

Annual statement on research integrity

If you have any questions about this template, please contact:
RIsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk.

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	Queen's University, Belfast
1B. Type of organisation: higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)	Higher Education Institution
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	25 November 2025
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.qub.ac.uk/Research/Governance-ethics-and-integrity/Research-integrity/
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Professor Archie Clements
	Email address: a.clements@qub.ac.uk
1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Name: Louise Dunlop
	Email address: l.h.dunlop@qub.ac.uk

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

Description of actions and activities undertaken

2A. Description of current systems and culture

Please describe how the organisation maintains high standards of research integrity and promotes positive research culture. It should include information on the support provided to researchers to understand standards, values and behaviours, such as training, support and guidance for researchers at different career stages/ disciplines. You may find it helpful to consider the following broad headings:

- Policies and systems
- Communications and engagement
- Culture, development and leadership
- Monitoring and reporting

Through the **Research and Innovation Pillar of Strategy 2030** Queen's University has made a commitment to "Foster a supportive, team-centred, ambitious research community and culture founded on inclusivity, integrity, and fairness". This is achieved through having the necessary policies, procedures and governance structures in place. In addition, a **high performing professional services team with specialist knowledge** on research ethics, research integrity, governance of health and social care research, animals research and research security provide the necessary support to staff and students.

The University considers the aspects of research governance, ethics and integrity to be well managed; therefore, it is not on the University's Risk Register. However, it has acknowledged the challenges presented by research security requirements and the work required to mitigate these risks, especially in the context of the University's ambitions within Strategy 2030. Subsequently, national security and foreign interference is captured on the University's risk register and regular reports on progress are considered.

Policies and systems

A wide range of regulations, policies and procedures are in place to ensure research is appropriately governed. The full suite of documentation can be

found on the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity webpages, though it is important to recognise that governance processes span many areas of the University, with various Directorates taking the lead in the development and maintenance of specific regulations, policies or procedures. These include, *inter alia*, Intellectual Property Policy (Research and Enterprise), Research Data Management (Library Services), Whistle Blowing (The Chancellery), Bullying and Harassment complaints procedure (People and Culture), etc. Policies and procedures are kept under regular review to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

Several systems are in place to support the management of specific areas such as research data management, research ethics, human tissue compliance, sponsorship of health and social care research, export control, open access, compliance with the Nagoya Protocol, and the contracting involved in research.

PURE is used within the University to facilitate transparency as academics and researchers upload their outputs onto this public platform.

Communications and Engagement

During 2024-25 the **University Deans and Directors of Research Forum** was re-established. This forum enables the provision of insight and feedback on research and innovation policies, facilitates a consultative forum for senior leaders in research aiding communication and collaboration across faculties, schools and departments. In September 2024 the forum was apprised of the UK Committee on Research Integrity project on **indicators for research integrity**. Forum members recognised the value of such indicators to underpin research culture.

Members of the Research Services Directorate are proactive at attending the Faculty Research Committees, School Management Boards, and School Boards to facilitate two-way communications. Induction events are another widely used tool enabling messaging to postdoctoral students, research, and academic staff. These are often delivered using on-line platforms and this has had a positive impact on attendance.

There is also a Directorate newsfeed to the University enabling messages on new initiatives, policies, requirements etc to be disseminated on a weekly basis.

Culture, development, and leadership

In 2024–25 Queen's University Belfast significantly advanced its institutional and sectoral leadership in research culture, building on the Research Culture Action Plan and transitioning towards a more strategic and sustainable framework. Recognising the need for a long-term, embedded approach, we developed and secured institutional approval for a new **Research Culture Roadmap**, setting out clear priorities for the next

five years. The Roadmap moves beyond short-term interventions and positions research culture as a core component of our research and innovation strategy.

