

Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2020

The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) is one of 17 independent member institutions of the federal University of London and specialises in research and postgraduate education related to cancer.

We are fully committed to upholding the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) (Universities UK, 2019). The ICR's aim is to achieve direct improvement of patient care and health outcomes through earlier diagnosis, more targeted and effective treatments, the reduction in side effects and improved quality of life. Good research practice and maintaining the highest standards of research integrity and research ethics are vital if we are to be successful.

This annual statement is approved by the ICR Executive Board, which has overall responsibility for research conduct at the ICR.

Supporting and strengthening research integrity

a. Governance

The ICR [Guidelines on Good Research Practice](#) were revised in February 2020 to take into account new legal and regulatory requirements and to ensure the information provided remains accurate and up-to-date. The Guidelines have been developed to emphasise the importance of integrity and rigour in all research carried out at, and in partnership with, the ICR, and to help ensure that all researchers are aware of their obligations with respect to proper scientific conduct. The document signposts external references and ICR policies and procedures, where applicable.

b. Development of a new action plan to support research integrity

Following the release of the updated Concordat to Support Research Integrity in October 2019, the ICR performed a gap analysis to identify any areas for improvement to ensure full compliance and the results were discussed by the Research Leadership Board, which has representation from all ICR Scientific Divisions. Proposed actions were subsequently debated by a newly established Research Integrity Steering Group. This work culminated in the development of an action plan to strengthen ICR's research integrity culture, which was approved by the Executive Board in November 2020. This plan consists of a new research integrity training mandatory for all researchers (in addition to the current regular interactive 'Research Integrity' course mandatory for research students only), and to be delivered annually by Team Leaders within their individual teams so as to create a culture of research integrity underpinning all work performed at the ICR. This approach will ensure accountability, at all levels, to collectively nurture a research environment in which all are empowered and enabled to place research integrity at the core of their work. The minimum yearly occurrence

will ensure that new team members are aware of the expectations and practices and will serve as refresher training for others. The Executive Board supported the development of an internal 'one-stop shop' online information resource signposting policies, guidance, training opportunities and external resources available under appropriate research integrity themes. The Executive Board has agreed to appoint Research Integrity Champions to oversee the implementation of the action plan, which will start in 2021.

c. Review of policies and procedures

The ICR has a number of policies and procedures for supporting and promoting research integrity. All ICR policies and procedures undergo periodic review. In addition to the ones cited under other sections, the following relevant ICR policies and procedures were updated in 2020: the Security of Sensitive Information Policy; the Data Protection Checklist and Impact Assessment Policy; the Policies and Practices on Intellectual Property; the Costing and Pricing Policy; the Fraud Response Plan; the Standing Financial Instructions; the Health, Safety, Environmental & Quality (HSEQ) Audit Guidance; the Academic Consultancy Policy; the Freedom of Speech Policy; the Recruitment and Selection Policy.

d. Training on research integrity

The ICR provides a regular face-to-face interactive training course: '*Research Integrity*'. Open to all staff and students, the session is promoted widely and is mandatory for research students. The ICR operate a rolling 'Start-Stop-Continue' system for its training provision, where tweaks or new suggestions during each session are recorded and acted upon. We also collect course feedback in a systematic manner and review it periodically to adapt courses. In February 2020, a process was implemented to keep track of the small continuous improvements implemented and to note how trainers are kept up-to-date. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the research integrity training was adapted to be run online and two out of the three 2020 research integrity courses were run virtually. The online courses had a higher attendance than previous face-to-face training with increased participation by postdoctoral training fellows and scientific officers.

Training available to all staff and students also includes sessions in areas relevant to Research Integrity such as: good research practice; research culture; academic writing, publication, authorship and Open Access; intellectual property; statistics and experimental design and analysis; research ethics and governance; data management; leadership and supervision; and training and mentorship.

Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.

a. Research involving human subjects, samples or data

The ICR and its hospital partner, The Royal Marsden (RM), are committed to ensuring that all clinical research conducted is of the highest scientific and ethical standards, and satisfies all regulatory requirements. In 2020, the ICR appointed a Quality Control Officer with the responsibility to provide proactive support and specialist advice to ensure quality control procedures are in place in research laboratories to meet new Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and other governance and regulatory requirements, as appropriate. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the ICR established an interim Clinical Research Group to provide advice on potential clinical research issues arising from the unprecedented situation. The key actions taken include: a survey of ICR-sponsored studies in relation to clinical trial patient recruitment and management and sample management during the pandemic; a risk assessment of each trial managed by the ICR Trials Units; a survey of ICR laboratories to understand any critical clinical trial patient sample analysis which was required to be completed on site and a process for review and approval of this work; a process for the identification and preservation of irreplaceable samples in case of disruption to the liquid nitrogen supply; and assessment of the capacity and prioritisation for the trial restart activity following the NIHR Framework for restarting research. The ICR also updated its NHS Spine Access Policy.

