



2022/23 Annual report on research Integrity

Outcome requested:	The Audit and Risk Committee is asked to consider the update and issues raised on research integrity. The paper also provides an update on the number and status of research misconduct cases over 2022/23.
Executive Summary:	<p>Key developments in research integrity in 2022/23 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the introduction of a procedure for dealing with misconduct claims made via online forums; • cross-disciplinary guidance on authorship issued to researchers; • training sessions in research integrity delivered across the university; • the recruitment of research integrity champions; • the approval of the new <i>Joint Policy for the Investigation of Apparent Research Misconduct</i>. <p>We report 4 investigations into Research Misconduct in 2022/23 three of which have been concluded. There is one investigation in its early stages.</p>
QMUL Strategy: strategic aim reference and sub-strategies [e.g., SA1.1]	Research and Innovation Enabling Plan Research Quality and Income KPIs
Internal/External regulatory/statutory reference points:	Concordat on Research Integrity Various funders grant conditions The National Security Investment Act (2021)
Strategic Risks:	10 Maintain/increase research quality 13 Improve reputation
Equality Impact Assessment:	There are no specific equality and diversity issues that arise.
Subject to prior and onward consideration by:	Prior consideration by: Queen Mary Senior Executive Team
Confidential paper under FOIA/DPA	No, a version of the document will be uploaded to the external QM website in meeting our commitments under the Concordat
Timing:	Annual report to the Committee
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Date:	21 September 2023
Senior Management/External Sponsor	Sharon Ellis, Chief Operations Officer

Developments in Research Integrity at Queen Mary in 2022/2023:

The Research Integrity Committee, which was constituted in 2022, has held four formal meetings during the academic year 2022/23. These involve the Committee being briefed on national policy developments relating to research integrity and being updated about local research misconduct complaints. Its deliberations have resulted in the following initiatives:

1. Faculties have been issued with a procedure for assessing claims made on online forums such as PubPeer. While formal complaints from those with substantiated concerns are encouraged, the procedure ensures that salient information is followed up appropriately by the University.
2. Cross-disciplinary guidance for researchers on the issue of authorship has been published on the University [website](#).
3. Feedback has been provided to the Research Data Management Group on its draft of the revised Research Data Management Policy. This resulted from a paper presented to the Committee which provided a comparison of the research data-storage policies of other institutions.
4. A proposal for mandatory online Research Integrity training for all researchers within the University has been developed. This is modelled on an approach currently used by the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry. The full proposal will be presented to the appropriate decision-making bodies.

In addition, Research Integrity training sessions have been delivered across the University to different cohorts of researchers. These have resulted from approaches made to every department, centre, and faculty. One session was delivered jointly with the Research Ethics team.

A small number of Research Integrity 'champions' have been recruited largely among early-career researchers. Their role, which is informal and voluntary, is to act as a conduit between the Research Integrity Committee and local research communities within the University. They are asked to disseminate information to their colleagues and to provide feedback on their behalf about policies and procedures pertaining to Research Integrity.

In June 2023, the Joint Clinical Research Board approved the new *Joint Policy for the Investigation of Apparent Research Misconduct*. Its main purpose is to establish a process of communication between Queen Mary and Barts Health NHS Trust. This is for determining which of them should investigate complaints of research misconduct involving studies in which they have a joint interest. The approval of this new policy does not affect the investigative procedures used by either organisation. Rather, it integrates them into a single policy framework. The new joint policy will shortly be presented to the University Senate for ratification and subsequently published.

Research misconduct complaints received in 2022/2023:

1. QMRI-04:

The University were contacted by a publisher about an authorship dispute between a staff researcher and their former research assistants. They sought an opinion as to who owns the research data. Upon becoming aware of this exchange, the researcher notified the publisher of their intention to retract the publication.

After some deliberation, the University concluded that it owns the data, and that the researcher is technically within their rights to retract the publication. The publisher was advised accordingly. However, the researcher was formally advised that they should consider the implications of a retraction for themselves and the University.

2. QMRI-05:

The Committee considered a complaint by a staff member about a colleague who had published a journal article about a teaching evaluation. Of particular concern was the representation of the input of other colleagues. After obtaining further information, the Committee took the view that the respondent had presented an analysis of pre-existing data rather than original research in the article. However, it was acknowledged that they had not necessarily observed professional courtesies with regards to acknowledging the work of colleagues. Furthermore, the Committee reflected that staff employed on teaching and scholarship contracts require further guidance on authorship and the use of student data.

Ultimately, the Committee concluded there was insufficient evidence of intentional research misconduct for a formal investigation. The respondent was subsequently advised that they should consider their research practice. Mediation between the complainant and respondent was also suggested, including a discussion of the possibility of amendments or corrections to the published article.

3. QMRI-06:

The University received a complaint from a former collaborator of a staff researcher at Queen Mary. They alleged double publication of the same experiment without due acknowledgement and the unauthorised removal and transfer of genetic materials. Consequently, these claims were subject to a triage process as are other research misconduct complaints. During this, a staff member with relevant academic knowledge reviewed the journal articles in question. They concluded that the experiments described in both were not the same, although some of the language used might lend itself to ambiguity. With regards to the materials, enquiries were made to the institution of the former collaborator. These revealed that the materials had not been accounted for in any paperwork and that the institution did not have formal transfer procedures. Therefore, it was not possible to demonstrate their unauthorised removal. The triage resulted in a decision not to refer to the Research Integrity Committee for consideration of a formal investigation. However, the respondent was encouraged to consider their use of language in future writing projects.

This complaint demonstrated the usefulness of expert advice during the triage process for a research misconduct complaint.

4. QMRI-07:

Further to an initial contact by email, a series of comments posted on the PubPeer website were examined at faculty level in accordance with the new procedure approved by the

Research Integrity Committee. This resulted in a written report to the Research Integrity Committee which has decided to instigate a formal investigation. The investigation is in its early stages.

5. Issues arising from a previously investigated case:

There have been further developments arising from a historical research misconduct investigation which concluded in 2021. The researcher involved was asked to contact corresponding authors and journal editors to ensure there had been no potential misunderstanding about data presentation. Consequently, they have become involved in discussions with one corresponding author about an addendum to a published article. A funder has also asked for further assurances with regards to their compliance with open access policies. The University is in the process of providing this.

The external context:

The [UK Committee on Research Integrity](#) (CORI) formally launched its [Strategic Plan](#) for 2023 to 2025 in March 2023. The Strategic Plan has four pillars titled 'Promote', 'Support', 'Define' and 'Build'. This is supported by an activity plan for 2023 which involves assessing the approaches taken by research institutions to integrity and addressing poor research practice and misconduct. To enable progress, the Strategic Plan will be reviewed annually. The Committee will adopt a modus operandi characterised by listening to and learning from research professionals and the public. Experts and groups will be convened with the aim of ensuring a unified approach to research integrity across the UK. This was reflected in the CORI annual 'state of the nation' report on research integrity. There is a question for research institutions as to how they practically engage with and influence the strategy.

In May 2023, the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee published the report arising from its inquiry into reproducibility and research integrity. One of its findings is there are systemic factors militating against reproducibility. Among these are local research cultures within universities. The report culminated in several recommendations including mandatory research integrity training for researchers and the management of the pressure on researchers to produce positive results. During its discussion of the report, the Queen Mary Research Integrity Committee observed that it provides an opportunity for universities to pre-empt likely developments in the sector.