

Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2021

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.

The ICR is committed to upholding the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (Universities UK, 2019), and to providing an environment and training that ensures our research is conducted to the highest quality standards, where its researchers have ownership of the research process and are aware of what is expected of them in the way they carry out their research.

This statement covers the calendar year 2021 and sets out the steps that the ICR has taken to sustain and further enhance research integrity and research culture, and reports on any research misconduct allegations arising. The statement was approved by the ICR Executive Board, which has overall responsibility for research conduct at the ICR, on 15 March 2022 and ICR Board of Trustees on 31 March 2022.

This statement, along with previous Annual Statements on Research Integrity and contact details for requests for further information, can be found on the ICR website at <https://www.icr.ac.uk/about-us/our-mission/responsibility/good-research-practice>.

1. Supporting and strengthening research integrity

a. Training

In 2020, the ICR undertook a review of its compliance with the UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2019) to ensure all commitments were being met and to identify areas for enhancement. As a result, and also in response to a Wellcome Trust audit that recommended expanding training provision for postdocs and other researchers on good research practice, an action plan was agreed by the ICR Executive Board to support and strengthen research integrity at the ICR. This included a new initiative to support research team leaders to deliver training in research integrity and good research practice to their teams at least annually.

The research team leader training model has now been developed and was launched across ICR in November 2021. Detailed guidance and resources have been developed by ICR's Research Integrity Champions (see 1b) for team leaders to use in planning and delivering their training sessions. The team-based format aims to create a forum for discussion and a culture of openness around research integrity. Discussion of training delivery will be a mandatory element of team leader annual appraisals, and a survey will be carried out to capture feedback from team leaders about the effectiveness of this training model.

In addition to the new team-based training, ICR continues to provide a regular, interactive Research Integrity course which is mandatory for PhD students and open to other students and staff. The course continued to run virtually during 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which ensured no disruption to provision, and 96% of all PhD students required to attend the course have done so.

b. Culture and leadership

As part of ICR's action plan to strengthen our culture of research integrity, the ICR Executive Board appointed four team leaders as Research Integrity Champions who took up their roles

in 2021. Representing different Research Divisions, the group act as local champions for research integrity and good research practice matters. The group reports to ICR Executive Board and has responsibility for overseeing implementation of the action plan. In 2021 the group were central to developing the team leader-led training model, and are expected to contribute to its evaluation in 2022.

An intranet-based research integrity resource was also created (also with input from the Research Integrity Champions) and launched alongside the team leader-led training in November 2021. This resource 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. As well as supporting team leaders to develop and plan their training, it has been widely promoted as a resource for all research staff to deepen their understanding of research integrity and why it is important. Future action will ensure that awareness of the importance of research integrity is maintained and promoted, in particular to new starters.

We continue to use opportunities for internal and external engagement to raise knowledge and awareness of research integrity matters both for research and professional support staff. In 2021 the ICR has:

- 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.
- Continued to participate in the London Research Integrity Consortium (an initiative from King's College London and City University). The group has shared experience and best practice in issues relating to research integrity and implementation of the Concordat.
- Promoted awareness of research integrity and the links between good research practice and elements of wide research culture such as researcher development at the 2021 ICR Conference, where information was provided on ICR's implementation of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and the Concordat for Researcher Development.

c. Infrastructure

In 2021 the ICR commenced a multi-year project to enhance research data management practices and ensure that all ICR research data adheres to FAIR Principles of Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse. To date this has included major investment to upgrade research data storage infrastructure and the development of a standardised minimum metadata set for all stored data. Future work will provide greater automation for data management tasks and integrate data management planning tools into the research data lifecycle, supporting researchers to use best practice in managing their data.

The ICR aims to support its researchers to transition to the use of electronic laboratory notebooks (or other appropriate electronic method of recording research progress and data), with the aim of eventually replacing paper records. Preparatory work and due diligence has been undertaken in 2021 to identify suitable software suppliers and develop a model for their use, and the roll-out to researchers planned for 2022.

2. Activities to support and strengthen a positive research culture

The ICR recognises the fundamental importance of a positive research culture in supporting staff and students to undertake research with integrity. Activities and actions undertaken during calendar year 2021 to support and strengthen a positive research culture include the following:

- A three-year Culture and Engagement Strategy was launched that addresses the ways that people work with and engage with each other, and the organisational culture

underlying these interactions. The strategy has five main themes that will be the focus of future work to enhance and build ICR's organisational culture.