The storage, use and disposal of human tissue for research are regulated under the Human Tissue Act (HTA) 2004. The ICR and the Royal Marsden have a joint policy for the removal, storage, use and disposal of human tissue for research, which was updated in 2020. The ICR and the RM use FreezerPro as the centralised database for sample and tissue information management. In 2020, the ICR reviewed the security of FreezerPro and approved a recommendation to revise the allowed patient identifiers. This has helped to minimise the risk associated with sample mislabelling and to ensure the integrity of the management process for samples. In collaboration with the RM, the ICR have been working on the Generic Biobank Data Visualisation Project, the aim of which is to create a data warehouse which will eventually allow ICR and RM users to aggregate and visualise information relating to biobank samples. The data for the warehouse is provided by FreezerPro and this highlights a strength of having a centralised samples management system. In this challenging year during which many staff have had to work from home, the FreezerPro team have supported users by producing a number of online video tutorials and by setting up a virtual user group chatroom on Slack.

In September 2020, the ICR hosted an Information Governance Awareness month through webinars, posts and articles to remind staff and students of their responsibilities when working with ICR data and information. The topics covered include: a refresher on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements; a session on what information security incidents are and what to do if they occur; how to safely and legally share data; and advice for working from home. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the ICR also issued specific guidance for taking data offsite. The ICR reviewed and updated the GDPR notices in the patient information sheet, and

developed an accountability and assurance mechanism that will be implemented in 2021 to assist with maintaining our GDPR compliance.

b. Research involving animals

The ICR adheres to the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 which regulates any experimental or other scientific procedure on protected animals that may cause pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm. In 2020, our Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) produced a comprehensive annual report to the Executive Board and the Board of Trustees, summarising the work of the Committee performed over 2019-20. The AWERB created, tested and adopted a pro-forma document to assist in AWERB's thorough and consistent consideration of new and amended Project Licences. In addition, a parallel session on "The Biological Services Unit and animal research at the ICR" was chaired by the Head of the Biological Services Unit at the annual ICR conference, which was held virtually in June 2020. The non-scientist employee member of the ICR AWERB gave a presentation about AWERB and its activities entitled "Animal welfare - reviewing the ethics of research projects", with a high attendance.

Dealing with research misconduct

Any individual wishing to initiate a complaint about the integrity of research carried out at the ICR can do so by writing to the Named Person under the ICR's [Misconduct in Research](#) policy.

There were no formal investigations of research misconduct in 2020.

In 2020, the ICR undertook a review of its Misconduct in Research policy. The policy, based on the UK Research Integrity Office's (UKRIO) "Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research", describes the appropriate principles and mechanisms to ensure that investigations are transparent, robust and fair, carried out in a timely manner, and protected by appropriate confidentiality. Following the review the policy has been updated to 1) clarify that the scope of the procedure includes both staff and students; 2) make a better distinction between the screening stage and the formal investigation stage 3) formalise the inclusion of a lessons-learnt exercise following any formal investigations.

UKRIO has announced a review of its 2008 Procedure and, once the outcome is available, the ICR policy will be reviewed again to ensure our processes reflect sector best practice.

Supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice, and support for researcher development

During the calendar year 2020, the ICR undertook the following activities and actions to continue to support and strengthen a positive research culture:

1. Updated policies related to good data management and information security: the Retention Policy that outlines responsibilities for retaining information and ensuring that retention is applied correctly, and the Acceptable Use Policy to help guide staff understanding around how we each play a part in protecting ICR data and information.
2. Promoted the requirements of the Wellcome Trust's new Open Access policy.
3. Revised procedures so the author of an article that is not Open Access compliant is automatically reminded of the ICR Open Access policy requirements.
4. Launched an online form to make it easier for researchers to alert the ICR to potential patentable inventions, an important step in facilitating the translation of ICR discoveries into patient benefit.
5. Ensured a 100% compliance across all funders in the 2020 Researchfish® impact exercise. This annual return on the outputs created by ICR researchers enables funders to demonstrate and communicate to supporters and members of the public the results and impact of the grants they make.
6. Offered refresher Active Bystander training following the reopening of ICR sites at the end of the first lockdown.
7. Launched our action plan for race equality "[Beyond the statements](#)".

External engagement

The ICR recognises the importance of collaborating and networking with regional, national and international colleagues, institutions and organisations working on research integrity. In 2020, the ICR joined the London Research Integrity Consortium (an initiative from King's College London and City University) and participated in its first virtual meeting with the aim of sharing best practice ideas, discussing issues relating to research integrity, and considering the implementation and related challenges of the new Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

The ICR has continued its subscription to the UKRIO. The ICR particularly welcomed the introduction in May 2020 of UKRIO research integrity online webinars that provide the platform to learn and discuss topics and issues related to research integrity. The ICR was represented at the first virtual roundtable organised by UKRIO, which provided an opportunity for attendees to discuss research integrity-related issues and share experiences with a focus on the impact of the pandemic.

One of the ICR research integrity trainers enrolled in the VIRT2UE Train the Trainer programme on Research Integrity. This course, developed and taught by [The Embassy of Good Science](#), focuses on the knowledge and skills to conduct research integrity training to foster reflection on scientific virtues and to promote understanding of the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.