Librarian in the Open Research Team is responsible for validating datasets in the University's Pure repository, which is used for publishing, publically, research data. Ninety-five datasets were validated in 2020-21, including datasets related to electronic theses.

2.10 Training and support to researchers

- 2.10.1 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. Despite the pandemic and the need to work from home, where possible, the Team have utilised on-line platforms to deliver workshops, induction programmes and provide on-going support to staff and students.

- 2.10.2 The training provision to staff and students has been enhanced through the roll-out of Epigeum's Good Research Practice training course. This course, which has eight core modules and five supplementary modules has enabled researchers to explore various aspects of research conduct and enhance their understanding of integrity in research.

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 May 2019. 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 2020-21 the University received three allegations of misconduct in research. One was received from outside the University and was made against a member of staff, the other was raised internally and was against both a PGR student and their supervisor. Relevant stakeholders, including Funders, were notified, as required.
- 3.3 Table 1, overleaf, provides details of allegations received, stage reached, time taken to complete investigation and outcome.

Table 1: Allegation of Misconduct in Research received during 2020-21

Staff / Student	Faculty	Nature of allegation	Stage reached	Time to complete Investigation	Outcome
Staff	MHLS	Authorship	Stage I	53 working days	Unsubstantiated – dismissed at end of initial investigation.
Staff & PGR Student	AHSS	Research ethics and plagiarism	Stage II	34 working days (to complete stage 1) 65 working days (to complete Stage II)	Substantive issue not established but integrity of research potentially compromised because of performance/ practice issues
Staff	MHLS	Authorship	Stage I	34 working days	Accepted by respondent - allegation held. Record to be amended.

3.3.1 Key to any investigation undertaken is to determine opportunities for learning or improvements in practice. From the investigations undertaken the University has developed an authorship agreement. This agreement is designed to gain mutual understanding of the collective nature of research and what the commitment required to be included as an author. This agreement draws upon the Vancouver Principles and promotes the use of CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy), used by many journals to facilitate recognition by individuals. This is particular relevance when persons move research groups or leave the University entirely.

3.3.2 The matter relating to the student and their supervisor highlighted deficiencies in training and induction programmes for overseas students. These gaps are being addressed moving forward.

4. External Engagement

4.1 The University is a subscriber to UK RIO and have benefited from the various webinars that have been held during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

4.2 As a member of the Russell Group the University continues to contribute to and benefit from the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum.

Governance Regulations, Policies and Procedures

Research Governance Regulations and Policies:

- Regulations for Research Involving Human Participants
 - Policy and Principles on the Ethical Approval of Research
 - Regulations Governing an Allegation of Misconduct in Research
 - Policy on the Use of Animals in Research and Teaching
 - Regulations Governing Research Involving Animals
 - Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research
 - Policy on Fieldwork in Conflict Zones
- <http://www.qub.ac.uk/Research/Governance-ethics-and-integrity/Policies-procedures-and-guidelines/>

Intellectual Property Policy

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/Business/Commercialisation/IP-and-innovation/IP-policy/>

Research Data Management

<https://libguides.qub.ac.uk/ResearchDataManagement>

Policies and Procedures Governed by the Registrar's Office:

- Acceptance of Gifts, Gratuities and Hospitality
 - Registrar of Interests
 - Whistleblowing Policy
 - Anti-Fraud Policy
 - Bribery Act
 - Freedom of Information
 - Data Protection
- <http://www.qub.ac.uk/about/Leadership-and-structure/Registrars-Office/Policies/>

Terms of Reference – Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Committee

1. To develop, implement and update University policies on the good governance of research, the ethical conduct of research and ensuring integrity through the implementation of good research practices. These policies currently include:
 - (i) Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research
 - (ii) Regulations for Research Involving Human Participants
 - (iii) Policy on the Ethical Approval of Research
 - (iv) Regulations Governing Research Involving Animals
 - (v) Policy on Fieldwork in Conflict Zones
 - (vi) Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research
 - (vii) Standard Operating Procedures to help researchers with the conduct of research.
2. To ensure the promotion of research ethics and the good conduct of research within the University.
3. To ensure that the governance, ethical and integrity agenda reflect regulatory and funder requirements and national good practice frameworks through:
 - (i) Identification of issues pertinent to research
 - (ii) Engagement with representatives from the research community to ensure the solicitation of opinions and views for the preparation of regulations and policies.
4. To monitor compliance through regular audit of studies, thereby providing assurance to the University of adherence to Legislation, Regulations and Policies, and that the University is fulfilling its duties as a sponsor of research and as an employer of researchers.
5. To provide oversight of the University's structure established to consider the ethical review of research studies. This shall include Faculty RECs in EPS and MHLS and School RECs in AHSS (until such times as the Faculty REC model is rolled out*). This oversight shall include, but is not limited to:
 - (i) Receipt of an annual report of activity from RECs;
 - (ii) Periodic review of studies considered by RECs to ensure consistency in practice;
 - (iii) Acting as an appeal mechanism for decisions made by Faculty REC ensuring that due process was followed in their decision-making.
 - (iv) The identification and subsequent delivery of training to REC members enabling them to develop and maintain the required skills to execute their duties.
6. To receive an annual report from the Animal Ethical Welfare Review Body and ensure that AWERB is executing its duties appropriately.
7. To learn from issues identified from breaches of good research practice and develop mechanisms to prevent reoccurrence.
8. To determine opportunities for shared learning and training through the review of aggregated audit findings.
9. To ensure compliance with the reporting requirements of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and make an annual report to Senate on matters of research governance, ethics and integrity.