

## **Summary report on research integrity (2018-19)**

### **1. Background**

As part of QMUL's commitment to upholding the highest standards of research integrity, we have adopted the five commitments of the 2012 UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The Concordat recommends that institutions present a short annual statement to their governing body that:

- summarises actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues;
- provides assurance that the processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair;
- provides a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken.

The Concordat recommends that annual statements on Research Integrity are made publicly available to improve accountability and this summary statement will be published in the Research Integrity section of the Queen Mary website.

### **2. Summary of research misconduct investigations (2018-19)**

#### **Cases of potential research misconduct reported to the end of July 2019: 5.**

The University was made aware in October 2018 of a request from an overseas researcher for ethical approval references and informed consent documentation that they believed was granted when they worked at QMUL. In considering the request, it was discovered that three blood samples and patient identifiable data had been recorded in laboratory books, breaching regulations and policy. The approvals being sought for purposes of publication were not granted and that was communicated to the individual concerned. An investigation was carried out, a number of corrective measures identified, which were all carried out in good time. The former QMUL academic was instructed to remove these data from any publications as they were obtained without ethics approval and had no viable consent. The case is closed.

The University was informed in January 2019 of conflicts of interest not being declared by the Principal Investigators in a clinical trial; the Principal Investigators and trial statistician did not make the trial data available and trial protocols were deviated from without prior authorisation. There have been a number of previous complaints related to this project, which had all been investigated. Given the hiatus with the VP Research stepping down and not being immediately replaced, a formal internal investigation was not launched until April 2019 by the Interim VP. A response was supplied to the complainant in May 2019, confirming that no evidence was found to substantiate their claims. The case is closed.

The University was made aware in April 2019 of allegations that an internal research project did not stay within the bounds of its ethical approval. An investigation was launched in April and concluded in the same month. It found that there had been a breach of the ethics approvals but the impact was so limited in its extent that a fuller formal investigation was not launched. The recommended action of discussing how the Principal Investigator would ensure the circumstances were not repeated was carried out and accepted by the investigator and all the members of the Research Ethics Committee. This case is closed.

The University was made aware in April 2019 of allegations of an article being published that did not properly acknowledge the contributions made by others. The Head of School considered the issue and the Principal Investigator was instructed to amend the article to ensure appropriate recognition of authorship. This was done in May 2019 and the complainants made aware of the change. However, the complainants were not content with this remedy and escalated their complaint to the Journal. The Journal decision was not to get involved in authorship disputes and the article was removed. Further engagement between the Head of School and the complainants led to the offer being made in July 2019 of the complainants redrafting the article and publishing it, as per the conditions of the grant they worked on. The complainants accepted this proposal in August and are in the process of doing so. The case remains open until the article is finally published.

In April 2019, a complaint was made by the supervisor of a PhD student that they had not carried out a series of experiments and fabricated results. An internal investigation was carried out under the Code of Student Discipline and concluded in June 2019 that there was a case to answer, and escalated the issue to the Registrar. The Interim VP Research and Innovation heard the case on September 18th with a panel consisting of an Academic member of Senate and the President of the QMUL Student Union. The results of the hearing will be confirmed on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September. The case remains open.

Cases with continuing ramifications: two

### **3. Concordat on Research Integrity**

Following a report into research integrity launched by the Commons Science and Technology Committee in July 2018, Universities UK launched a consultation to update the Concordat. It is anticipated that the revised Concordat will overcome weaknesses identified regarding the sector's ability to demonstrate it has met the requirements of the existing Concordat, and proposing there would be on-going monitoring of how commitments are being implemented.

The consultation closed in April 2019 and the revised details have yet to be released, so we cannot provide the Committee with a further assessment at this time.

### **4. Other developments**

Funders are increasingly requesting information and details regarding investigations and any ongoing cases of misconduct. Our Standard Operating Procedure states that the tightest level of confidentiality will be maintained regarding the identity of the complainant and respondent, and should not be released to a third party (e.g. the funder) unless/until they have been *proved to have committed misconduct in research*.

A gap and risk analysis of Funders positions hardening regarding alerting them to any allegations, proven or otherwise, of research misconduct has started. We will engage the Senior Executive Team on this work and any proposed changes over the autumn. We are also working with other Russell Group Universities to understand their views and actions.

**Dr Sharon Ellis**

**Acting VP Research and Director of Research Services**