

King's College London's Research Integrity Statement, 2020-2021¹

Introduction

As a world-leading, research-intensive institution, King's College London is committed to ensuring that the research conducted by our staff and students is consistently of the highest quality and conforms to the most rigorous standards. The proper conduct of research requires all our researchers to uphold certain principles and professional responsibilities to ensure integrity in the work they do. This is important to instil confidence in academic communities, funding bodies, and the public that the data, findings, and results produced by our researchers are reliable and trustworthy. The Research Integrity Office (RIO) is committed to the promotion of good conduct and integrity in research and to supporting the university's research community through the provision of training and guidance, as well as the development of policies and procedures, in order to safeguard public trust in all King's research. We expect that all research undertaken at King's is conducted with the core values of research integrity in mind, to produce research of the highest standard. The principles of honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, care and respect, and accountability are key to maintaining research integrity at King's.

This statement on research integrity at King's College London relates to the period September 2020 to August 2021 and has been drafted to fulfil our obligation to commitment 5 of the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#), of which we are a signatory. Many of the actions and activities undertaken to support and strengthen an understanding and the application of research integrity issues reported in this statement relate specifically to the work of the Research Integrity Office and, where relevant, the wider team of Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity (RGEI). Through our local partnerships, we are aware that many other areas of the College have embedded research integrity within their practices or culture. For the purposes of this year's statement, we have only captured select initiatives to highlight the range of activities evident. Over the next academic year, we will adopt a more systematic approach for reporting to ensure an accurate reflection of the full range of activities that promote and embed research integrity across the College.

Resource

In support of KCL's commitment to the Concordat and the principles of research integrity, RGEI has been successful in recruiting to new roles. Of particular relevance, the role of Research Integrity Manager was split in December 2020, giving the incumbent responsibility for the Arts & Sciences faculties and a new appointee responsibility for the Health faculties. A new Research Integrity Officer was appointed in November 2020. From 1 September 2021, the Dean of Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity role will be incorporated with a newly created Dean of Research Culture post, further reflecting the College's commitment to improving the wider research environment.²

Website

Our external webpages provide enhanced visibility for our three teams and set out clearly the College's expectations of researchers, signalling how to find guidance and support. [The research](#)

¹ Presented to the College Research Committee on 18.08.2021 with recommendations for amendments made as requested. Current version presented to the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee on 09.11.2021 and approved by the College Council on 23.11.2021.

² EDIT (12/08/2022): the previously published report had a typographic error, noting the post had been in place since 1 August 2020 (not 2021). Implementation of the post was pushed back by 1 month to September 2021, so will additionally be reported in the 2021-22 statement.

[integrity landing page](#) provides the framework within which we expect all research at King's to be conducted, aligning this with other national initiatives, including more recently our [Commitment to Fair and Responsible Research Assessment](#).

Local Engagement

Matters of research integrity are the primary responsibility of the Research Integrity Office (RIO) at King's College London but research integrity is integral to all those involved in the research landscape. In response to this and to support proper advocacy of the principles of research integrity within our nine faculties, RIO created a network of Research Integrity Champions (RICHs) in September 2019 who meet every two months at the RICH Forum. [Terms of Reference](#) for the RICH Forum were approved in May 2021 and these are publicly available.

Since the position of a Research Integrity Champion is a senior one, RIO developed the faculty framework to include Research Integrity Advisors (RIAs). This faculty framework is in recognition of the stronger connection felt by researchers to their local environment, in contrast to any institutional bonds which are often seen as weaker, sentiments that were echoed in VITAE's June 2020 publication [Research Integrity: a Landscape Study](#). Originally individuals were due to be in post from April 2020 but demands on academic staff as a result of the coronavirus pandemic resulted in the rollout of this initiative from September 2020. By December 2020, RIAs had been appointed in eight faculties through a nominations and approvals process to ensure appropriate oversight of this system (by both faculty and RIO leadership), designed to enable every research-active member of staff of the university to have access to an individual cognisant of research integrity matters. Information about our Champions and Advisors are available on our [external webpages](#), with full details of local role-holders accessible [internally](#).

Members of the Research Integrity Office have met with each RIA, both individually and collectively within faculty groups. These meetings have been integral to establishing strategic action plans, appropriate to the local cultures and disciplines within each faculty. To support them in their role, all RIAs are invited to a focused training session led by the RIO (a refresher session is offered annually) and are provided with a bespoke interactive resources pack.

RIO continues to communicate more broadly with our network of researchers through our newsletter, which promotes and raises awareness of internal and external developments and initiatives across the three areas of research ethics, governance, and integrity. To enable a more targeted approach, RIO also liaises directly with faculty communications teams for wider dissemination of our activities and we have created a comms pack to support this. Research integrity is now included in the [School of Education, Communication and Society \(SSPP\) research handbook](#) and has a [dedicated page](#) on the FoDOCS internal research support pages.

