

Annual Statement on Compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity

2014-15

1. Annual Statement on Compliance

- 1.1 Academic research involves a wide variety of disciplines. As an institution Queen's works collaboratively with industry, healthcare organisations, voluntary, government and charitable sectors to develop new knowledge and create impact for society locally and globally.
- 1.2 Queen's University Belfast is committed to the principles outlined in The Concordat to Support Research Integrity. This is the second year the University has provided an annual statement of the Institution's compliance with the Concordat.
- 1.3 To reflect the importance of research integrity, the team responsible for supporting academics, researchers and students in developing their knowledge and understanding of research integrity, has been rebranded as the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team. This facilitates the promotion of the integrity agenda both within and external to the University. The Team has continued to consolidate the programme of activities that have been undertaken to strengthen and support research integrity. The Team has also developed and implemented new policies and procedures, where necessary, and ensured the timely and relevant provision of training to staff and students.

2. Supporting and Strengthening Integrity

- 2.1 In the University's 2013-14 statement of compliance, it was indicated that allegations of misconduct in research had related to authorship. The issue of authorship is important in the context of good research practice. Subsequently, the University developed and implemented Guidelines on Authorship and Publication, which have been made available on the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity website and integrated into training and induction sessions.
- 2.2 Research data management is central to research excellence and so the University has developed an institutional framework for research data management. During 2014-15, the University launched and implemented its new Research Data Management Policy, providing staff and students with the necessary information to comply with the standards required for the effective collection, quality, storage, security, maintenance and dissemination of data. A series of roadshows are currently being delivered to each School highlighting the requirements of the Policy.
- 2.3 The University's Research Governance and Integrity Committee (RGIC) completed a benchmarking exercise using the UK Research Integrity Office's Self-Assessment Tool. The Committee were satisfied that the University had good policies and systems in place to support research integrity and address issues of misconduct.
- 2.4 The RGIC continue to oversee a programme of audits undertaken to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and University regulation around human participant research. Aggregated audit findings were presented to the Committee, which was assured researchers were compliant with good research practice.

- 2.5 During 2014-15 the University's Research Ethics Committee participated in a benchmarking exercise using a tool developed and issued by the Association for Research Ethics Committees. This resulted in the Committee reviewing the standards applied to individual School Research Ethics Committees (SRECs) and amending its approach to the series of annual visits to SRECs. Where possible, a member of UREC attended the SREC meeting to enable a deeper understanding of how the Committees operate and the issues faced when considering ethics applications.
- 2.6 Training is key component to the enhancement of research integrity. The Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team have continued to deliver, or have arranged the delivery of, training on Research Ethics, the Human Tissue Act, Data Management and Informed Consent to relevant staff and students. To complement the established training programme the Team also organised 2 bespoke lunch-time seminars that enabled the consideration and discussion of 'hot topics'.
- 2.7 In November 2014 the Human Tissue Authority (HTA) undertook an inspection of the University's Human Tissue Authority Licence 12059, on the Royal Victoria Hospital site. The inspectors report is publically available on the HTA website <https://www.hta.gov.uk/establishments/queens-university-belfast-12059>. The Inspectors provided three areas for advice but had no findings against the licence. In particular, the report outlined examples of strength highlighting the strong commitment by staff to good governance of human tissue collections and the robust governance framework that underpins all of the University's HTA licences.

3. Allegations of Misconduct in Research

- 3.1 During 2014-15 the University had five allegations of misconduct in research, three against members of staff and two against Postgraduate Research (PGR) students. The issues identified were across the University's three Faculties and related to plagiarism, non-compliance with local governance permissions and unethical practice.
- 3.2 Each allegation was addressed under the University's Regulations Governing an Allegation of Misconduct in Research or the University's General Regulations, Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences.
- 3.3 Following the robust collection of evidence, followed by careful examination and consideration of the facts, substantive issues were found against one staff member and against both the PGR students. It should be noted that one allegation against a member of staff, pertaining to plagiarism, remains open at year end.
- 3.4 The investigations resulted in a disciplinary process being implemented against a member of staff. For the other matter against a member of staff it was agreed the individual would undergo additional training as it was recognised the person involved had made a genuine error. The two PGR students were referred to the Academic Offences Committee.
- 3.5 Such incidences provide opportunities for learning and the development of actions in order to minimise a re-occurrence. Therefore, in 2015-16 all new PGR students will attend a centrally delivered induction programme at which research integrity and ethics will be highlighted. This will be complimented by routine School based induction programmes on research integrity and research ethics.

4. External Engagement

- 4.1 During this period, the University has continued to be an active member of the Association for Research Ethics Committees and UK Research Integrity Office (UK RIO). Work has also continued amongst the Russell Group Heads of Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity to support institutions in complying with the Concordat. This year the Russell Group focused on the challenges presented in cross-institutional cases of misconduct in research.
- 4.2 During 2014-15 the University also launched a website dedicated to animal research <http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/AnimalResearch/> within which research integrity is an integral part.

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