The Roadmap identifies three priority domains:

1. **Responsible and high-integrity research** – embedding open research practices, research security, and ethical standards across disciplines.
2. **Valuing and supporting people** – strengthening recognition of diverse contributions across the research ecosystem, enhancing researcher development, and supporting wellbeing and inclusion.
3. **Agility and collaboration** – enabling diverse, cross-disciplinary teams to work effectively, supported by responsive systems and a culture that maximises societal benefit.

These priorities are supported by a clear set of institutional commitments, including a new ethics management system, further development of researcher development pathways, and embedding research culture considerations into strategic planning and REF 2029 preparations. The Roadmap represents a step change in Queen's approach: from discrete actions to a holistic framework that aligns people, processes, and partnerships to deliver sustained culture change.

Monitoring and reporting

Progress on the Research Culture Roadmap is monitored by the Research and Innovation Committee, which is one of the **robust governance structures** the University has in place to scrutinise progress. Other Committees oversee the work of Faculty and School Research Ethics Committees, or compliance with Human Tissue, or research security. These governance bodies enable due consideration of policies and processes and the development of strategic processes. Monitoring is also key and tools such as audits supplement reporting. During 2024-25 audits were completed on 18 studies utilising human tissue to ensure compliance with the Human Tissue Act. Within animal research, all personal licences, as defined by the Animals Scientific Procedures Act, were also audited

The aggregated findings of audits are brought to the relevant committees to facilitate an assurance function. Importantly this provides an opportunity to reflect and identify potential shortcomings where systems or processes need adapting or training delivered.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

Please provide an update on any changes made during the period, such as new initiatives, training, developments, also ongoing changes that are still underway. Drawing on Commitment 3 of the Concordat, please note any new or revised policies, practices and procedures to support researchers; training on research

ethics and research integrity; training and mentoring opportunities to support the development of researchers' skills throughout their careers.

Queen's has taken a **leading role in shaping research culture regionally and across the island of Ireland**. We are lead partner for **Research Culture NI (RCNI)**, a Wellcome Trust-funded initiative delivered with Ulster University. In 2024–25, we completed the first year of delivery, including the commissioning of an independent CRAC-Vitae landscape review of research culture in Northern Ireland, development of a new Research Careers and Employability strand, and establishment of governance structures (Steering Board and Advisory Group) involving government, funders, and other stakeholders. RCNI is laying the foundations for a regional research culture action plan, ensuring that progress extends beyond Queen's and UU to encompass the wider ecosystem.

We also jointly lead the **All-Island Research Culture Network (AIRCNI)** with University College Dublin. In 2024–25, Queen's hosted the annual AIRCN conference in Belfast, convening academics, professional staff, and policymakers to share practice, develop collaborations, and drive forward an all-island agenda. This reinforced our role as a convener of research culture activity at scale, bridging institutional, regional, and cross-border priorities.

Through these initiatives, Queen's has both strengthened its own institutional culture and positioned itself as a sector leader in driving forward inclusive, responsible, and sustainable research environments.

At a micro level Queen's comprehensively reviewed, revised and promoted their **Guidelines on Authorship and Publication**, taking the approach to focus on the principles of research integrity throughout. Five workshops were held in March and April 2025. These were delivered by an external facilitator and were mixed between being on-line (March) and in-person (April).

Recognising that on-line platforms are being used for research purposes new guidance was developed to support **research undertaken in the digital space**. This has enabled, amongst other elements, a greater emphasis on the consideration of platforms terms and conditions and how this may/or may not impact on the ethical conduct of research.

As the geo-political landscape is becoming increasingly volatile the University replaced its Policy on Fieldwork in Conflict Zones with a new Policy and Procedure for the **Duty of Care of staff and students travelling for research purposes to high-risk locations**.

The Policy on **Preventing Harm (Safeguarding) in Research and Innovation** Activities was also updated, and a **Rehoming Policy** was approved and implemented.

