

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST
Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research
Revised February 2014

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 A central mission of the University is to promote integrity and excellence in the practice of research. In doing so, the University has a responsibility to ensure that all research carried out under its auspices is conducted to the highest standard achievable, in accordance with the law and public interest. This means that all members of the University, as defined by Statute II, involved in the research process should exhibit impeccable integrity and follow the principles of good research practice.
- 1.2 The University supports the Universities UK (UUK) Concordat to Support Research Integrity which provides a framework for good research conduct and governance. The five key principles identified in the Concordat, which apply to all fields of research, are:
- (i) to maintain the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research;
 - (ii) to ensure that research is conducted according to the appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards;
 - (iii) to support 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) to use transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise;
 - (v) to work together to strengthen the integrity of research and to review progress regularly and openly.
- 1.3 The University expects the principles identified in the Concordat and the standards outlined in this Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research to be adhered to by all staff and research students working within or on behalf of the University.
- 1.4 This document addresses the issues involved in the proper conduct of research, and provides guidance on the standards expected. This cannot, however, be an exhaustive document and the Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research is to be viewed as the minimum standard with which University staff and research students should comply. The lack of mention in this code of a particular act or omission should not be taken as conclusive on any question of professional conduct, should an enquiry arise.
- 1.5 The University expects all staff and research students to work within the Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research. If they have any doubt concerning the applicability of a particular section of the Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research they should consult with their Head of School or with the Research Governance Team of the Research and Enterprise Directorate.
- 1.6 The Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research should be read in conjunction with other documents, especially the:
- (i) Regulations for Research Involving Human Participants;
 - (ii) Policy and Principles on the Ethical Approval of Research;
 - (iii) Animal Use Policy and;
 - (iv) Regulations Governing Investigation into Allegations of Research Misconduct.

For some areas the general principles are addressed in this document, but researchers should be familiar with any additional documents, such as those on data protection, which cover specific aspects of this code in more detail.

1.7 The Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research applies to:

- (i) researchers (including academic staff, research assistants, research fellows and academic related staff) and other staff involved in the research process (including technical, clerical, academic related and administrative staff) employed by the University, whether involved in the research process within the University, or whilst at another institution;
- (ii) students undertaking research and their supervisors;
- (iii) any persons with honorary positions involved in research within, or on behalf of, the University.

The term researcher has been used for convenience throughout this Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research and can be taken to refer to any or all of the above categories, as is appropriate.

1.8 The Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research may be supplemented or updated from time to time by additional guidance notes on specific areas.

1.90 Failure to comply with the Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research may result in actions being taken under the Regulations Governing Investigation into Allegations of Research Misconduct.

2. Principles of good research practice

2.1 The University cannot be prescriptive about individual approaches taken by researchers to solving particular research questions. However, in the conduct of all research, the University expects the following general principles to be complied with.

2.2 Good research practice includes the following aspects:

- (i) maintaining open, honest and fair standards, including ready questioning of the researcher's own findings and proper attribution of the contribution made by others;
- (ii) leadership, organisation and co-operation in research, including appropriate supervision and mentoring of young researchers;
- (iii) appropriate recording (including the storage of data) maintenance and reporting of research, allowing ready verification of the quality and integrity of the research data;
- (iv) appropriate dissemination, application and exploitation of the research findings, including negative results;
- (v) compliance with relevant regulations or policies, whether legal, institutional or other, which govern particular aspects of research or the involvement of children and vulnerable adults;
- (vi) participation only in work which conforms to accepted ethical standards and which ensures the safety of all those associated with the research;
- (vii) participation only in work which the researcher is competent to perform;
- (viii) avoidance or declaration of real or apparent conflicts of interest;
- (ix) strict maintenance of the confidentiality of all those involved where appropriate.

3. Integrity

3.1 Researchers should be honest in their own actions in research and in their responses to the actions of other researchers. This applies to all aspects of research work,

including experimental design, research ethics, generating and analysing data, applying for funding, declaring conflict of interest, publishing results, and acknowledging the direct and indirect contribution of colleagues, collaborators and others.