- Recognition is one of the themes of the Strategy, and was a focus in 2021 of work undertaken to develop a programme of initiatives to recognise the efforts and achievements of staff and students, which is expected to begin implementation next year. Related to this, the ICR Scientific Officers' Association recognised the pivotal and outstanding work done by Scientific Officers at the ICR through the giving of "Community" and "Science" awards to two members of the Scientific Officer community.
- The ICR became a signatory to the UUK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers in 2020. During 2021 a working group has driven work to define how the Concordat should be implemented at the ICR to best support its researchers, including defining the requirement for 10 days' professional training and ensuring that these are understood both by researchers and also by their supervisors and managers.
- 2021 was the first full year of ICR's programme to address race inequality, Beyond the Statements. An action plan was developed that was informed by an institution-wide Race Equality Survey conducted in November 2020. Major achievements in 2021 include the launch of ICR's Race Equality Career Accelerator Programme for Black, Asian and other minority ethnic staff, the appointment of four champions for ethnic diversity, and the implementation of a campaign of awareness including antiracism workshops for senior leadership and a webinar series about microaggressions and talking about race.
- As a result of analysis of 2020 payroll data, the ICR reviewed its progress in addressing the gender pay gap and identified seven key areas that would be the focus of future action, to be taken forward by the ICR Athena Swan Steering Group. Full information on ICR's work to create an inclusive culture where all can thrive can be found in our [annual equality report](#).
- A new training module was introduced on Sustainability. This provides an overview of key global sustainability challenges, outlines the ICR's approach to sustainability and provides information about how staff and students can contribute to improving impacts whilst undertaking their research.
- Work commenced on refreshing ICR's five year research strategy, which will be launched in 2022. As part of the strategy development, a discussion on research culture will be held at the annual retreat for all team leaders.

3. 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 2021, a tiered quality system for tertiary and exploratory endpoints, for Good Clinical Practice (GCP) in labs analysing samples from Clinical Trial of an Investigational Medicinal Product, was developed and approved by the Joint Clinical Research Governance Board. This tiered quality system was developed to meet the MHRA requirement that all biomarkers used in clinical trials must be assessed according to GCP laboratory standards. It aims to: strike a balance between the need for robust, comprehensive GCP standards for later-stage clinical research and the flexibility to support early discovery-driven research; to prevent this new requirement from constricting the scope to carry out vital early-stage clinical research; and to achieve appropriate interpretation of GCP for these types of endpoints. Workshops are planned to disseminate and implement the tiered quality system for tertiary and exploratory endpoints in relevant teams.

The ICR and the RM use FreezerPro as a centralised database for sample and tissue information management. The ICR recommended to the external supplier enhancements to the product that resulted in decreased FreezerPro download times and more user-friendly

search functionality. The ICR runs a programme of Human Tissue Authority desk audit simulations, which aims primarily to inform and raise awareness of regulatory requirements, and ensure that samples and data are stored (and can be retrieved) to the highest standards. Our findings in the 2021 simulation indicated that this process is having a positive impact in improving practice and identify areas for further support or guidance.

Following a successful launch in 2020, ICR continued its programme of annual Information Governance months, holding the latest in September 2021 to uphold a culture of awareness of the standards and responsibilities that exist around data and information. Topics covered included Information Governance Policy requirements; Records Management and Retention and a session on how to safely and legally share data. The following relevant ICR policies and procedures were updated in 2021: the Data Protection Policy; the Cloud Data Sharing Policy; the Data Subjects Rights Policy; the Sharing Personal Data under Data Protection Law Policy. In addition the Clear Desk and Screen Policy was introduced as a new policy for the ICR.

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. The organisation adopts a welfare first approach and in 2021, the ICR Biological Services Unit published a range of guidance documents for animal licence holders outlining how the highest standards of animal welfare are supported. These include factsheets on “Fostering a culture of care”, “Licence holder responsibilities”, and “Cage stocking densities”. The Terms of Reference of the ICR’s Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) were updated to ensure continuity of senior strategic and scientific input for both the ICR Chelsea and the Sutton site. As in previous years, the AWERB produced a comprehensive annual report to the ICR Executive Board and the Board of Trustees, summarising the work of the Committee undertaken during 2020-21.

4. 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 or Nominate Alternate under the ICR’s [Misconduct in Research](#) policy.

The policy was written in line with UKRIO’s “Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research” and described 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. As described in the 2020 annual statement, a review of ICR’s Misconduct in Research Policy was undertaken and several updates were made to ensure it reflected latest best practice and requirements. We expect to undertake a full review of the Policy once the outcome of UKRIO’s review of its 2008 Procedure is available.

There were no formal investigations of research misconduct in 2021.

The named person was informed of a potential case of plagiarism however an informal review revealed that an ICR researcher’s identity had been used without their permission. As no ICR individuals were involved in this case it was out of scope of the ICR’s Misconduct in Research policy. Nevertheless, the ICR arranged for the journal article in question to be removed from BioRxiv.

During the year we also responded to queries from other organisations carrying out research misconduct investigations.