During this year a key strategic focus has been the implementation of a

single **on-line ethics management system** for the University. Much work has been undertaken to secure agreement to a standard question set and the development of workflows. The initiative will go live early 2025-26, underpinned by a programme of engagement, training, and the development of guidance videos. Once rolled out across the University the new on-line ethics management system will bring with it **efficiencies, robust record keeping** but importantly **consistency** to the ethical review of research being undertaken by staff and students across all three faculties. In turn, this will enhance the **quality of research studies** and support the research integrity agenda through the application of rigour.

Data Management

During this reporting period, the University provided comprehensive support to researchers through systematic reviews and expert feedback on data management plans, guidance toward DMPOnline resources, and curation of datasets within our research data repository, Queen's Research Portal, in strict accordance with FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) principles.

The data repository underwent increased enhancement through measures designed to **strengthen FAIR compliance**. These included the implementation of mandatory comprehensive documentation protocols and the development of standardised institutional readme files for all datasets. Furthermore, the formal registration of Queen's University Belfast Research Data Repository with re3data, the **revision of our research data policy**, and the establishment of a new **Digital Object Identifier (DOI) policy** represent coordinated institutional efforts to optimise the discoverability of datasets within Queen's Research Portal while ensuring rigorous adherence to international data curation standards.

Our commitment to advancing research transparency was further evidenced through participation in the UK Reproducibility Network's (UKRN) STAR (Sustainable Transparent and Research Data) project. This collaborative initiative seeks to understand and enhance frameworks for open and transparent research data practices across UK Higher Education Institutions. The comprehensive site visit in September 2024 included structured interviews with the Head of Open Research and Research Data Librarian, alongside focused discussions with our Research Data Management sub-group, contributing valuable institutional insights to the forthcoming STAR project report.

The University demonstrated care in providing support to Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (AHSS) researchers navigating complex ethical and methodological challenges in sensitive research domains e.g. longitudinal studies, including the Belfast Youth Development Study. Support was offered to several projects in Social Sciences which required nuanced consultation and collaboration with the UK Data Service to address the intricate requirements of sensitive research data management. This

specialised support indicates the maturation and sophistication of our RDM services.

An **extensive training program** over this twelve-month period was delivered, strategically addressing researcher integrity and optimal research data management practices. The RDM Team delivered a comprehensive suite of workshops encompassing protecting your research, and research data management. Innovation in training delivery was demonstrated through the introduction of specialised workshops on informed consent for data sharing, including a bespoke workshop designed specifically for AHSS researchers, collaboratively developed and delivered by the Research Data Librarian and the Head of Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity.

The University pioneered engaging pedagogical approaches through the development of a **Research Data Escape Room training event** (delivered by the Research Data Librarian), and an innovative Murder Mystery workshop devised by The Graduate School, both designed to illuminate critical issues surrounding researcher misconduct and integrity within intellectually stimulating and memorable frameworks. Additional specialised training by the Research Data Librarian was provided to School of Biological Sciences researchers, focusing on reproducibility, publication bias mitigation, publication strategies, and data sharing best practices as part of a comprehensive conference on welfare animal sciences.

A pivotal institutional development in the past year has included the **establishment of a Data Access Committee** with the appointment of its inaugural Chair during this period. This committee, comprising distinguished faculty representatives and professional support services expertise, ensures that sensitive data curated within our repository is managed through rigorous, ethical, and FAIR-compliant access request protocols, thereby maintaining the highest standards of data stewardship and institutional integrity.

Training

As detailed above, in terms of data management, a broad range of training continues to be delivered or made available to the research community. This includes Higher Education Export Control Association (on-line platform), Good Research Practice (on-line platform) using Epigeum, Human Tissue Act (available monthly), Animal Scientific Procedures Act (delivered through Town Halls held each semester), Authorship and Publication (5 sessions using a mixture of on-line and in-person). As a subscriber to the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) the University is also able to utilise the recent training package developed by them on research integrity and members of the University have availed of the on-line seminars organised and facilitated by UKRIO.

In addition to these formal training sessions Induction Programmes are a primary means of engaging staff and students at an early point of their research career. The Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team staff are frequently requested to be guest lecturers at a variety of post-

graduate degree programmes throughout the year and to speak to School Boards where all staff within that School gather to receive the latest information.

Support for Postdoctoral Researchers

Building on earlier initiatives from the Postdoctoral Development Centre (PDC), 2024–25 saw a step change in provision for postdocs, ECRs and fellows.

- **Formal recognition:** Guidance for Schools now enables formal recognition of supervision by research staff, supported by wider eligibility for internal funding schemes (conference, engagement, bid development).
- **Work–life balance:** Dedicated resources were produced, including guidance on workload, new training on time management, and clarity on maternity leave entitlements for research staff through case studies and information sessions.
- **Careers and skills:** Expanded training covered career pathways outside academia, leadership, and enterprise skills. This was complemented by plans for a more integrated approach to talent development spanning postdocs to senior academics, linked to Queen's new **Grand Challenges Programme** and Doctoral Training Entities.
- **Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers:** As a signatory, Queen's further embedded Concordat principles through institutional policy alignment, monitoring, and new support programmes, strengthening our reputation as a supportive environment for postdocs.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion in Research Action Plan

In May 2023 Queen's launched Phase 1 of its 3-year Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) in Research Action Plan (2023–26), complementing the University Equality Scheme, D&I Policy and Disability Action Plan. Two years on, Phase 1 has delivered strong progress across the KPIs: enhanced data capture and real-time evaluation, improved equitable access to information and opportunities, and inclusive practice embedded across pre-award processes, alongside active engagement with funders and peers. A particular focus area, which was for greater equity and representation in demand management (DM) schemes shows clear improvement, with significant narrowing and, in several areas, closed gaps for the relevant protected characteristics versus 2023. These improvements align closely with progress on wider KPI targets.

This programme is a key delivery mechanism for the aforementioned Research Culture Roadmap, directly advancing its priorities to value and

support people, embed responsible and high-integrity practice. Learnings from Phase 1 will feed into strategic planning and REF 2029 preparations through the Roadmap's governance under the Research & Innovation Committee.

In parallel, Phase 2 has advanced beyond pre-award into post-award and delivery, with early emphasis on doctoral recruitment and progression/completion, which were prioritised in light of recent cohort bids to UKRI and other funders, and this work is already informing enhancements to doctoral provision through an EDI lens.

2C.

This should include a reflection on the previous year's activity including a review of progress and impact of initiatives if known relating to activities referenced in the previous year's statement. Note any issues that have hindered progress, e.g. resourcing or other issues.

The University is committed to research integrity, demonstrated through the pledges in Strategy 2030 and the Research Culture Roadmap. Last year the University acknowledged and agreed to enhance the research integrity agenda. This has been achieved through firmly embedding research integrity within the Research Culture Roadmap. The University's commitment to enhancing the quality of research is demonstrated through the implementation of the on-line Ethics Management System. The system has been co-designed with Faculty and Schools Research Ethics Committees and will go-live during late summer/early autumn of 2025.

As an Institution training is an important feature of personal and professional development. Whilst many routine training programmes have continued, this year has demonstrated that new and innovative approaches, such as an Escape Room or a Murder Mystery can be adopted to deliver, what can be considered, a familiar message.

The University has continued to ensure that new policies are developed, especially to support the needs of the research community. Existing policies have also been revised to ensure they remain current and fit for purpose. Training remains pivotal to the implementation of the integrity agenda, be that for local considerations or further afield.

As the University moves forward, training will continue to be a driving force for research integrity. Regular events will be organised to ensure that the variety of topics that contribute to research integrity are addressed.

2D. Case study on good practice (optional)

Please describe an anonymised brief, exemplar case study that can be shared as good practice with other organisations. A wide range of case studies are valuable, including small, local implementations. Case studies may also include the impact of implementations or lessons learned.

Murder Mystery – a new way to embed research integrity.

