

Policy on Assessing Research Conduct

1. Introduction

All researchers and students within the CRUK Scotland Institute have a duty to society, to their profession, to the CRUK Scotland Institute and to research funders to conduct research in the most honest and responsible manner, as described in the Institute's Code of Good Practice¹. This applies to the entire research process, from applying for research funding, conducting research, publishing results, sharing research outputs and reviewing the work of others.

2. Policy Scope

2.1. This policy applies to assessing potential mistakes, honest errors, questionable research practices² and poor research conduct³ throughout the research lifecycle.

2.2 This policy does not apply to allegations of potential breaches of research integrity or research misconduct, which will be transferred to, and investigated in accordance with, the CRUK Scotland Institute's [Research Misconduct Policy](#)⁴.

2.3 This policy applies to all individuals carrying out research for the CRUK Scotland Institute including, without limitation, to all current and former:

- Institute employees, irrespective of whether their current place of work is within or outside Institute premises
- researchers with associate/honorary/affiliate/emeritus positions, conducting research within, or on behalf of, the Institute
- visiting researchers at the Institute
- co-investigators or collaborators funded by grants held at the CRUK Scotland Institute
- postgraduate research students conducting research within, or on behalf of, the Institute
- independent contractors or consultants

2.4 Concerns and assessments regarding University of Glasgow employees and matriculated postgraduate students will be reported by the Head of the Research Integrity Service⁵ to the University of Glasgow's [Research Integrity Adviser \(Misconduct\)](#) and investigated in accordance with the University of Glasgow's [Research Misconduct Policy](#)⁶.

2.5 After assessing potential mistakes, honest errors, questionable research practices or poor research conduct, this Policy may transfer to the Full Investigation stage of the CRUK Scotland Institute's [Research Misconduct Policy](#) and/or another Institute policy or process, such as the CRUK Scotland Institute's Disciplinary and Grievance Policy⁷.

2.6 Assessment of multiple/serial instances of questionable research practices and poor research conduct that collectively amount to significant deviation from accepted practice may undergo Full Investigation in accordance with the CRUK Scotland Institute's [Research Misconduct Policy](#).

3. Key Stages of Assessing Research Conduct

3.1 The CRUK Scotland Institute is committed to ensuring that all concerns raised or identified are informally assessed for their validity and seriousness, following these key stages:

- Identifying potential mistakes, honest errors, questionable research practices or poor research conduct (section 4)
- Raising a concern about potential mistakes, honest errors, questionable research practices or poor research conduct (section 5)
- Receipt and review of a concern (section 6)
- Potential outcomes of receiving and reviewing a concern (section 7)
- Assessment of a concern (section 8)
- Potential outcomes of assessing a concern (section 9)

3.2 The key stages of assessing concerns align with the receipt, assessment and Initial Investigation of research misconduct allegations as outlined in the CRUK Scotland Institute's [Research Misconduct Policy](#).

4. Identifying potential mistakes, honest errors, questionable research practices or poor research conduct

4.1 [PubPeer](#)⁸ will be screened annually by the Head of Research Integrity for posts relating to members of the CRUK Scotland Institute's Faculty.

4.2 Potential mistakes, honest errors, questionable research practices or poor research conduct may be identified in a funding application, during the course of a research project, in the preparation of manuscripts, in the pre-submission integrity review of manuscripts, at the peer-review stage, in published papers, in shared data and code or during presentations, by researchers themselves, the Head of Research Integrity or by other researchers or individuals.

4.3 Potential mistakes, honest errors, questionable research practices or poor research conduct may be identified by the Initial Investigation of a research misconduct investigation⁴, and subsequently transferred to this policy.

5. Raising a concern about potential mistakes, honest errors, questionable research practices or poor research conduct

5.1 Anyone can raise a concern about potential mistakes, honest errors, questionable research practices or poor research conduct. It is not limited to members of the CRUK Scotland Institute.

5.2 Concerns should be raised by completing the [Research Conduct Assessment Form](#) and emailing it to the [Head of Research Integrity](#) or to the [Research Integrity Service](#).

5.3 The person raising the concern (the Initiator⁴) should in the first instance and where appropriate, attempt to address the issue with either the individual (the Respondent⁴) concerned or the appropriate Research Group Leader. Advice can be sought from the Head of Research Integrity. Where the Initiator is not satisfied with the outcome of this informal approach, or if they do not consider such an approach appropriate, they should raise their concerns by completing the Research Conduct Assessment Form and emailing it to the [Head of Research Integrity](#) or to the [Research Integrity Service](#).

5.4 If researchers at the Institute discover or are notified of a potential problem with their research or a published paper, whether anonymous (for example on PubPeer or by Claire Francis) or not, they should complete the Research Conduct Assessment Form and email it to the [Head of Research Integrity](#) or to the [Research Integrity Service](#).

5.5 All possible steps will be taken to protect the confidentiality of the Initiator and of the Respondent. Unless the Initiator indicates a preference to be named, the identity of the Initiator or the Respondent will not be made known to any third party unless it is deemed necessary (e.g. in order to carry out the assessment of the concern). The decision as to whether the identities of the Initiator and/or the Respondent need to be known more widely will be taken by the Head of Research Integrity.

5.6 The Initiator will not be penalised for raising a concern, provided it is made without malice and in good faith. However, in the event that a concern was raised with malicious intent, the CRUK Scotland Institute may consider initiating disciplinary proceedings against the Initiator in accordance with the CRUK Scotland Institute's Disciplinary and Grievance Policy.

5.7 If at any stage, a counter concern is raised about the Initiator, whether related or not to the concern being assessed, this matter will be addressed as a separate case.

6. Receipt and review of a concern about potential mistakes, honest errors, questionable research practices or poor research conduct

6.1 Every concern raised will be given serious consideration. The Head of Research Integrity will acknowledge receipt of the concern, inform the Initiator that the concern will be assessed and provide them with a copy of the Policy on Assessing Research Conduct.

6.2 Concerns raised anonymously, including those made by anonymous whistleblowers such as PubPeer or Claire Francis, will be considered at the discretion of the Head of Research Integrity, considering the seriousness of the concern raised.

6.3 The Head of Research Integrity will review the concern to determine

- (i) whether the Respondent is or was conducting research under the auspices of the Institute, whether solely or in conjunction with others at the Institute or externally.
- (ii) whether the research project to which the concern relates is being or was conducted under the auspices of the Institute, whether solely or in conjunction with other bodies.
- (iii) whether the research project to which the concern relates includes legal, collaboration or contractual obligations.
- (iv) how the Respondent and the research were funded.

6.4 The Head of Research Integrity will assess the nature of the concern to determine the type of concern and whether to proceed with the Policy on Assessing Research Conduct or whether it falls within the scope of other policies, including but not limited to [Research Misconduct](#), Disciplinary and Grievance, Bullying and Harassment⁹, financial fraud, ethical breaches or legal breaches.

6.5 The Head of Research Integrity may ask for suitable professional advice from the Institute's HR, Finance team or contracts manager.

6.6 The Head of Research Integrity will document the review information from sections 6.3-6.5 on the [Research Conduct Assessment Report](#) and decide how to proceed (section 7).

6.7 The Head of Research Integrity will notify the University of Glasgow's [Research Integrity Adviser \(Misconduct\)](#) of concerns regarding University of Glasgow employees and matriculated postgraduate students.

7. Potential outcomes of receiving and reviewing a concern about potential mistakes, honest errors, questionable research practices or poor research conduct

7.1 The concern falls within the scope of this policy and the Head of Research Integrity will assess the concern (section 8).

7.2 The concern falls within the scope of the [Research Misconduct Policy](#) or another Institute policy or process and will be directly referred to it (section 6.4).

7.3 The concern warrants referral directly to an external organisation, including but not limited to: the research organisation(s) under whose auspices the research in question took place; statutory regulators; or professional bodies.

7.4 The Head of Research Integrity will notify the Initiator of outcome of the concern review.

8. Assessment of a concern about potential mistakes, honest errors, questionable research practices or poor research conduct

8.1 The Head of Research Integrity will assess the concern by

(i) discussing the concern with the Initiator

and/or

(ii) ascertaining when, where and by whom the queried data were generated

and/or

(iii) reviewing any supporting evidence provided

and/or

(iv) accessing and checking any primary data stored on the Institute's published data archive to determine whether there is a problem with the output or the primary data

and/or

(v) discussing the concern with the Respondent

and/or

(vi) requesting the original data from the Respondent and checking the data independently to determine whether there is a problem with the output or the primary data

8.2 The Head of Research Integrity may ask for expert technical opinion on the data, analysis method, research methodology or research discipline.

8.3 The Head of Research Integrity may ask for suitable professional advice from the Institute's HR, Finance team or contracts manager.

8.4 The Head of Research Integrity may ask for suitable professional advice from external bodies, such as [UKRIO](#)¹⁰ or other research integrity and governance professionals.

