

Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2023

Section 1: Key contact information

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| 1A. Name of organisation | The Institute of Cancer Research |
| 1B. Type of organisation: | Higher Education Institution |
| 1C. Date statement approved by the Executive Board (DD/MM/YYYY) | 12/03/2024 |
| Date statement approved by the Board of Trustees (DD/MM/YYYY) | 27/03/2024 |
| 1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable) | https://www.icr.ac.uk/about-us/strategy-2022-27/responsibility/good-research-practice |
| 1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity | Name: Prof. Clare Isacke |
| | Email address: Clare.Isacke@icr.ac.uk |
| 1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity | Name: Dr. Yuen-Li Chung |
| | Email address: Yuen-Li.Chung@icr.ac.uk |

Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken

2A. Description of current systems and culture

Culture and leadership

The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) is committed to providing an environment that supports the highest standards of research integrity, ensuring its researchers have ownership of the research process, adhere to the highest standards of rigor and integrity, and work according to applicable ethical legal and professional standards and frameworks. The ICR is a signatory to the Universities UK (UUK) Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

The ICR Lead for Research Integrity is also the Named Person for Investigations of Research Misconduct Policy. To strengthen our culture of Research Integrity, the ICR has additionally appointed four research leaders as Research Integrity Champions who act as local champions for research integrity and good research practice. The Champions and Named person provide oversight for our Research Integrity action plans.

Overall responsibility for good research conduct rests with the most senior ICR committee, the Executive Board, chaired by the CEO. Heads of Division and Group Leaders are responsible for mentoring research staff within their Divisions and Groups, respectively, and for ensuring that all staff and students (a) understand all the facets of research integrity, (b) its importance for their research and the wider research community, and (c) adhere to good practice guidelines and the relevant regulations.

Training and development

We have implemented a hybrid training model. All new researchers attend a centrally organised Research Integrity workshop within their probation period and this training is reinforced by Group Leaders formally discussing Research Integrity within their groups at least once a year. To support the local training delivery, Group Leaders are provided with a presentation, detailing the framework of the UUK Concordat and the importance of good research conduct (prepared by the Research Integrity Champions), to use as a starting point for their discussions.

In addition to the Research Integrity Training, the ICR provides courses that cover Good Laboratory Practice, Good Clinical Practice, and accessing library resources. Further, the ICR provides many technical courses to help researchers acquire new scientific skills and science communication skills and courses such as the 'Adobe Photoshop: processing figures with integrity' and 'Statistics for Researchers' which trains researchers on performing statistical

analysis with integrity. The ICR also offers support in career guidance and development of researchers through one-to-one support, mock interviews, career counselling and organizing career development and professional development bootcamps.

Policies and systems

The ICR's Good Research Practice Guidelines emphasise the importance of integrity and rigour in all research carried out at, and in partnership with, the ICR, and are designed to ensure that all researchers are aware of their obligations with respect to proper scientific conduct. The Guidelines signpost external references and ICR policies and procedures, to support and strengthen research integrity, including policies for information security and governance; research governance and accountability; research involving human subjects, samples, or data; research involving animals; health and safety; dissemination and publication of results; and practices on intellectual property management. These policies are reviewed and updated on a regular cycle and available on the ICR's intranet site. The Good Research Practice Guidelines is included in the induction of all new starters.

Monitoring and Reporting

The ICR is committed to honesty and integrity in the way its research is carried out, to openness and co-operation, and to accountability to funding bodies and the public. The ICR monitors and ensures that all research involving human subjects, samples or data is ethical and meets legal and regulatory requirements. We comply with the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research for all research involving human participants. The Committee for Clinical Research (CCR), a sub-committee of the Joint Clinical Research Governance Board of the Royal Marsden NHS Trust (RM) and the ICR, is responsible for reviewing and approving all research involving human subjects.

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. The ICR Animal Welfare and Ethics Review Body (AWERB) reviews all proposed research involving animals and advises on the best practice and ethics for using animals. As in previous years, the AWERB produced a comprehensive annual report for the ICR Executive Board and the Board of Trustees, summarising the work of the Committee.

The Sustainability, Health and Safety team (formerly Health, Safety, Environment and Quality team) ensures that all staff and students undertake mandatory HS&E induction training and comply with the relevant HS&E Policies and Procedures. Relevant risk assessments are carried out for work with genetically modified organisms, unsealed radioisotopes, hazardous chemicals, clinical specimens, and biological agents. The team also advises and drives the Sustainable Discoveries Action Plan to ensure the ICR is playing a part in tackling the global climate crisis.

