

Queen Mary University of London and Barts Health NHS Trust

Joint Policy Statement on Research Misconduct

1. Background

The validity of research and other academic endeavour is based on the implicit assumption of honesty and integrity by the research investigator and on the explicit premise that research data are properly obtained, and are reliable and verifiable. Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) and Barts Health NHS Trust (BHT), working in partnership, must uphold this principle and endeavour to maintain public trust in the research process. This is summarised in the following Joint Policy Statement on Research Misconduct.

This policy recognises the need for BHT and QMUL to augment their standard policies and guidelines to address issues relating to misconduct in research. The guidelines should be read in conjunction with other relevant related policies of each organisation, including research integrity, whistle-blowing and disciplinary policies.

2. Policy Statement

BHT and QMUL adhere to the Universities UK 2012 Concordat to support research integrity¹ committing us to:

- maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research; ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards;
- supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers;
- using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise;
- working together to strengthen the integrity of research, and reviewing progress regularly and openly.

BHT and QMUL are responsible for ensuring that the research carried out under their aegis is carried out legally, in the public interest and in accordance with best practice. This policy applies to anyone involved in research, whether as an employee of BHT or QMUL, student, research manager or in some other capacity, and includes researchers holding substantive or honorary employment contracts at either

¹ <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2012/the-concordat-to-support-research-integrity.pdf>

organisation who are responsible for visitors or engaged in external research collaborations.

All individuals undertaking research at BHT and QMUL are obliged to comply with this policy and to conduct, record and report their research in line with all relevant laws and regulations, and research policies endorsed by BHT and QMUL.

All employees of QMUL or of other Trusts who carry out research involving BHT patients, patient samples, patient records, premises, facilities, staff and services must be bound by BHT policies and hold a current BHT honorary contract or Letter of Access for Research with clear lines of reporting and accountability at BHT. All employees of BHT, or other Trusts and Universities, who carry out research involving QMUL premises, facilities, engagement with staff, research samples, records, information or QMUL's intellectual property, must be bound by QMUL policies, and hold an honorary contract, and have clear lines of reporting and accountability whilst undertaking research in QMUL.

All employees and students of BHT and QMUL, and individuals permitted to work under their oversight, have the responsibility to report any cases of suspected research misconduct (see Joint Procedure for details), and must fulfil their responsibilities, where appropriate, as outlined in the QMUL Policy on Research Integrity and the Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care².

Any designated Chief or Principal Investigator (CI/PI) must accept a key role in detecting and preventing research misconduct and must adopt the role of guarantor on published outputs from the work they have oversight for as CI/PI. Researchers must comply with and aid in any necessary monitoring and auditing of research projects required by BHT or QMUL. Any complaints, incidents or risks relating to research must be reported through the approved BHT/QMUL mechanisms. Any such complaints, incidents or risks should be logged by ARCS for QMUL and using an appropriate Trust reporting system by the JRMO for BHT.

Allegations of misconduct will be handled and investigated in line with the research misconduct procedures of the employing organisation. BHT and QMUL will inform each others' HR Departments (or those of other organisations) immediately upon notification of any allegations of research misconduct that have been reported and involve both organisations and/or employees that have contracts with both organisations. Suitable arrangements between the organisations will then be made to address the allegations with reference to the Joint Procedure.

3. Principles

- BHT and QMUL will investigate all allegations of research misconduct relating to the work of any employee, student, or anyone else involved in research within their organisations.

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/139565/dh_4122427.pdf

- No detrimental action of any kind will be taken against any person making an allegation through this policy in good faith, in line with BHT and QMUL Whistleblowing Policies and Public Interest Disclosure Legislation.
- Any allegations made will be investigated thoroughly, and in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, accuracy and fairness.
- Investigations will be carried out in such a way as to appropriately safeguard the confidentiality of the interested parties, as necessary.
- Bearing in mind appropriate levels of confidentiality as needed, the outcome of the investigation will be made known as quickly as possible to all parties with a legitimate interest in the case.

4. Definition of Research Misconduct

For the purposes of this policy, research misconduct includes carrying out, attempting or planning any of the following (as well as any other examples that might reasonably fall within the remit of the policy and its documentation):

- The fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or deception in proposing, carrying out or reporting the results of research
- The deliberate, dangerous or negligent deviation from agreed formal protocols or regulations, including accepted professional standards of behaviour and conduct, in carrying out research, and the failure in that context to avoid risk or harm to humans, animals used in research, and the environment where appropriate
- The facilitation of misconduct in research or collusion in, or concealment of, such actions by others
- The intentional and unauthorised use, disclosure of, removal of or damage to, research related property of another researcher. This may include, but is not limited to, intellectual property, writings, data, apparatus, materials, hardware, software, infringement of data protection or confidentiality requirements.

Misconduct in research can include acts of calculated omission as well as acts of commission. It excludes genuine errors or differences in interpretation or judgement in evaluating research methods or results, or misconduct unrelated to research processes.