- 3.2 All individuals in the University's employment, or working within the University, must refrain from plagiarism, piracy, the fabrication of results or other forms of research misconduct.
- 3.3 The University expects the quality of research results to be assured before being made public. It is important that ideas can be challenged and tested without loss of reputation. Equally, it is important that researchers or research groups should not become subject to commercial pressures. Researchers must have a critical and impartial approach to results including not rejecting results that are perceived to be negative or are unexpected and not in accordance with the hypothesis tested.
- 3.4 The University is committed to the highest standards of openness, accountability and integrity. As such, individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety are able to raise these matters in accordance with the University's Whistleblowing Policy, If there are more appropriate procedures available for addressing concerns raised then the individual will be advised accordingly (eg for allegations of fraud the University's Fraud Policy and Procedures would be more appropriate).
- 3.5 The University takes seriously any allegation of research misconduct. Any member of the University who believes that an act of research misconduct has occurred or is occurring should bring this to the notice of the University. An individual or individuals with concerns about possible misconduct in research by a member of the University should raise the issue in writing to their Head of School, Centre Director, Institute Director or the Head of Research Governance. All such allegations will be dealt with under the procedures detailed in the Regulations Governing Investigation into Allegations of Research Misconduct.

4. Openness

- 4.1 While recognising the need for researchers to protect their own research interests in the process of planning their research and obtaining their results, the University encourages researchers to be as open as possible in discussing their work with other researchers and with the public.
- 4.2 Once results have been published, where appropriate, the University expects researchers to make available relevant data and materials to others, on request. This is, of course, provided that this is consistent with any ethics approvals and consents which cover the data and materials and any intellectual property rights (IPR) in them.

5. Leadership and cooperation

- 5.1 It is the responsibility of the Vice Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellors, Deans, Heads of School and other Senior Managers, both academic and academic support, to ensure that an environment is created which allows research to be conducted in accordance with good research practice.
- 5.2 These individuals are responsible for establishing a research climate of mutual cooperation, in which researchers at all levels are encouraged to develop their skills and in which the open exchange of ideas is fostered.

5.3 A research community should be promoted and encouraged in which discrimination based on gender, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, political or scientific viewpoint, ethnic or national origin does not occur. The University's Equality and Diversity Policy must be complied with.

5.4 Research misconduct is least likely to arise in an environment where good research practice prevails and where there is adequate supervision at all relevant levels. It is a responsibility of Heads of Schools, Institutes, Research Centres, and supervisors of researchers, to promote, develop, encourage and implement the standards and protocols for research advanced in the University's Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research amongst their staff and students, and to ensure adherence to those standards is a matter of course.

6. Supervision and mentoring

6.1 It is the responsibility of established researchers, to nurture the appropriate intellectual, technical, ethical and career development of new staff, students and supervisees.

6.2 Supervisors are responsible for the overall progress of their students, and should follow good supervisory practice. Supervisors and postgraduate students should be familiar with all applicable sections of the University Calendar: General Regulations, in particular, the Regulations for Postgraduate Students and Regulations for Undergraduate Students and the Institutional Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes.

6.3 Researchers who are new to the research community may face particular difficulties. Responsibility for ensuring that students and other new researchers understand good research practice lies with all members of the research community, but particularly with Heads of Schools, Centre Directors, Institute Directors, Directors of Research, team leaders, grant holders and supervisors. Good practice should include mentoring young researchers in their new environment.

6.4 The University is committed to ensuring researchers are skilled and equipped to complete their research and the University is actively engaged with The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. All researchers should receive appropriate training, for example in research design, regulatory and ethics approvals and consents, equipment use, confidentiality, data management, record keeping and data protection.

6.5 Upon completion of the research project research students must provide all primary source material, raw research data, records of analysis, software and laboratory books to their supervisor. All such materials should be handed over prior to the submission of the thesis.

7. Commitment to competency

7.1 Researchers are responsible for actively maintaining professional competency and remaining knowledgeable within their areas of expertise. To this end researchers should conduct their work within the scope of their own training and knowledge base.

7.2 Researchers should not claim any level of competence that they do not possess, and should take all reasonable steps to ensure that their qualifications, capabilities or

views are not misrepresented by others. If this should occur they should take necessary steps to correct any such misrepresentation.

- 7.3 Researchers should also ensure that all persons who assist in the conduct of their research are adequately trained and perform their responsibilities competently.

8. Documenting results and storing primary data

- 8.1 Confidentiality of personal data relating to research participants, including data associated with tissue and biological samples, is essential and it is of paramount concern that this is protected. All personal information must therefore be encoded or made anonymous as far as is possible, and as early as possible after collection; ciphers should be held separately. Confidentiality is dealt with further below (see item 10).

- 8.2 The researcher should clarify at the outset of the research programme any issues regarding the ownership of the data and samples used or created in the course of the research and also the results of the research. Any issues regarding ownership of these should be resolved before the research commences.