Training is recognised as an important component, giving researchers the skills necessary to undertake their research with integrity. As discussed previously, training is delivered through a variety of methods, however, this year the Researcher Development Consultant in the Graduate School planned and developed a Murder Mystery event on research integrity.

The victim, the University's Head of Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity. The four suspects included:

- The Research Data Librarian who had fabricated datasets and missing/alterd DOI records linked to the datasets
- The editor of a journal who had been accepting bribes to fast-track journal publications
- The PhD candidate who had failed to obtain consent from vulnerable patients
- The Post-doctoral researcher who had allegedly plagiarised some of her work but had also manipulated data relating to nutritional research.

Approximately 20 PGR students took part in the session that was designed to bring learning, in a light-hearted manner, and consider specific elements of research integrity. Each crime scene was played out enabling shared learning on research data management, informed consent, publication ethics, honesty in reporting research results and plagiarism. The values of honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, care and respect and accountability were emphasised throughout the session.

Events such as this also provides an opportunity for students to make connections across a variety of disciplines.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

Please provide:

- a brief summary of relevant organisation policies/ processes (e.g. research misconduct procedure, whistle-blowing policy, bullying/harassment policy; appointment of a third party to act as confidential liaison for persons wishing to raise concerns) and brief information on the periodic review of research misconduct processes (e.g. date of last review; any major changes during the period under review; date when processes will next be reviewed).
- information on how the organisation creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct (e.g. code of practice for research, whistle-blowing, research misconduct procedure, informal liaison process, website signposting for reporting systems, training, mentoring, reflection and evaluation of policies, practices and procedures).
- anonymised key lessons learned from any investigations into allegations of misconduct which either identified opportunities for improvements in the organisation's investigation procedure and/or related policies / processes/ culture or which showed that they were working well.

The Concordat to Support Research Integrity requires that processes are in place to investigate research integrity concerns. Queen's University has in place Regulations Governing the Allegation of Misconduct in Research. On receipt of an allegation, it is screened to determine whether these Regulations are the appropriate ones to be followed. For example, in the event of a complaint relating to Bullying and Harassment, the University's policy on this matter would be followed, which is managed by colleagues in People and Culture.

The Regulations Governing and Allegation of Misconduct in Research were last reviewed and updated on October 2021 and whilst a review has been planned this has yet to occur. The University awaits the revisions of the UK Research Integrity Office's code of practice on research misconduct before embarking on the review and update of the Regulations.

The Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Webpages have the information required for the reporting of allegations.

During the reporting period 5 formal allegations/concerns were received. Of these formal allegations received 3 were against staff and 2 were against PGR students. In addition, the University also received a “Claire Francis” email. All of these have been included in the table below (n=6).

Not all matters received are formal allegations of research misconduct. During this year one concern raised related to a dispute around authorship and input sought from the Named Person to resolve the matter. Another matter related to a low quality output which raised concerns around how it had passed peer review. However, the nature of the journal, which is on a list of predatory journals may explain how the manuscript was published.

This year witnessed the first 2 allegations that involved the use, or potential use, of artificial intelligence which had not been declared.

3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken

Please complete the table on the number of **formal investigations completed during the period under review** (including investigations which completed during this period but started in a previous academic year). Information from ongoing investigations should not be submitted.

An organisation’s procedure may include an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. These allegations should be included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column.

Type of allegation	Number of allegations			
	Number of allegations reported to the organisation	Number of formal investigations	Number upheld in part after formal investigation	Number upheld in full after formal investigation
Fabrication				
Falsification	1			
Plagiarism	2	1		1
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	1			
Misrepresentation (eg data;				

involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)				
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)	1	1 ongoing		
Other*	1 (ongoing)			
Total:	6	2		1
*If you listed any allegations under the 'Other' category, please give a brief, high-level summary of their type here. Do not give any identifying or confidential information when responding.				
<i>The case identified as 'other' relates to an allegation where the published manuscript is of poor research quality reporting</i>				