

**Annual Statement of Compliance with
The Concordat to Support Research Integrity
2019-20**

1. Annual Statement of Compliance

- 1.1 Universities UK published the revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity in October 2019. This version had been substantially reworked from the initial Concordat published in 2012, placing a greater emphasis on the responsibilities of individual researchers and also on those who fund research. The key commitments remain essentially unchanged:
- 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 Queen’s University has demonstrated its commitment to the Concordat since its initial publication 2012, exhibited through publishing its first annual statement of compliance with Concordat 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 seventh statement of compliance, covering the period 01 August 2019 to 31 July 2020. Despite the COVID-19 global pandemic the University has continued to deliver on its commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.
- 1.4 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.

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.
- 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 Annex 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.
- 2.3.2 This was the first year of operation for the University's Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Committee, chaired by the Dean of Innovation in MHLS. This new Committee, formed through the amalgamation of the University's Research Ethics Committee and the Governance and Integrity Committee has brought together post-doctoral research staff, senior lecturers, members of the professoriate and a lay member to shape the University's response to the Concordat and oversee the systems and processes in place to manage research. The membership and terms of reference are available in Annex 2.
- 2.3.3 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.
- 2.3.4 The role of Global Partnerships Compliance Officer was introduced within Queen's to assist in compliance with certain funder's contractual expectations with regards to due

diligence. The purpose of this requirement is to assess the University's risks when entering into partnerships.

2.3.5 Queen's internal due diligence process is based upon the pillars recommended by UKRI including governance, financial stability and capacity to deliver. Duties of this position include the coordination of due diligence activities which demands a collaborative working relationship with such colleagues as Research Contracts, Faculty Finance and Research Finance to ensure full understanding and compliance with terms and conditions. This role also necessitates engagement with and understanding by both internal Principal Investigators and external partners as to the importance and need for due diligence.

2.3.6 During the year a series of visits were scheduled to each of the Faculty's Research Committees. One of the three visits was completed, the need to move to remote working because of the COVID-19 prevented the other two from occurring. In order to target more researchers an internal funding bulletin, which has 300 subscribers, was used to promote the need for due diligence on partners/collaborators/sub-contractors. The article was published in January 2020 edition of the bulletin.

2.4 Research Culture

2.4.1 Following the Wellcome Trust's 'Reimagine Research' report the University commenced work on examining its own research culture. During this year a number of initiatives have been undertaken which included a survey, in February, that sought opinion from the research community on what was needed to drive positive change in the QUB research culture and how individuals could support this.

2.4.2 Town Hall meetings with the research community, both staff and student, and professional support services have been held to discuss the issues and challenges identified through the survey. As the year ends a draft institutional Research Culture Action Plan (RCAP) has been developed which will be taken to the research community and professional support services via workshops to enable open and transparent discussion on the themes identified and facilitate meaningful contribution to the final RCAP.

2.5 Research Ethics – Human Research

2.4.1 Two of the three University's faculties have operationalised a Faculty Research Ethics Committee structure, with the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) being in their third year of operation and the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences having just completed their first year operation.

2.4.2 The Faculty REC in EPS has been operational now for three years and the Committee has noticed a gradual increase in the number of applications being received. In particular, there has been a significant increase in number of full applications that are to be considered at the Faculty REC meeting in comparison to proportionate applications, which are considered by one of a pool of Designated Reviewers who are not members of the Faculty REC. An audit of proportionate review (PR) during 2019-20 has assured the Committee these were being appropriately considered. The University are confident that the Faculty REC model has improved consistency of decisions. It has also increased awareness of ethical issues amongst a greater proportion of staff as they give of their time to consider lower risk applications through PR.

- 2.4.3 The two Faculty RECs are managed by the University Research Ethics Officer who is a member of 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. The University's Information Compliance Manager is now a member of the Faculty RECs. This enables oversight over other areas of governance at the same time as an ethical review of a research application. The University's Information Compliance Unit work closely with the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team in supporting and advising researchers on data protection matters.
- 2.4.4 The aspiration is to roll-out the initiative to the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences in due course, though this shall require additional resource with the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team to achieve this change and enable standardisation across the University regarding research ethics.

2.5 Research Ethics – Animal Research

- 2.5.1 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.
- 2.5.2 AWERB made it's annual report to the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Committee in 2019-20. 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.
- 2.5.3 Research studies involving animals that are not governed by the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 also require ethical consideration. With the introduction of the Faculty Research Ethics Committees in MHLS and EPS it was necessary to create a sub-committee of the Faculty RECs to consider animal studies that, for example, related to behaviour. To ensure robust governance this subcommittee reports to the Faculty REC and keeps AWERB informed of studies considered.