- 8.3 Throughout their work, researchers are required to keep clear and accurate records of the research procedures followed and of the results obtained, including interim results. This is necessary not only as a means of demonstrating proper research practice, but also in case questions are subsequently asked about either the conduct of the research or the results obtained. It also is important in the process of protecting intellectual property rights.

- 8.4 Laboratory notebooks should be kept, where appropriate, and each key document and any changes should be signed and dated. Laboratory notebooks should be maintained in accordance with the University's SOP Maintaining Laboratory Books.

- 8.5 Data generated in the course of research must be kept securely, as appropriate and back-up records should always be kept for data stored electronically. Data should be stored in such a way that permits a complete study reconstruction, if necessary, and records should be monitored regularly to ensure their completeness and accuracy. University procedures developed by Information Services relating to data management and handling must be adhered to (<http://www.gub.ac.uk/directorates/InformationServices/Services/Security/Support/InformationSecurityandAcceptableUsePolicies/>).

- 8.6 The University expects primary data to be securely held for a minimum period of 5 years after the completion of a research project. However, researchers must be aware of and comply with any specific requirements of the funding body relating to longer periods of data retention. For example several Research Councils require data to be retained for 10 years, or even longer for research based on clinical samples or relating to public health. It is the responsibility of the Chief/Principal Investigator to ensure that data retention meets with the requirements of the funding body and the requirements of the Sponsor of the Research and the University's SOP on Archiving Research Study Documents. Information on funding council requirements and data retention can be found on the Digital Curation Centre webpage (<http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/policy-and-legal/funders-data-policies>).

- 8.7 If a member of staff leaves the University, for whatever reason, before the required period of data retention expires, they have a responsibility to ensure that the data is

securely held, either by the University, or if agreed to by the University may be held by themselves or transferred to another institution/establishment.

9. Intellectual Property Rights and ownership

- 9.1 IPR include patents, registered designs, copyright, design rights and know-how. Creative work, including research and development, can lead to IPR and some of these can be protected under one or more headings. The University IPR Policy must be adhered to.
- 9.2 In patent law, the IPR created during an employee's normal or specifically assigned activities belongs to the employer. This means that most of the IPR arising from the activities of University teaching and research staff belongs to the University.
- 9.3 Where work is being carried out under contract from an outside organisation, specific provisions about IPR may apply. For instance, the University may be requested to assign its rights to the sponsor, usually in exchange for some benefit.
- 9.4 In any circumstances where a researcher feels there is any ambiguity or uncertainty regarding IPR or the University's IPR Policy then the researcher must seek advice from the Research and Enterprise Directorate.

10. Confidentiality

- 10.1 Researchers must ensure the confidentiality of personal information relating to the participants in research, and that the research fulfils any related legal requirements, such as those of the Data Protection Act 1998. Researchers must adhere to the University's Data Protection Policy.
- 10.2 Researchers who have access to confidential information of the University, or information from other parties to whom the University has an obligation of confidentiality, must not disclose such information without the prior consent of the University. Confidential information may include, but is not limited to, protocols, processes, techniques, computer readable software, data, drawings or documents.

11. Conduct of reviewers/referees

- 11.1 Peer review requires that the reviewer/referee be expert in the subject under review or the methodology to be used. If a researcher considers themselves to be insufficiently expert in the area on which they have been asked to comment, they must make this clear, and would normally be expected to return the material unread.
- 11.2 A researcher asked to serve as a reviewer/referee should declare any possible conflict of interest, whether real or perceived, such as competitive, collaborative or other close relationship with one or more of the authors under review, or a close professional or commercial interest in the work. If there is any real or perceived conflict of interest, the researcher should normally not participate further in the review process, and should return the material unread.
- 11.3 All information made available to reviewers/referees must be treated in the strictest confidence, and they must not take advantage of any information obtained as a result of their role, eg either using ideas or material contained therein or presenting the information as their own. In particular they must not pirate unfunded grant applications or unpublished manuscripts (the latter including use of knowledge of a

work before its publication, unless granted permission by the author(s), to further their own interests).

12. Conflict of interest

It is the responsibility of researchers to identify and declare any conflicts of interest, whether legal, ethical, moral, financial, personal or other nature, so that it does not become a complicating or actionable issue. The University's Register of Interests Policy must be adhered to.

