

**Annual Statement of Compliance with  
The Concordat to Support Research Integrity  
2021-22**

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 publication of the Concordat in 2012 Queen’s University has demonstrated its commitment, 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 Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity webpages, along with the contact information for relevant persons: <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, subsequently contextual information may not have changed since the previous year. This statement of compliance covers the period of 01 August 2021 to 31 July 2022 and is the ninth report from Queen’s University. During this period there has been a greater emphasis on meeting the requirements of Trusted Research, part of the wider governance and integrity agenda and putting into the action the Research Culture Action Plan.

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 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 in the promotion of research integrity. The Director of Research and Enterprise and Deputy Director of Research Services act as the named point of contact for persons wishing to raise a concern regarding research integrity.

- 2.1.3 The Faculty Dean of Innovation and Impact for Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (MHLS) is Chair of the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Committee, and the Establishment Licence Governance and Strategy Committee. The Dean of Research in MHLS chairs the Human Tissue Steering Group.

## **2.2 Policies and Procedures**

A range of Regulations and Policies that govern integrity matters are in place to support the governance and integrity agendas. 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 There are robust governance structures in place to oversee research, which in turn report into corporate governance arrangements. The Human Tissue Steering Group, enables the Designated Individuals (DIs) and Persons Designated (PDs) to meet at least twice a year to review and approve policies, procedures, standard operating procedures, and consider the findings of local premises and/or audits of individual's holdings. The University's Human Tissue Steering Group, Faculty Research Ethics Committees and Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body report to Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Committee (RGEIC) (membership and terms of reference are attached in Appendix 2).
- 2.3.2 The University has lay representation on the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Committee and each of the Faculty Research Ethics Committees.

## **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 adopts an agile and iterative approach to implementation, informed by regular staff surveys.
- 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 This was the first full year of implementation of RCAP. During this year the primary focus was to achieve a number of 'quick wins' by bringing to completion nascent programmes, such as the launch of an institutional Postdoctoral Development Centre, and to raise awareness and engagement with this institutional approach to research culture through a series of events and online communications, and building

connections with peer networks in the research culture landscape through organisations such as ARMA.

- **Research careers:** In September 2021 the new institutional Postdoctoral Development Centre (PDC), building upon a successful pilot in the Faculty of MHLS. The 'PDC' is a one-stop-shop to help 'post-docs' and other researchers progress their careers, and promote a supportive culture and positive post-doc experience. It offers support around six main themes: information, development, career, policy, representation and recognition.

Alongside this a new three-year action plan for institutional implementation of the UK Researcher Development Concordat was developed. A [campaign](#) aimed at addressing the stigma of 'failure' in academic careers was developed, which included a series of online videos featuring senior academics sharing open reflections on challenging moments that helped shape their careers. A 'Research Culture Conversations' event extended this theme and involved guest speakers and panel/plenary discussions.

- **Reward and recognition:** During the second half of the year a campaign that focussed on the role of 'non-academic' staff who enable and support research activity was delivered. This included a series of [video profiles](#) showcasing 'hidden roles' in research at Queen's. A further 'Research Culture Conversations' event attended by c. 100 aimed at examining the experiences of non-academic staff in the broader research culture. An outcome of this event, has been the establishment of a pilot project to network 'research and innovation professionals', which is planned for the new academic year.
- **Pump-priming and sharing best practice:** An institutional 'Research Culture Seed Fund' was established, and has supported 12 projects with £18k of funding through a competitive process (from c. 60 applications). The purpose of the Fund was to enable nascent ideas and initiatives that aligned with the priorities of the RCAP to deliver a series of short and focussed activities (such as an event or campaign). Each project will publish a summary of their activities as a blog in the new academic year, which are intended to act as exemplars of the type of activity that others could emulate in other parts of the University. It is intended that this will act as the foundation of an institutional 'good practice exchange' on research culture.

## 2.5 Research Ethics

- 2.5.1 During 2021-22 the University recruited for a second Faculty Research Ethics Officer to support the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. As the year ends, the working group that was convened to support this change process has nearly completed its work. The new Faculty REC in AHSS will oversee the School RECs in AHSS, which are needing to be retained because of volume of applications. It will ensure robustness of the ethical review process through audit and provide consistency through training and standardisation of systems and processes.
- 2.5.2 The Faculties of Medicine Health and Life Sciences and Engineering and Physical Sciences have had their Research Ethics Committees operational for three and five years respectively. The continued growth in applications, in particular within EPS, demonstrates researcher's commitment to the Concordat by "ensuring that research

is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards”.