8.5 Where the original primary data are not available to check, the data retention policies, as well as research practices, at the time the data were generated will be taken into consideration to determine whether any further action is possible or required by the Institute or the Respondent.

8.6 The Head of Research Integrity will document the assessment on the [Research Conduct Assessment Report](#).

8.7 The Head of Research Integrity will summarise the assessment and a decision on how to proceed (section 9) will be made in conjunction with the CRUK Scotland Institute's Research Integrity Committee⁵.

8.8 Research conduct assessments will be audited independently by the University of Glasgow's Research Governance and Integrity Team, on an annual basis.

9. Potential outcomes of assessing a concern about potential mistakes, honest errors, questionable research practices or poor research conduct

9.1 The assessment identifies that the concern is unfounded, because it is mistaken or is frivolous or is otherwise without substance, it will be dismissed. The Head of Research Integrity will notify the Respondent that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the Institute's Policy on Assessing Research Conduct, has been concluded and that no further action will be taken by the Institute.

9.2 The assessment identifies that an error has occurred as the result of an honest mistake, the Head of Research Integrity will work with the Respondent to resolve the issue. This may involve

- education and re-training
- preparing a corrected figure for a paper using the correct original primary data and liaising with the journal concerned

9.3 Once a mistake has been resolved or rectified the Head of Research Integrity will notify the Respondent that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the Institute's Policy on Assessing Research Conduct, has been concluded and that no further action will be taken by the Institute.

9.4 The assessment identifies that an error has occurred as the result of poor practice (questionable research practices or poor research conduct), the Head of Research Integrity will notify the Respondent that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the Institute's Policy on Assessing Research Conduct, identified poor practice and inform them of any subsequent actions. These may include

- education, training and re-training in research activities
- repeating research integrity training
- supervision of research activities
- restriction of research activities
- temporary suspension of supervisory duties
- temporary suspension of access to the Institute's core facilities and Advanced Technologies
- pausing submission of a manuscript to a journal
- Institute requesting withdrawal of a manuscript from a journal
- further monitoring of conduct
- mediation
- mentoring
- pastoral care and support
- transfer to the Institute's [Research Misconduct Policy](#)
- transfer to another Institute policy or process, such as the Disciplinary and Grievance Policy
- transfer to an external body or organisation

9.5 The assessment identifies that the concern is potentially research misconduct, the Head of Research Integrity will notify the Respondent that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the Institute's Policy on Assessing Research Conduct, identified potential research misconduct and will be transferred to a Full Investigation, in accordance with the Institute's [Research Misconduct Policy](#).

9.6 The assessment identifies that the concern cannot be resolved, for example due to the length of time that has passed since the data were generated or figures prepared or whether the author is still an active researcher, the Head of Research Integrity will notify the Respondent that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the Institute's Policy on Assessing Research Conduct, has been concluded and that no further action will be taken by the Institute.

9.7 No formal action will be taken by the Institute where the queried data were not generated at the Institute or were generated by someone who is not or was not employed by the Institute or were generated by matriculated students.

9.8 The Head of Research Integrity will notify the Initiator that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the Institute's Policy on Assessing Research Conduct and has been concluded. If there are no further actions, the Head of Research Integrity may notify the Initiator that the Institute considers the matter closed and no further action will be taken at this time.

9.9 The assessment identifies that the concern is malicious, the Head of Research Integrity will notify HR and the concern will be transferred to the Disciplinary and Grievance Policy, and the Initiator will be informed.

9.10 The Head of Research Integrity will notify the University of Glasgow's [Research Integrity Adviser \(Misconduct\)](#) of assessments relating to the University of Glasgow employees and matriculated postgraduate students.

9.11 The Head of Research Integrity will notify the Director of the CRUK SI about research conduct assessments on a quarterly basis.

9.12 The Head of Research Integrity will summarise research conduct assessments on an annual basis and share the information with the Director, Academic Lead for Research Integrity, Head of Research Management and the Chief Financial Officer.

9.13 The Head of Research Integrity will monitor and track assessment outcomes and actions.

10 Support

10.1 Reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that the Respondent does not suffer any detriment during the concern assessment or from unconfirmed or unproven concerns with their research.

10.2 Reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that the Initiator does not suffer any detriment from having raised a concern.

10.3 The Head of Research Integrity will advise on sources of support, for example the Institute's HR Service, Mental Health first aiders or Neurodiversity Champions, the Institute's Pluxee Employment Assistance Programme and the University of Glasgow's [Health and Wellbeing Services](#)¹¹.

11. Timescale

11.1 Receipt of the Research Conduct Assessment Form will be acknowledged by the Head of Research Integrity within 2 weeks of receiving the concern (weeks 1-2).

11.2 The concern will be reviewed and a decision made on how to proceed by the Head of Research Integrity within 2 weeks of receiving the concern (weeks 1-2).

11.3 The Initiator will be notified by the Head of Research Integrity of the outcome of the concern review within 2 weeks of receiving the concern (weeks 1-2).

11.4 Any assessments of concerns by the Head of Research Integrity will be conducted within 4 weeks of the decision to proceed with an assessment (weeks 3-6).

11.5 The decision on how to proceed will be made by the Head of Research Integrity and the Research Integrity Committee within 2 weeks of the assessment (weeks 3-8).

11.6 The Respondent will be notified of the conclusions of the assessment and any outcomes or actions within 2 weeks of the assessment (weeks 7-8).

11.5 The Initiator will be notified of the completion of the assessment within 2 weeks of the assessment (weeks 7-8).

11.6 All timescales are subject to exceptions due to unforeseen delays.

12. Documentation

12.1 Each concern raised will be given a case number.

12.2 All documentation¹² relating to a case will be stored in a case-specific folder in the Research Integrity Service's restricted access space on the Institute's Server.

12.3 All cases will be recorded in the CRUK Scotland Institute's Research Integrity Assessment Tracker, which is stored in the Research Integrity Service's restricted access space on the Institute's Server.

APPENDIX

1. CRUK Scotland Institute's Code of Good Practice

2. Questionable Research Practices (QRP)

Questionable Research Practices (QRPs) are a range of behaviours, from honest errors and mistakes, lack of knowledge, sloppiness, negligence or incompetence to more serious deliberate and dishonest research practices that lead to untrustworthy data. QRPs include, but are not limited to

- poor and incomplete record keeping
- making mistakes when copying /transferring data
- cherry picking data to analyse or present
- incorrect data analysis
- incorrect data interpretation
- inadequate and incomplete reporting of methods and results
- selective reporting to create a narrative

3. Poor research conduct

Poor research conduct includes, but is not limited to

- cutting corners and deviating from current accepted best research practices
- poor supervision of students
- poor training of research staff
- failure to give appropriate recognition to others involved in research activity (where this does not constitute plagiarism or misrepresentation of involvement)
- inadequate data management
- inadequate data preservation
- failure to archive published data on the Institute's server
- minor breaches of legal requirements or ethical review that are not deliberate or negligent
- failure to follow the Institute's Research Integrity Framework of policies and processes
- failure to attend research integrity training

4. CRUK Scotland Institute's [Research Misconduct Policy](#)

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Head of the Research Integrity Service	To receive concerns relating to research conduct, to screen concerns, to determine processes to undertake, to assess concerns, to discuss and determine outcomes of assessments and identified actions with the Institute's Research Integrity Committee, to track and monitor outcomes and actions, to arrange external audit of assessments and to notify relevant parties. The Head of Research Integrity is Dr Catherine Winchester. Contact: c.winchester@crukscotlandinstitute.ac.uk
Initiator	Person raising the concern.
Respondent	Researcher against whom a concern has been raised.
Research Integrity Committee	The Research Integrity Committee brings expertise and impartial advice at the key decision-making stage of what actions to take after an assessment;

	due to its senior composition, it also has the authority to take decisions on any reputational risk to the Institute. The Research Integrity Committee consists of the Academic Lead for Research Integrity, the Head of Research Management and the Chief Financial Officer. For any conflicts of interests committee members will be replaced with Senior Group Leaders.
External auditor	University of Glasgow's Research Governance and Integrity Team will review assessments on an annual basis.

6. University of Glasgow's [Research Misconduct Policy](#)

7. CRUK Scotland Institute's Disciplinary and Grievance Policy

8. [PubPeer](#)

9. CRUK Scotland Institute's Bullying and Harassment Policy

10. UKRIO's [Advisory Service](#)

11. University of Glasgow's [Health and Wellbeing Services](#)

12. Documentation

Assessing Research Conduct documents	Purpose
Research Conduct Assessment Form	To raise a concern about research mistakes, honest errors, questionable research practices or poor research conduct.
Research Conduct Assessment Report	Part 1 to be completed by the Head of Research Integrity to review the concern. Part 2 to be completed by the Head of Research Integrity to assess the concern and document outcomes and actions.
Research Integrity Assessment Tracker	Database to record all concerns raised and assessed and the location of files and supporting data.

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