Process Improvement

Over the last academic year, the Department of Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity has made a number of process improvements informed by daily practices and experiences of dealing with research governance, ethics and integrity issues.

Two internal process improvements have resulted in the better management of research integrity. The live tracking platform for all research integrity enquiries and misconduct cases has been updated. The document now captures far more information, thereby facilitating RIO to analyse the data for trends and have a better understanding of issues prevalent at King's. The existing research misconduct case checklist has been expanded, allowing for a higher level of detail to be captured.

This will support in those growing instances of particular complexity and also allow any member of RIO to pick up a case midway through.

RIO has also worked with colleagues across the College to ensure input where there are areas of crossover and to ensure better compliance with funder terms and conditions. To support cases which have aspects of research misconduct and bullying or harassment, RIO has drafted a Memorandum of Understanding with HR to reflect the cooperation and liaison that is necessary to handle such instances appropriately. RIO is strengthening its ties with HR and initiated a training session to the HR People Partners in July 2021, outlining at this the agreed process for reporting. In July 2021, the College published a [Declaration of Interest policy](#) and associated documents, which were drafted by RIO in collaboration with Business Assurance.

The College's online Research Ethics Management Application System (REMAS) has been updated to incorporate the King's Data Protection Register (KDPR). Researchers obtaining ethical clearance through REMAS are now subject to a streamlined process that incorporates both ethical clearance and data protection registration. Previously, the latter required the completion of a separate KDPR registration form after gaining ethical clearance. Housing two processes within one system allows KCL staff and students to complete two key research requirements in one application, saving time and also avoiding any unnecessary duplication. The combined process also allows the level of information required for KDPR registration to be proportionate to the researcher's level of study and the risk level identified for their research.

The College Research Ethics Committee (CREC) introduced a 5 working day expedited review process for COVID-related research at the beginning of the pandemic and continued to be implemented throughout the 2020/21 academic year. It was made available to staff and doctoral projects where researchers could demonstrate that their study had strong public health grounds and was time-critical. This involved a three-step review and ratification process that was designed to remain robust and rigorous whilst adapting to the constantly shifting landscape of the pandemic and research time constraints.

CREC also introduced two new generic Health Faculty Research Ethics Subcommittees (RESCs), which will supersede the current Faculty-/discipline-specific based RESCs. This change will improve the balance of the number of submissions received previously by each of the existing Faculty-specific RESCs, allowing for more consistency in the amount of time allocated to each submission review.

Training

In the past academic year, training in research integrity has continued to be delivered online. Feedback from all sessions given has been used for continual improvement with comments being consistently positive about the quality of content and delivery. In addition to the termly training offered to all via Skills Forge, 'Research Integrity: the fundamentals of research excellence at King's', numbers at which have remained consistent at around 25 attendees, RIO has given more targeted sessions. Across RGEI, a number of independent and joint research governance and research ethics training sessions have also been provided. For all RGEI training, different modes of delivery have been offered to enable maximum flexibility to participants. Sessions have been provided either live over virtual platforms (Zoom and MS Teams) or as pre-recorded, with the option of a follow-up live Q&A session.

RGEI has engaged with a vast number of doctoral students, including those on the LISS, NERC, and MRC DTPs, and the STAI CDT. PGRs were also reached in sessions delivered to cohorts within Cardiovascular & Medical Sciences, the King's Business School, Law, and Politics and Economics.

Further training has been given to researchers at various career stages as part of the SSPP Research Café, the Emerging Researchers programme (organised by ASRO), the MSc in International Management (KBS), to the department of Global Health and Social Medicine (SSPP), and to the Cancer Prevention Group. RIO has delivered bespoke training, designed in collaboration with local Research Integrity Advisors, to the HR Management research group in KBS and the department of Physics (NMES). Three focused sessions have been given to various groups within the IoPPN: the Research & Innovation Committee; the department of Basic & Clinical Neuroscience; and Senior THRIVE, aimed at senior academic staff members. A conservative estimate suggests that, collectively, RGEI has reached over 500 individuals through training. The true number is likely to be higher.

To improve coordination of training across the three areas of RGEI, a new [training form](#) has been created. This has enabled the training needs of staff to be identified based on research requirements and offered as appropriate.

Training continues to be offered by other teams and departments across King's, in areas that relate to research integrity. Libraries & Collections organise sessions on research data management, while both the Centre for Research Staff Development (CRSD) and the Centre for Doctoral Studies (CDS) each offer a range of training courses. There is additional faculty-based training in good research practices.

Research Culture

RIO recognises that the integrity of research is impacted by the broader research environment. Members of RIO have engaged in the national conversations on research culture, as well as contributing to the Task & Finish groups as part of the [CRSD's Research Culture Projects for Research Staff](#), which were tasked to look more closely at bullying & harassment, career mapping & progression, and reward & recognition. RIO will continue to collaborate with colleagues to harmonise a College-wide approach to research culture.

Internal Audits

Demonstrative of our commitment to ensure compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, the department of Business Assurance conducted an internal review. In particular, the focus was to ensure that King's could fulfil the mandatory requirements of the Concordat by the deadline given as part of the 12-month implementation following the publication of the revised Concordat in 2019. The outcome of this audit was that King's did meet the mandatory requirements, however an enhanced process for presenting the annual statement to our governing body was recommended and has been implemented.

The Research Governance Office (RGO) has conducted random audits of projects registered through the College's Minimal Ethical Risk Registration Process to ensure they meet the criteria for registration. RGO has also introduced a 'Supervisor breach of good practice process' in parallel to our existing student 'Procedure for research conducted without the appropriate ethical clearance', as a way of alerting supervisors to their inappropriate authorisation of a minimal ethical risk research ethics registration. Members of RGO then engage pro-actively with supervisors deemed to have breached good practice in this way to ensure that they have a clear understanding of how to determine the correct ethical risk level of their student's research, enabling them to follow the correct process in the future.

External Engagement

Collaboration across the sector has continued, despite the challenges of the pandemic. In November 2020, RIO organised an event with the publisher Wiley on the subject of research integrity and open practices from the publisher's perspective, with specific focus on authorship and data sharing. This was held in collaboration with Library Services and IT Assurance. Over 90 colleagues from across all faculties were in attendance, with representation from many of the Research Integrity Advisors as well as other colleagues.

King's remains a subscriber to the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and members of the Research Integrity Office have continued to attend webinars and roundtable events hosted by UKRIO. RIO has additionally contributed to a consultation process on UKRIO materials, including the revised self-assessment tool for the Concordat (yet to be republished) and a guidance note on research integrity champions (still in consultation phase).

As an institutional member of the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN), King's has continued to contribute to the national conversation on research improvement. Activity within our local network, led by Alexandra Lautarescu, has included, among other: contributions to the establishment of an Open Research Award scheme within the IoPPN; the RIOT Science Club conference 'Open Research: a vision for the future' attended by over 300 participants; and the creation of an open research calendar in collaboration with external colleagues.

King's is a part of the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum (RGRIF), which last met in November 2019. KCL hosted the subsequent meeting virtually in June 2021 and led an agenda on research culture, research integrity training, an update from UKRI's Integrity Team, and other issues including dealing with anonymous allegations of research misconduct and recognition for external panel members on research misconduct investigations.

The London Research Integrity Consortium, which was co-founded by King's in June 2020, held its first meeting remotely in October 2020. This was followed by a series of three roundtable events co-chaired by KCL in April, May, and June 2021 to discuss the topics of: barriers to change, developing discipline-specific guidance, and training in research integrity.

The Research Ethics Office continues to act in an advisory capacity to other universities who are in the early stages of establishing an electronic ethical clearance process.

Research Misconduct

The College has a formal [procedure to investigate and resolve allegations of research misconduct](#) (the 'Procedure'). The Procedure should be reviewed every three years. The current version was updated in December 2020 following approval by the Academic Board. It provides an update to the definitions of research misconduct to align our procedure with the revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The revisions also include updated URLs and have tightened up the process steps of the Procedure, to provide clarity to all those involved in any investigations.

The Procedure is to be carried out in accordance with the principles of fairness, confidentiality, integrity, prevention of detriment, and balance, and these are defined with Annex 1 of the Procedure. There are appropriate mechanisms and safeguards in place within the Procedure to ensure adherence to these principles and that the process is transparent and robust.

The College makes every effort to meet its obligations to external bodies, including regulatory and professional bodies, regarding the initiation or completion of a formal investigation. To the knowledge of the Research Integrity Office, KCL has met such obligations.

Learnings from formal investigations

The Research Integrity Office intends to update the Procedure further, following consultation with the Research Integrity Champions in 2019/20 over proposals to make the College's response to allegations more proportionate and timelier. The proposals resulted from greater experience and knowledge gained from recent, complex cases. Involvement in recent cases has brought to light further key considerations for our new revised procedure. New clauses will be embedded within the procedure that will allow us to address these complexities, for example how to manage appropriately anonymous allegations of research misconduct, and how to work effectively when legal input is sought from any party.

To support paragraph 6.2 of the Procedure relating to the recording (written and/or audio) of formal meetings held as part of an investigation, a second member of the Research Integrity Office attends any meeting (in addition to the Panel Secretary) to facilitate the sharing of evidence and record keeping.

How does King's create or embed a research environment conducive to reporting misconduct?

Information about the Procedure is available on our [Research Misconduct](#) webpage, along with advice and support, to all staff, students, and individuals external to the university who wish to raise an issue about the conduct of research undertaken in the College's name.

The process for reporting concerns about research conducted in the College's name is communicated to our research community through our training sessions and is also visible on our webpages. The Research Integrity Office provides assurance to researchers that they should feel safe to report poor research practices, either to us or at local level. The Research Integrity Office encourages researchers to approach us or local contacts (ordinarily the Research Integrity Advisors) if they feel that they or others have failed to meet the expected standards of good research practice, so that we can offer appropriate advice on how to mitigate any risk, and then advise on the next steps should it be appropriate to report research misconduct. In the course of an investigation, we may signpost to mental health support provided by the College to staff and students, where appropriate.

Summary data on formal investigations of research misconduct

The following summary data relates to cases that have been undertaken by the College under the Procedure over the past 5 years. Other issues relating to research integrity and handled by the Research Integrity Office are not included in this information. Please note that the figures provided for research misconduct are provided for the financial year (August 2020-July 2021), to align with our internal reporting purposes. Data on investigations under the Procedure and issues of research integrity are reported to SMT quarterly within the audit and monitoring section.



Figure 1: Chart showing the number of closed research misconduct investigations by financial year (Aug-Sept)³

Date Completed	Source of Allegation	Respondent Status	Faculty	Allegation	Outcome
Ongoing	External	Staff	IoPPN	Failure to follow accepted procedures	<i>Pending</i>
Ongoing	External	Former staff	IoPPN	Failure to follow accepted procedures	<i>Pending</i>
Ongoing	Staff	Former staff	IoPPN	Failure to follow accepted procedures	<i>Pending</i>

³ Please note that the chart has been generated from a spreadsheet with the earliest record being the case closed in November 2018. As such, the earlier cases included in the table are not represented.

Ongoing	Anonymous (internal)	(i) Former staff; (ii) former PhD student	IoPPN	Fabrication; falsification; misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement; and failure to follow accepted procedures	<i>Pending</i>
07/2021	Anonymous (internal)	Staff x3	IoPPN	Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement; and failure to follow accepted procedures	Unfounded (x3); Substance to allegations (x2), not research misconduct but poor research practice
08/2020	Anonymous (external)	Staff	n/a	Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement	Unfounded
08/2020	Anonymous (external)	Staff	IoPPN	Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement	Substance to allegation, not research misconduct but poor research practice, erratum published
08/2020	Anonymous (external)	Former staff	IoPPN	Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement	Substance to allegation, not research misconduct but poor research practice, paper retracted
02/2020	Anonymous (external)	Former staff	IoPPN	Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement	Unfounded
02/2020	Anonymous (external)	Former staff	IoPPN	Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement	Substance to allegation, not research misconduct but poor research practice, erratum published
02/2020	Anonymous (external)	Staff	IoPPN	Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement	Unfounded
10/2019	PhD student	Staff	IoPPN	Fabrication; misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement; and failure to follow accepted procedures	Unfounded (x3); Substance to allegations (x2), not research misconduct but poor research practice, training required

10/2019	Anonymous (external)	Staff	FODOCS	Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement	Substance to allegations (x3), not research misconduct but poor research practice, erratum submitted
10/2019	Anonymous (external)	Staff x2	FoLSM	Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement	Unfounded (x3); Substance to allegations (x5), not research misconduct but poor research practice, errata and training required
04/2019	Journal editor	(i) Staff; and (ii) Former PhD student	FoLSM	Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement	Substance to allegation, not research misconduct but poor research practice
03/2019	External examiners	PhD student	A&H	Plagiarism	Upheld in part, not intentional but reckless
12/2018	External independent source	Former PhD student	KBS	Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement	Unfounded
12/2018	External examiners	PhD student	SSPP	Plagiarism	Substance to allegation but not research misconduct and can be remedied at local level
11/2018	External examiners	PhD student	SSPP	Plagiarism	Substance to allegation but not research misconduct and can be remedied at local level
09/2018	External entity	Staff	SSPP	Plagiarism	Unfounded
04/2018	Former postdoctoral researcher	Staff	NMES	Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement	Unfounded

04/2018	Journal editor	Staff	FoLSM	Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement	Unfounded
10/2017	Internal Supervisor	PhD student	FoLSM	Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement	Substance to allegation, not research misconduct but poor research practice
03/2017	External examiner	PhD student	SSPP	Plagiarism	Upheld