2.6 Human Tissue Act Compliance

- 2.6.1 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.
- 2.6.2 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. Training is normally delivered in small workshop that are delivered locally to researchers and from August to March 2020 a total of 143 staff/students were trained through face-to-face training sessions. This enables questions pertinent to individual researchers to be answered in a timely manner. The figure detailed does not include induction programmes and/or annual health and seminars conducted in Research Centres which are also used to address HTA

compliance. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic the University ceased face-to-face training at the end of March and availed of the Medical Research Council's on-line training package and we are aware of a further five staff/students availing of this package.

2.7 Data Management

- 2.7.1 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.
- 2.7.2 On 1 October 2019 responsibility for providing research data management (RDM) support to Queen's researchers was transferred from Research and Enterprise to the Open Access (OA) Team in Library Services. The handover took place because RDM is closely related to OA and Information Services (IS) is already responsible for the RDM technical infrastructure so support was unified in one directorate. Prior to the handover a member of the OA Team visited the University of Edinburgh, which is viewed as a RDM exemplar, to investigate best practice and Queen's researchers were surveyed to verify the RDM support they require and determine the technical infrastructure needed for the future. Three hundred and two surveys were completed out of a total of 1886 staff so the response rate was 16%. A subscription to DMPonline, a tool that helps researchers write DMPs, was also purchased and trainers from the Digital Curation Centre at the University of Edinburgh were invited to the University to deliver a RDM course for academic staff and research postgraduate students.
- 2.7.3 During 2019-20 approximately 75 enquiries were received via the dedicated RDM email account. This included requests from researchers for assistance with the preparation of DMPs to support grant applications to various funding bodies and approximately 10 DMPs were reviewed by the OA Team. In addition, the OA Team delivered a range of training courses on an ad hoc basis or as part of the Staff Learning and Development and Postgraduate Research Development programmes and RDM content was incorporated into these courses. In 2019-20 over 1000 researchers attended OA Team courses.
- 2.7.4 The Senior Systems Analyst (High Performance Computing Support) in IS 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 54 projects have data management supported through this facility, with 22 projects approved from January 2019 to date.

2.7.5 The Institutional Repository Officer in the OA Team is responsible for validating datasets in the University's Pure repository, which is used for archiving and publishing research data. Currently, three hundred and seventy five datasets have been validated, including datasets related to electronic theses.

2.8 Training and support to researchers

2.8.1 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.

2.8.2 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.

2.8.3 The team are also actively involved in induction programmes for the Contract Researchers, which occurs as a minimum 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.

2.8.4 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.

2.8.5 As the year ends the University has just purchased a two year licence for Oxford University Press' on-line research integrity training package – Epigeum. Work shall commence in earnest to have this available for the start of the new academic year in late September 2020.

2.9 Transparency in Research

2.9.1 As a sponsor of clinical research the University must ensure transparency regarding studies being conducted. In particular, certain studies must be made known on a publically available database, these are clinical trials of an investigational medicinal product, clinical investigation or other study of a medical device (or a combination of both) or other clinical studies examining a novel intervention or comparing an intervention in clinical practice. On the most part, this is accomplished using ClinicalTrials.gov and there is ongoing piece of work to ensure its completeness by researchers.

2.9.2 At the start of the year there was one outstanding co-sponsored Clinical Trial of Investigational Medicinal Products (CTIMPs) with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust for which data needed to be captured on the EudraCT database. This has now been completed.

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 2019-20 the University received one allegation of misconduct in research that against a member of staff. Table 1, below, provides details regarding the allegations received.

Table 1: Allegation of Misconduct in Research received during 2019-20

Staff / Student	Faculty	Nature of allegation	Stage reached	Time taken to completion
Both	MHLS	Authorship	Ongoing	Ongoing.

- 3.3 An allegation that was opened in late 2017-18 was concluded during the year. The timeframe involved was as a result of the respondent's mental well-being. The University was careful to support them and move at a pace with which they were able to cope. The case was upheld. It also demonstrated the importance of mental well-being support throughout any investigation, subsequently the Regulations Governing an Allegation of Misconduct in Research were amended to include the need to ensure this remained paramount.

4 External Engagement

- 4.1 Queen's University was delighted to host the Russell Group's Research Integrity Forum in November 2019. This was a timely event given 2nd Edition of the Concordat to Support Research had been published the previous month.
- 4.2 The University is a subscriber to UK RIO and have benefited from the various webinars that have been held during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team
Research and Enterprise