



2023/24 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 2023/24.
Executive Summary:	<p>Key developments in research integrity in 2023/24 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Research Integrity Committee has issued guidance issued to researchers about dealing appropriately with online commentary about the integrity of their work; • The Strategic Risk Register has been updated to account for risks involving research misconduct and commercial collaborations; • the Queen Mary Research Misconduct Policy has been amended to codify an approach to dealing with anonymous allegations of research misconduct; • A new Early Career Researcher (ECR)/Student member position on the Committee has been created, replacing the previous student member role; • The delivery of research integrity training presentations at induction events for new staff and doctoral students has continued, and extended to schools and departments on request. <p>We received 10 complaints relating to research misconduct two of which led to investigations following initial triaging.</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:	10 September 2024
Senior Management/External Sponsor	Sharon Ellis, Chief Operations Officer

Developments in Research Integrity at Queen Mary in 2023/2024:

The Research Integrity Committee has held three formal meetings during the academic year 2023/24. 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. The Committee has issued guidance issued to researchers about dealing appropriately with online commentary about the integrity of their work. This has been circulated to the three faculties.
2. The Queen Mary Strategic Risk Register has been updated to account for risks involving research misconduct and commercial collaborations. This arose from a briefing to the Committee about a court case involving another university. The other institution was ordered to pay damages to a commercial collaborator after the latter successfully argued that a finding of research misconduct had rendered the venture commercially useless. In addition, the Research Integrity and Assurance Officer is communicating with school and departmental leadership teams to ensure that local risk registers are updated, if appropriate.

Following approval by Senate, the Queen Mary Research Misconduct Policy has been amended to codify an approach to dealing with anonymous allegations of research misconduct. This is intended to ensure an appropriate balance between institutional responsiveness and confidentiality. Anonymous complainants, who provide an email address, will be issued with a summary report at the end of an investigation, rather than a full report. Decisions about reviewing anonymous complaints are made on a case-by-case basis. The institution reserves the right not to engage with anonymous complainants.

A new Early Career Researcher (ECR)/Student member position on the Committee has been created. This replaces the previous Student member role. The new position has been created because of difficulties recruiting a suitable Student member and the increasing expectation of funders that ECRs should be represented on research integrity committees. Advertisements for the role have been circulated.

The delivery of research integrity training presentations at induction events for new staff and doctoral students has continued. These are also extended to schools and departments on request. The University has begun procurement of an institutional subscription to the research integrity and ethics training modules on the Epigeum platform.

Research misconduct complaints and investigations in 2023/2024:

1. QMRI-07

The formal investigation into allegations of unacknowledged reuse of control group data did not result in a finding of research misconduct. However, a series of recommendations were made by the Panel with regards to the research practice of the respondent. The respondent was also required to correct the published record. After being notified of the outcome of the investigation, one funder imposed a temporary sanction and requested further assurances.

2. QMRI-08 and QMRI-09

The University received two separate formal complaints from the same individual within short succession. The first related to a journal article arising from the trial of a medicinal device. It was suggested by the complainant that there might have been falsification. However, no substantiation was offered. The ethics approval for the study was also queried. It transpired

that the study had ethical approval from its legal sponsors overseas. A second complaint was comprised entirely of links to comments posted on PubPeer, which are already material to an investigation by the University. This did not amount to an actionable complaint. A letter of response was sent to the complainant addressing both complaints.

3. QMRI-10

Concerns were raised in relation to a previous misconduct case. These pertained largely to figures presented in a journal article. The complainant contended there were indications of fabrication and uncorrected errors. They also requested some clarifications. It subsequently transpired that very similar concerns had been raised during the previous investigation about the same paper. The complainant was advised of this by letter. However, the research team were asked to ensure any errors are corrected and to provide the clarifications requested.

4. QMRI-11

The Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office reviewed a complaint by a former PhD student arising from the breakdown of their relationship with their academic supervisors. The broader complaint included an allegation of falsification in a published journal article. This was referred to the Research Integrity and Assurance Officer. During the triage of the complaint, academic advice was obtained from an expert with relevant disciplinary knowledge, who was not party to the complaint. They found errors in some of the statistical equations presented. However, they took the view that these are not sufficient to have altered the fundamental conclusions of the paper. The complainant was advised to this effect by letter. Nevertheless, the researchers were asked to review their work and issue erratum to the journal if necessary.

5. QMRI-12

An anonymous complainant made allegations of citation manipulation by a researcher. However, they did not provide substantiation beyond including links to posts on PubPeer. They were subsequently advised that while the University has a procedure for following up on online claims, they had not provided sufficient evidence for a formal investigation. The relevant faculty, having been issued with the guidelines on assessing online claims, took the view that the PubPeer posts did not amount to actionable evidence of citation manipulation. Nevertheless, the number of publications produced by the researcher is to be raised with them by the Faculty.

6. QMRI-13

A formal investigation into allegations of image manipulation and duplication has been conducted by a Named Investigator. They have completed their report and will present their findings to the Panel shortly.

7. QMRI-14

A staff member made allegations of plagiarism, misrepresentation, and incitement to research misconduct against a former doctoral supervisee and their new supervisor. This pertained to the preprint of an unpublished journal article, arising from their collaboration. Of relevance is an investigation previously conducted by their school following a complaint made by the former PhD student. The investigation concluded that the staff member had diminished the intellectual property of their student in relation to the work conducted for the paper. Given the context, it was concluded that the staff member was effectively presenting an authorship dispute rather than a research misconduct case. To this end, it was decided that the Research

Integrity Officer would liaise with the Appeals, Conduct and Complaints team to ensure clarity about intellectual property and acknowledgements before the paper is published.

8. QMRI-15

A former staff member presented an authorship dispute as a research misconduct allegation. While they had been acknowledged as a contributor to the paper in question, they were of the view they should be named as an author. To resolve the issue, the University obtained external expert advice, providing the evidence submitted. The expert advisor concluded that the finished article presented an analysis that extended far beyond the contribution made by the complainant. Therefore, they determined, with reference to the authorship guidance issued by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), that the recognised criteria of authorship had not been fulfilled. The complainant was advised accordingly.

9.QMRI-16

The University has been notified of an allegation of citation manipulation. The Research Integrity Committee will be meeting imminently to decide whether a formal investigation is required.

The external context:

In May 2024, the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) published its [report](#) on the approaches taken to dealing with research misconduct. There appears to be a broad consensus about the difficulties involved in conducting research misconduct investigations. The report has recommended a national infrastructure and training for investigators.

The World Conference on Research Integrity, of which Queen Mary was a sponsor, was held in Athens, Greece in June 2024. There were three broad themes that emerged consistently: public trust in research, the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on research integrity, and training for researchers. A broad range of research institutions from across the globe were represented at the conference. Common experiences were very observable, particularly with regards to preparedness for AI and research integrity training.

The national Committee on Research Integrity (CORI) has developed both qualitative and quantitative indicators of research integrity with input from various stakeholders. These indicators, detailed in a Committee report, are organized into categories including leadership, strategy, procedures, practices, and skills. Research institutions are responsible for deciding which of these indicators, if any, they should implement. A briefing on these indicators will be given to the Queen Mary Research Integrity Committee in due course.