13. Publishing results

- 13.1 Researchers should make every effort to ensure research findings are widely disseminated to both the academic community and where appropriate to the general public. This includes the sharing of negative results as appropriate.
- 13.2 The person with overall responsibility for the research programme should authorise publication of results: authorisation should cover both the content of the publication (integrity of results, adequacy of internal peer review, appropriate protection of intellectual property rights, appropriate authorship) and the intended place of publication.
- 13.3 When publishing, researchers should not misrepresent their work by omitting information that changes the meaning or significance of their findings.
- 13.4 Work should normally be published as a coherent entity rather than being artificially divided into a number of smaller parts. This does not necessarily preclude preliminary publication where appropriate, such as in letter format, or presentation at conferences, but caution should be exercised that redundant or duplicate publication does not result.
- 13.5 Redundant or duplicate publication, which is a publication that overlaps substantially with one already published elsewhere (in print or electronic media), is not good practice and should be avoided. There may be exceptions to this, such as a publication of a complete report that follows the publication of a preliminary report, or a paper presented at a meeting but not published in full or that is being considered for publication in a proceedings or similar format. When submitting a manuscript, the author should always make a full statement to the editor about all submissions and previous reports that might be regarded as redundant or duplicate publication of the same or very similar work. The author should alert the editor if the work includes subjects about which a previous report has been published. Any such work should be referred to and referenced in the new paper. Copies of such material should be included with the submitted paper to help the editor decide how to handle the matter.
- 13.6 Researchers are, however, encouraged to communicate their results to as wide an audience as possible. In this context secondary publication may be justified and can be beneficial. For example, publication in another language or publication of a more accessible and widely disseminated report, might be appropriate. In this situation approval should be received from the editors of the publication outlets involved and the editor concerned with secondary publication informed.
- 13.7 More detailed guidance on the issues of redundant or secondary publication is usually available in the guidance to authors provided by academic journals or, for instance, in the 'Vancouver Guidelines' (ICMJE Recommendations for the Conduct,

Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals: Overlapping Publications) or by the Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE).

- 13.8 In the context of communicating academic information it is always good practice to use as clear and accurate language as possible, without recourse to unnecessary jargon. This is essential when communicating information to a lay audience.
- 13.9 The University supports the freedom to publish research findings. There may, however, be occasions when a legitimate request for deferral of publication is made. An example of this would be when collaborating with an industrial partner, who may wish publication to be deferred until adequate protection of any intellectual property has been arranged. The University would expect the period of deferral requested to be no longer than necessary.
- 13.10 There may, however, be occasions when an external funder of research exerts pressure in an attempt to suppress results, for example to conceal results they perceive to be detrimental to their interests. In this situation the University will take whatever action it deems necessary to counter any attempt at suppression.
- 13.11 When negotiating contracts with external funders the right to publish the results of the study should be protected. It is the responsibility of Research and Enterprise Directorate, on behalf of the University, and not that of the individual researcher to ensure this has been adequately done.
- 13.12 Many research funders (eg Research Councils UK) advocate open access to research publications. Depending on the funding stipulations this may or may not also include open access to research data. Researchers must be aware of and comply with any funding requirements with regards to open access and data management.
- 13.13 The University itself places importance on appropriate protection of IPR (see item 9), and researchers should refrain from any form of publication or disclosure until it is clear that any necessary protection has been secured.
- 13.14 Researchers must ensure that all publication and presentation of material arising from research is correct and accurate. If it subsequently becomes clear that this is not the case, the researcher must take appropriate steps to correct the information, and if necessary make a retraction, in all outlets the information has appeared in. Where appropriate, funding or external agencies should also be informed.

14. Authorship

- 14.1 The issue of authorship is important in the context of good research practice. Although authorship practices may vary across disciplines the University supports an approach based on the 'Vancouver Guidelines' (ICMJE Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals, 2013) with authorship credit based on all four of the following criteria being met:
- (i) substantial contributions to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis of interpretation of data;
 - (ii) drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content;
 - (iii) final approval of the version to be published;
 - (iv) agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

- 14.2 The above criteria are not intended to be used to deny authorship to those who deserve credit and individuals who meet the first criterion should have the opportunity to participate in the review, drafting and final approval of the article or manuscript.
- 14.3 It should be noted that the acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of the research group, alone, does not justify authorship. Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content. All contributors, who do not meet the criteria for authorship, should be listed in an acknowledgements section. The practice of honorary authorship is unacceptable.
- 14.4 In order to minimise authorship disputes occurring it is good practice to discuss authorship, including order of authorship, at the start of projects rather than on submission of the research to a journal or conference.
- 14.5 Where an internal authorship dispute occurs, involving research that is not yet published or presented, researchers should attempt to resolve the dispute at a local level. Where it is not possible for the researchers to resolve the dispute, the matter should be referred to the Head of School or Institute Director to review and mediate an agreed solution. Manuscripts for which there is an unresolved authorship dispute should not be submitted for publication before consulting with the Head of School or Institute Director. Where there is a conflict of interest, an alternative Head of School or Institute Director or the relevant Dean may be asked to consider the dispute.
- 14.6 Authorship disputes involving published manuscripts may be considered under the procedures detailed in the University's Regulations Governing Investigation into Allegations of Research Misconduct. An individual or individuals with concerns regarding authorship of published works by a member of the University should raise the issue in writing to their Head of School, Centre Director, Institute Director or the Head of Research Governance.
- 14.7 When an external authorship dispute involves collaborators or contributors from another institution, the procedures for dispute resolution at the lead author's institution should be followed.

15. Acknowledging the role of collaborators and other participants

In all aspects of research, the contributions of formal collaborators and all others who directly assist or indirectly support the research must be properly acknowledged or a conflict of interest disclosed, including the source of funding where appropriate. This applies to any circumstances in which statements about the research are made, including provision of information about the nature and process of the research, and in publishing the outcome. Failure to acknowledge the contributions of others is regarded as unprofessional conduct. Conversely, collaborators and other contributors carry their share of the responsibility for the research and its outcome.

16. Health and safety

Research should be conducted to the highest possible health and safety standards, both for the research participants, collaborators, and the general public. Research must adhere to current safety practices and legal requirements, and all researchers must be familiar with relevant University regulations, including the University's Health and Safety Manual and the University Calendar: General Regulations.

Researchers should also be cognisant of matters relating to their own health and safety. Guidance and information on managing occupational stress and promoting wellbeing are available from the University's Wellbeing webpage (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/wellbeing/Health/>). University policies and procedures on lone working and out of hours working should also be adhered to and are available from the Human Resources (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/OccupationalHealthandSafety/GuidanceNotes/LoneWorking/>).

Guidance for researchers working in conflict zones is also available from the Research Governance webpage (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/ResearchEnterprise/ResearchGovernanceandEthics/ResearchinConflictZones/>).

17. Ethical practice

17.1 Researchers are expected to be aware of and to comply with all relevant ethical and legal standards and frameworks including the standards of research practice as published by the University, scientific and learned societies, funding bodies and other relevant professional bodies or stakeholders.

17.2 Research involving human participants

17.2.1 Approval from an appropriate research ethics committee must be sought for research which involves human participants, their material or data. The University requires that all research complies with the legal requirements of the UK. In particular, this includes Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations 2004 and subsequent amendments, Human Tissue Act 2004 and subsequent amendments and the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990.

The University's Regulations for Research Involving Human Participants and the Policy and Principles on the Ethical Approval of Research detail the University's requirements for research of this nature and must be adhered to.

17.3 Research involving animals

17.3.1 Research involving animals should have approval through the appropriate Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body and the researcher involved should ensure appropriate Personal and Project Licences are in place. The use of animals in research should conform to current laws and regulations, including the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act (1986) and any subsequent amendments.

17.3.2 Researchers should consider, at an early stage in the design of any research involving animals, the opportunities for reduction, replacement and refinement of animal involvement. The University's Policy on the Use of Animals in Research and Teaching must be adhered to.

18. Integrity in managing research projects

18.1 Researchers must take all reasonable measures to ensure compliance with sponsor, institutional, legal, ethical and moral obligations in managing projects.

18.2 Researchers are expected to familiarise themselves with the terms and conditions of any research contract or agreement entered into by the University on their behalf.

- 18.3 Researchers must follow established University financial procedures as detailed on the Finance Directorate's webpage (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/FinanceDirectorate/FinancialProcedures/>).
- 18.4 The person with overall responsibility for a research programme should ensure that it runs within its allocated budget, and ensure that no penalties are incurred by failure to meet sponsor's requirements, for example submission of reports according to schedule.
- 18.5 In accordance with the University's Bribery Act (2010) Policy in no case should any offer of bribery or inducement be accepted.

19. Compliance with audit or other monitoring procedures

Researchers must comply with any audit or monitoring procedures, whether external or internal, with which they legitimately may be asked to cooperate. Examples of such audit or monitoring may include examination of management of specific research projects, compliance with procedures, such as this Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research or with external sponsor requirements.

20. Sources of research funding

Researchers must consider any ethical implications associated with sources of funding, including potential conflicts of interest or reputational risks for the University. If unsure about the acceptability of a funding source, researchers should contact the Research Development Team in the Research and Enterprise Directorate.

For example, it should be noted that in accordance with Cancer Research UK's Code of Practice and UUK's Protocol on Tobacco Industry Funding to Universities, the University will not knowingly accept funds from the tobacco industry.

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