The ICR has a systematic procedure for monitoring and investigating any formal allegations of misconduct in research from both within and outside the Institute (See Section 3 for details). The ICR also has a Code of Practice for Plagiarism and Examination Offences which applies to all students registered on any of the ICR's taught courses and research degree programmes.

ICR researchers co-operate with both internal and external monitoring and audit visits. The joint RM/ICR GCP and Regulatory Compliance Team and the ICR Clinical Trials and Statistics Unit (CTSU) are responsible for providing monitoring and audit for clinical research projects at the ICR. In addition, there is an audit programme for human tissue management. An annual audit program is agreed by the Joint Clinical Research Governance Board and the reports and subsequent action plans are reviewed by the Board.

Communications and engagement

The intranet contains a repository of information, policies, tools and internal and external training links on research integrity-related topics including data management; experimental design, reproducibility and rigour; and image manipulation. It has been widely promoted as a resource for all research staff to deepen their understanding of research integrity and why it is important.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

In 2023, the ICR continued its subscription to the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and participated in its annual conference and webinar series. Relevant webinars and other events were promoted to ICR research staff and students.

Activities and actions undertaken during calendar year 2023 to support and strengthen a positive research environment include the following:

Research Integrity Training

- Group Leader led Research Integrity Training has been implemented. As detailed above, a presentation detailing the framework of the UUK Concordat, and the importance of good research conduct was prepared by the ICR Research Integrity Champions and circulated to all Group Leaders to use as a starting material for the 2023 group Research Integrity discussions.
- As a result of making the Research Integrity Training mandatory to all new scientific staff, the number of centrally organised training sessions increased from 3 to 11 and are now training about 220 researchers a year. The increase in frequency means more than 20 Group Leaders are participating in the training session as panel members leading to increased engagement amongst this group.

- Two new Research Integrity Seminars were delivered. The first seminar entitled: 'Building on strong foundations: reproducibility and robustness in biomedical research' highlighted the importance of ensuring not only the reproducibility for research findings but also the robustness of research results and the conclusions drawn from them. Examples of experimental areas in which problems frequently arise in biomedical research were discussed and the solutions to these problems were then explored. The second seminar entitled: 'Governance in research: from bench to clinical trials' discussed aspects of clinical tissue governance and the challenges and lessons learnt in the labs, as well as the importance of appropriate sharing of clinical data/samples and key considerations when sharing clinical data/samples for use in future research. The seminars were well attended (by 90 and 60 people, respectively) and recorded to add to the resources on the ICR intranet.
- The ICR continued the promotion of intranet-based research integrity resource which covers a wide range of topics and the ICR's first point of contact for research integrity matters attended the annual UKRIO conference and the various webinars organised by UKRIO.

Good Research Practice

- A review of the Good Research Practice Guidelines was completed in February 2023. The updates include signposting the policy on recognition of core facilities staff contributions to publications and presentations through authorship or acknowledgement as appropriate.
- The ICR reviewed and revised the Open Access Policy. Under the revised policy, from September 2023 onwards, ICR authors or co-authors must use the free 'green' open access route whenever possible to ensure all research articles and conference proceedings that are authored or co-authored by ICR staff, students, honorary faculty or associate honorary faculty continue to be published on an open access basis, so that they can be viewed free of charge by anyone in the world.

Clinical Research Governance

- The ICR and RM implemented a review of policies and procedures associated with tissue and data access for research purposes.
- An HTA inspection on ICR's compliance to HTA licence standards took place on 20th January 2023. Only two minor shortfalls were identified, and the required actions have been completed.

- During the ICR HTA inspection, the HTA inspector complimented the implementation of FreezerPro as an institution-wide system for tracking and managing clinical samples and the key role it plays in supporting the compliance of HTA standards. The computer system validation documents for FreezerPro were approved, which describe the testing process on FreezerPro to ensure it continues to meet statutory requirements. The FreezerPro data review programme has been streamlined to support the audit process.
- To address the inspection finding, the ICR has developed and implemented a standardised risk assessment for ICR HTA license standards and streamlined the process for ICR teams to report HTA-related incidents. We have also implemented a spot check programme and a consistent signage for vessels that store human materials.
- Development of the Biobank Data Visualisation tool was completed in 2023, which enables researchers to search for available human tissue samples in the biobank.
- The NHS Spine Policy was updated, with minor changes made, and approved by the Information Governance Committee in February 2023.