- 2.5.3 The Animal Welfare Ethics Review Body (AWERB) is responsible for the review of project licences, at application, mid-term and end of study stages. 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/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/AnimalResearch/). Statistics of animal use are also available on this site. During 2021-22 AWERB amended its approach to business alternating its requirement to review applications with addressing matters to enhance systems and the approaches to animal research, in particular by developing a suite of Standard Operating Procedures for specific procedures and ensuring that training and competency requirements were captured to facilitate ongoing monitoring.
- 2.5.4 During the year the Regulations Governing the Use of Animals in Research were updated, strengthening requirements relating to training and competency of individual licence holders. The University’s Culture of Care initiative, which commenced in 2021-22, has also been captured in the Regulations. This demonstrates the University’s commitment to the creation of an open, transparent culture that supports the sharing of ideas and encouraging honest reflection of activities involving animals in research.

## **2.6 Open Research**

- 2.6.1 An Open Research Group was formed during this period to coordinate implementation of the University’s policies governing open research. This Group draws representation from academics from each Faculty, and staff from Research and Enterprise, Information Services and the Information Compliance Unit. An Open Research team was also established to promote open research and provide support for open access (OA), research data management (RDM), e-theses and digital preservation.
- 2.6.2 The team’s activities included:
- i. Organising online and in-person training on open research related topics (e.g., copyright, OA, persistent identifiers (PIDs) and RDM) as part of the Staff Learning and Development, and Postgraduate Research Development programmes, or, on an hoc basis. During 2021-22, 51 sessions were delivered and attended by over 1900 staff and students.
  - ii. Developing the Library’s OA and RDM webpages to ensure they incorporate the latest information on funder policies.
  - iii. Managing the OA block grants that the University receives from the British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research UK, UKRI and Wellcome Trust.
  - iv. Managing the University’s Research Portal (institutional repository) and Read and Publish journal agreements to enable staff and students to publish OA and fulfil funder policies.

## **2.7 Data Management**

- 2.7.1 A new Research Data Librarian post was created within the Open Research team in Library Services to provide dedicated RDM advocacy, support and training for staff and students. Ongoing activities in this area also included:

- i. Offering a single point of contact, via a dedicated email account, for staff and students to request assistance with RDM related issues such as sharing data, licensing, repository deposit and signposting of resources and Queen's stakeholders.
- ii. Providing advice to staff and students on producing Data Management Plans (DMPs), which are often required for funding applications. In 2021-22, approximately 50 DMPs were reviewed by the Open Research team.
- iii. Organising four RDM courses for research postgraduate students via the Graduate School, including a CITI-GENS training event that was run in collaboration with a data management specialist from the University of Bristol.
- iv. Arranging 69 one-to-one sessions with staff and students to offer advice and support on RDM related issues.
- v. Validating datasets in the Research Portal (University's data repository) so staff and students can share datasets in accordance with FAIR data principles. From January 2021 to August 2022, approximately 130 datasets were validated by the Open Research team.

2.7.2 A new and enhanced Research Data Storage platform has been deployed by Information Services to support the secure storage of large datasets for the duration of research projects. It is available to all staff and students and there is capacity to accommodate growth in data generated in the coming years. Currently, 93 research projects have data management supported through this facility, with 38 projects approved between January 2021 and August 2022.

## **2.8 Human Tissue Act Compliance**

2.8.1 During 2021-22 the Human Tissue Steering Group met on two occasions. Once Northern Ireland's recommendation to work from home because of COVID-19 was lifted in May attention was turned to undertaking premises audits to ensure laboratories were operating according to the HTA Codes of Practice. It is expected that the premises audits will be completed by October 2022 and the aggregated findings will be brought to the Steering Group for review and discussion.

2.8.2 As the University has the requirement that anyone working with human tissue samples must be trained on the legislative framework governing this work every three years, training continued using MS Teams for those individuals who were working in laboratories. During 2021-22 12 training sessions were delivered to 134 staff and students.

## **2.9 Global Research Partnerships**

2.9.1 The global compliance agenda has continued to evolve – in January 2022 the National Security and Investment Act was enacted. The University continues to respond to and ensure compliance with matters related to national security which is encompassed in a programme of Trusted Research. During 2021-22 the University Operating Board considered and approved the Export Control Policy. This has provided a structured framework to facilitate training to relevant staff, which is ongoing. In June 2022 the Research and Innovation Committee approved the Policy to Govern the Prevention of Harm in Research. There has been a concerted effort to raise awareness of the requirement amongst researchers.

The University continues to improve its compliance with the terms and conditions detailed by funders. During this reporting there has been a focus on raising awareness amongst academic, and research staff and students on bullying and

harassment (B&H), Nagoya protocol, preventing harm in research. In particular cross directorate working has developed a robust system to confidentially identify and enable discreet reporting to funders on B&H.

The University utilises its grants management system (Research Application System (RAS)) to act as a prompt and reminder to staff on matters such as Due Diligence and Export Control. Work will continue in earnest to embed the requirements of Trusted Research across all disciplines during 2022-23.

### 3. Allegations of Misconduct in Research

3.1 The Concordat requires institutions to have in place a “transparent, timely, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise”. All allegations of misconduct in research are considered under the University’s [Regulations Governing an Allegation of Misconduct in Research](#), last amended October 2021.

3.2 During 2022-22 the University received two allegations that were within the scope of the Regulations. One allegation was received from outside the University and was made against an individual member of staff, the other came through internal channels and involved a research group. 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 2021-22

<b>Staff / Student</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Nature of allegation</b>	<b>Stage reached</b>	<b>Time to complete Investigation</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Staff and PGR students	MHLS	Lack of ethical review to govern non-ASPA research.	Stage 1	6 weeks	The investigatory panel concluded the matter had occurred because of poor research practices rather than a deliberate breach of integrity. The research group were required to undertake a range of training activities, which have been monitored in terms of completion.
Staff	MHLS	Authorship	Currently at Stage 1	Ongoing at end of reporting period.	

#### 4. External Engagement

- 4.1 The University is a subscriber to UK RIO and have benefited from the various webinars and annual conference hosted by UK RIO during this year.
- 4.2 As a member of the Russell Group the University continues to contribute to and benefit from the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum.
- 4.3 Queen's has engaged in UK-wide and all-island activities relating to Research Culture. In particular, University staff have collaborated with a group of peer institutions through the UK Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) to develop and publish a sector ['toolkit'](#) to facilitate discussions about the role of non-academic staff in the broader research culture. Queen's and Glasgow piloted the workshop, and led on developing the toolkit, which was published by ARMA in June 2022. The University has also jointly led on the delivery of a pilot [All-Island Research Excellence Network](#) to connect Research Managers and Administrators across the island of Ireland. Funded by Intertrade Ireland, the project will culminate with a conference in September 2022 and discussions are ongoing to determine how best to take this forward in future.

Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Committee

August 2022

## **Governance Regulations, Policies and Procedures**

### **Research Governance Regulations and Policies:**

- Regulations for Research Involving Human Participants (updated 2020)
- Policy and Principles on the Ethical Approval of Research (updated 2020)
- Regulations Governing an Allegation of Misconduct in Research (updated 2021)
- Regulations Governing Research Involving Animals (updated 2022)
- Code of Conduct and Integrity in Research (updated, awaiting approval)
- Policy on Fieldwork in Conflict Zones (updated 2020)  
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/Research/Governance-ethics-and-integrity/Policies-procedures-and-guidelines/>
- Export Control Policy (2022)
- Preventing Harm (Safeguarding) in Research and Innovation Activities (2022)

### **Relevant Policies from across the University:**

#### **Intellectual Property Policy**

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

#### **Research Data Management**

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/InformationServices/TheLibrary/CustomerService/PoliciesandRegulations/ResearchDataManagementPolicy/>

#### **Open Access Policy**

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/InformationServices/TheLibrary/CustomerService/PoliciesandRegulations/QUBOpenAccessPolicy/>

- Gifts, Gratuities and Hospitality Policy
  - Registrar of Interests Policy
  - Whistleblowing Policy
  - Anti-Fraud Policy
  - Bribery Act Policy
  - Freedom of Information
  - Data Protection Policy
  - Risk Management Policy
  - Equality and Diversity Policy
  - [Bullying and Harassment Complaints Procedure](#)
  - Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy
- Available on the Registrar's Office webpages: [Policies | About | Queen's University Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](#)



**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.