Animal Research Governance

- The ICR strictly adheres to the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 Animal Research and is committed to provide continuous training on carrying out regulated procedures on protected animals and to the highest standards of animal welfare in all research studies. A major refurbishment in the Chelsea Biological Services Unit has been completed in 2023.
- The ICR Biological Services Unit continues to review and update a range of guidance documents in 2023 which include the Research Using Animals Policy and various SOPs. The Terms of Reference for AWERB were also revised.
- ICR continues to support the principles of the 3Rs – replacement, refinement and reduction of use of animals for research – and are working to develop alternative experimental techniques. To further support and raise awareness of these principles, the ICR promoted presentations and workshops from the NC3R to ICR researchers and some ICR Biological Services Unit staff members and AWERB members also attended the NC3R's 3Rs Champion Workshop in May 2023.
- The ICR continues to uphold the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research to provide accurate information about how animals are used in our research and continue to demonstrate best practice in animal research and embed openness within the organisation. The ICR promoted the training courses organised by the UAR (Understanding Animal Research) to researchers.

Information Security and Governance

- in September 2023, the ICR continued its practise of holding an annual Information Governance month to promote and maintain awareness of the standards and responsibilities that exist around data and information. Topics covered include phishing awareness; Freedom of Information; working safely online and onsite; and guidance for AI.
- During 2023, the ICR reviewed and updated the following policies and procedures: Freedom of Information Policy; ICR Publication Scheme Guide to Information; Information Security Vulnerability Management Policy; Information Asset Management Policy; Retention Policy; Publicly Accessible Media Policy; Password Policy.

Sustainability, Health, Safety and Wellbeing

- Sustainability is growing in importance both globally and at the ICR and this has been recognised by appointing two dedicated Sustainability Advisors and restructuring the Health, Safety, Environment and Quality team to form the Sustainability, Health and Safety team. This demonstrates the ICR's commitment to tackling the global climate crisis with a dedicated team of professionals to advise and drive the Sustainable Discoveries Action Plan, as well as continuing to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff and students.
- As a target in the ICR's Sustainable Discoveries Action Plan, 110 research scientists from six labs at the ICR have attained [My Green Lab certification](#) in 2023 in recognition of the work they have done to reduce the environmental impact of their work and become more sustainable. Five of the labs achieved certification at the highest level (Green) and one achieved Platinum level certification, which is the next best level.
- For the second year in a row, the ICR has been recognised as a leader in lab sustainability with an honourable mention in the [Freezer Challenge 2023](#). The Freezer Challenge is an annual competition run by My Green Lab and the International Institute for Sustainable Laboratories to promote and encourage best practice in cold storage management and greater energy efficiency in the lab.
- To ensure the continued wellbeing of all its staff and students, in 2023 ICR launched an online reporting and supporting tool which effectively manages both named and anonymous reporting of concerns about inappropriate behaviour at workplace.
- The ICR has organised several events during the 2023 Mental Health Awareness Week to boost staff wellbeing and remind staff of the mental health and wellbeing support that is available all year round at the ICR.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments.

- With two Research Integrity Seminars successfully delivered in 2023, the third Research Integrity Seminar is being planned for 2024.
- The ICR plans to undertake a review of the Misconduct in Research policy in 2024 (see below).
- In 2024, the ICR plans to promote and raise awareness of the ICR's acknowledgement and authorship guidelines, and therefore enable consistent and fair recognition of technical contributions, which is an action from our Technician Commitment action plan. This will be achieved by (i) including a relevant case study in the mandatory training course; (ii) additional best practice guidance and relevant links in the Research Integrity Presentation provided to Group Leaders; (iii) adding guidelines on acknowledgement in Symplectic Elements (the research publication management system that we use to collect the career-long publication record for all our scientists).
- Data accuracy and completeness in Freezerpro has been the focus in the 2023 FreezerPro data review programme. A new self-auditing tool is currently being developed to support research groups in checking the accuracy of their data.
- In 2024, the ICR will continue its participation in the UKRIO Annual Conference 2024 and training events organized by UKRIO.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of 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 or Nominate Alternate under the [ICR's Misconduct in Research policy](#) which is available on the [ICR's website](#). The policy was written in line with UKRIO's "Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research" and describes the principles and mechanisms to ensure that investigations are transparent, robust and fair, carried out in a transparent and timely manner, and protected by appropriate confidentiality. The policy was last updated in October 2020, and will be reviewed in 2024 based on UKRIO's new edition of its Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research.

3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken

| Type of allegation | Number of allegations | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------|--|--|
| | Number of allegations reported to the organisation | Number of formal investigations | Number upheld in part after formal investigation | Number upheld in full after formal investigation |
| Fabrication | | | | |
| Falsification | | | | |
| Plagiarism | | | | |
| Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Misrepresentation (e.g., data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history) | | | | |
| Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct | | | | |
| Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation) | | | | |
| <i>Other*</i> | | | | |
| Total: | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |