Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2024

Section 1: Key contact information

1A. Name of organisation	The Institute of Cancer Research
1B. Type of organisation:	Higher Education Institution
1C. Date statement approved by the Executive Board **Date statement approved by the Board of Trustees**	18/03/2025 27/03/2025
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.icr.ac.uk/about-us/our-strategy/responsibility-and-sustainability
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Prof. Clare Isacke
	Email address: Clare.Isacke@icr.ac.uk
1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Name: Dr. Yuen-Li Chung
	Email address: Yuen-Li.Chung@icr.ac.uk

Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture. Description of actions and activities undertaken

2A. Description of current systems and culture

Culture and leadership

The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) is committed to providing an environment that supports the highest standards of research integrity, ensuring its researchers have ownership of the research process, adhere to the highest standards of rigor and integrity, and work according to applicable ethical legal and professional standards and frameworks. The ICR is committed to upholding the principles of the Universities UK (UUK) Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

The ICR Lead for Research Integrity is also the Named Person for the ICR's Procedure for Investigating Misconduct in Research. To strengthen our culture of Research Integrity, the ICR has additionally appointed four research leaders as Research Integrity Champions who act as local champions for research integrity and good research practice. The Champions and Named person provide oversight for our Research Integrity action plans.

Overall responsibility for good research conduct rests with the most senior ICR committee, the Executive Board, chaired by the CEO. Heads of Division and Group Leaders are responsible for mentoring research staff within their Divisions and Groups, respectively, and for ensuring that all staff and students (a) understand all the facets of research integrity, (b) its importance for their research and the wider research community, and (c) adhere to good practice guidelines and the relevant regulations.

Training and development

We have a hybrid training model. All new researchers attend a centrally organised Research Integrity workshop within their probation period and this training is reinforced by Group Leaders formally discussing Research Integrity within their groups at least once a year. To support the local training delivery, Group Leaders are provided with a presentation, detailing the framework of the UUK Concordat and the importance of good research conduct (prepared by the Research Integrity Champions), to use as a starting point for their discussions.

In addition to the Research Integrity Training, the ICR provides courses that cover Good Laboratory Practice, Good Clinical Practice, and accessing library resources. Further, the ICR provides many technical courses to help researchers acquire new scientific skills and science communication skills and courses such as the 'Adobe Photoshop: processing figures with integrity' and 'Statistics for Researchers' which trains researchers on performing statistical

analysis with integrity. The ICR also offers support in career guidance and development of researchers through one-to-one support, mock interviews, career counselling and organizing career development and professional development bootcamps.

Policies and systems

The ICR's Good Research Practice Guidelines emphasise the importance of integrity and rigour in all research carried out at, and in partnership with, the ICR, and are designed to ensure that all researchers are aware of their obligations with respect to proper scientific conduct. The Guidelines signpost external references and ICR policies and procedures, to support and strengthen research integrity, including policies for information security and governance; research governance and accountability; research involving human subjects, samples, or data; research involving animals; health and safety; dissemination and publication of results; and practices on intellectual property management. These policies are reviewed and updated on a regular cycle and available on the ICR's intranet site. The Good Research Practice Guidelines is included in the induction of all new starters.

The ICR collaborates internationally in order to deliver on its mission to defeat cancer and our academic collaborations are usually funded by external research grants from funders such as UKRI, Wellcome, Cancer Research UK and other charities. The vast majority of ICR academic collaborations are with institutions in the UK, Europe and the US. We recognise the need to ensure, particularly if we are transferring grant monies, that our collaborators are appropriate and comply with our and funder expectations in financial management but also wider policies areas such as research culture and integrity.

Monitoring and Reporting

The ICR is committed to honesty and integrity in the way its research is carried out, to openness and co-operation, and to accountability to funding bodies and the public. The ICR monitors and ensures that all research involving human subjects, samples or data is ethical and meets legal and regulatory requirements. We comply with the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research for all research involving human participants. The Committee for Clinical Research, a sub-committee of the Joint Clinical Research Governance Board of the Royal Marsden NHS Trust (RM) and the ICR, is responsible for reviewing and approving all research involving human subjects.

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 ICR Animal Welfare and Ethics Review Body (AWERB) reviews all proposed research involving animals and advises on the best practice and ethics for using animals. As in previous years, the AWERB produced a comprehensive annual report for the ICR Executive Board and the Board of Trustees, summarising the work of the Committee.

The Sustainability, Health and Safety (SHS) team assists the ICR in promoting a proportionate approach to risk management to enable research whilst protecting staff, students, visitors and the environment. The SHS team provides specialist advice and support on a number of SHS matters, including risk assessment, ensuring that specific assessments are carried out for work with genetically modified organisms, unsealed radioisotopes, hazardous chemicals, clinical specimens, and biological agents. The SHS team also provides and delivers mandatory training on matters of safety and sustainability, ensures relevant policies and procedures are maintained, and manages ICR's externally certified management systems (H&S - IS045001 and Environment - ISO14001). The team also advises and drives the Sustainable Discoveries Action Plan to ensure the ICR is playing a part in tackling the global climate crisis.

The ICR has a systematic procedure for monitoring and investigating any formal allegations of misconduct in research from both within and outside the Institute (See Section 3 for details). The ICR also has a Code of Practice for Plagiarism and Examination Offences which applies to all students registered on any of the ICR's taught courses and research degree programmes.

ICR researchers co-operate with both internal and external monitoring and audit visits. The joint RM/ICR GCP and Regulatory Compliance Team and the ICR Clinical Trials and Statistics Unit (CTSU) are responsible for providing monitoring and audit for clinical research projects at the ICR. In addition, there is an audit programme for human tissue management. An annual audit program is agreed by the Joint Clinical Research Governance Board and the reports and subsequent action plans are reviewed by the Board.

Communications and engagement

The intranet 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. It has been widely promoted as a resource for all research staff to deepen their understanding of research integrity and why it is important.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

Activities and actions undertaken during calendar year 2024 to support and strengthen a positive research environment include the following:

Research Integrity Training

- Each year Group Leaders discuss research integrity within their groups with a focus on the relevant research integrity considerations that are associated with the areas of their work. In early 2024, an email from the Named Person went to all group leaders to remind them of this requirement, alongside material developed for their use.

- We reviewed the new UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) research integrity training, comparing it to the training materials for our centrally organised Research Integrity workshop. We have updated our course to include:
  (i) Questionable research practices and how this links to a lab's research culture
  (ii) Research Integrity as a continuous cycle of choices

  Additions and enhancement were made on the topics of:
  (i) ICR guidance on chat-GPT and AI systems in research (produced by our Information Governance team)
  (ii) Awareness and understanding of papermills
  (iii) Fair recognition and attribution of support services in research (contributor role taxonomy) to reflect the work being done as part of our Technician Commitment Action Plan

- We continued the promotion of intranet-based research integrity resources which cover a wide range of topics and the ICR's first point of contact for information on research integrity related matters attended the annual UKRIO Subscriber Day and the various webinars and roundtable discussions organised by UKRIO.

Good Research Practice

- During 2024 the ICR undertook a substantial review of the Misconduct in Research Policy to align with the revised UKRIO Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research (version 2.0). The major changes include adaption of the various stages of the procedure and the introduction of an appeal process. The document has been re-titled 'Procedure for Investigating Misconduct in Research'.

- We actively promoted ICR's acknowledgement and authorship guidelines to ensure consistent and fair recognition of contributions, fulfilling an undertaking from our Technician Commitment Action Plan. This was achieved through (i) including a relevant case study in the mandatory training course; (ii) additional points included in the Good Research Practice guidance and relevant link in the Research Integrity Presentation provided to Group Leaders.

Clinical Research Governance

- The pathway for requesting ICR or RM sponsor approval for clinical studies has been streamlined. A Research Clinic has been established to provide early advice and support for research groups to plan and set up sponsored studies.

- The Committee for Clinical Research is now constituted as a Higher Education Institution approval committee for the ICR to undertake ethical scrutiny under explicit

circumstances where a research study does not require NHS REC favourable ethical opinion but where there is a requirement for local ethical review.

- The ICR launched an information hub where all the material relating to Human Tissue Authority (HTA) standards and compliance can be readily found.

- The ICR and RM continued the regular review cycle for key policies, procedures, SOPs and templates associated with tissue governance and clinical trial management.

- We have further improved the performance, data quality, training and management processes on our clinical sample tracking and management system, FreezerPro, by:
  - upgrading to version 8 which has improved functionality in a number of areas. The upgrade was approved by the ICR Change Advisory Board and the computer systems validation was completed following the upgrade.
  - simplifying documentation and support information for users.
  - performing a deep data cleanse.
  - introducing a new training course on how to import and export data more efficiently.
  - implementing a new helpdesk ticketing system.
  - launching a new self-auditing tool to support research groups in checking the accuracy of their data.

- The Biobank Data Visualisation tool was launched in 2024, which enables researchers to search for available human tissue samples in the biobank.

Animal Research Governance

- ICR continues to support the principles of the 3Rs – replacement, refinement and reduction of use of animals for research – and are working to develop alternative experimental techniques.

- The ICR continues to uphold the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research to provide accurate information about how animals are used in our research and continue to demonstrate best practice in animal research and embed openness within the organisation.

- The ICR Biological Services Unit continues to review and update various SOPs. The Terms of Reference of the Animal Welfare and Ethics Review Body (AWERB) were updated, approved by the Executive Board and implemented in 2024.

- To further enhance the effectiveness of our AWERB, the AWERB Deputy Chair, the Non-staff Lay Member, the AWERB secretary and the Home Office Liaison Contact attended an RSPCA workshop: “Maximising the Effectiveness of your AWERB”.

Information Security and Governance

- The ICR continued its awareness programme including the annual Information Governance month, holding the latest in September 2024, to maintain a culture of awareness of the standards and responsibilities that exist around data and information. Topics covered included phishing awareness; appropriate use of Outlook and Teams; Information Governance assessments; and guidance for AI.

- The ICR reviewed and updated the Information Security Incident Policy and the Acceptable Use Policy.

Sustainability, Health, Safety and Wellbeing

- In April 2024 the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice was published and the ICR has become a signatory. Key priority areas align with the ICR's Sustainable Discoveries Action Plan, including leadership and system change, sustainable infrastructure, sustainable procurement, emissions from business and academic travel, collaboration and partnership, and environmental impact and reporting data.

- As a target in the ICR's Sustainable Discoveries Action Plan, the ICR promoted the My Green Lab® and LEAF programs for environmental sustainability in laboratories. At the end of 2024, 39% of our teams have attained accreditation from of one of these programs.

- Sustainable laboratory certification has also been expanded to include GreenDisc, a new scheme which provides a roadmap for research groups and institutions who want to tackle the environmental impacts of their computing activities.

- The ICR-CTSU translate cutting-edge science into quality clinical trials that can transform cancer care. They have committed to reducing the environmental impact of their trials. ICR-CTSU led the development of the NIHR-funded method and guidance for carbon footprint of clinical trials. Recognising the growing interest in this area, a multidisciplinary Greener Trials group, led by ICR-CTSU, aims to disseminate greener research practice and facilitate collaboration between stakeholders to drive the paradigm shift to lower carbon clinical trials.

- The ICR's policy regarding business travel recognises that air travel is disproportionately responsible for generating carbon emissions, therefore domestic air travel and travel to Europe is not permitted where good rail links are available, except under special circumstances.

- A new Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) in Research Working Group has been established. The aims of this working group are:
  - to address the EDI agenda with a strategy and action plan that aligns with national, regional and cross-institutional priorities.
  - to develop, progress and embed an inclusive research culture across the NIHR Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) and Clinical Research Facility (CRF), and beyond, promote best practice and monitor our approach to EDI issues.
  - to track, report and evaluate EDI activities within the BRC and CRF, including data on applications and awards for our research and training programmes, workforce, committees and the people who shape and participate in our research studies.

- The ICR has organised several events during the 2024 Mental Health Awareness Week to boost staff wellbeing and remind staff of the mental health and wellbeing support that is available all year round at the ICR.

- A new Wellbeing Champions Network has been launched to promote positive wellbeing across the ICR and support our commitment to an inclusive workplace culture that supports health and wellbeing for all.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments.

- We are implementing a new Learning Management System and are starting with the creation of mandatory training, which includes research integrity. We will be able to enhance the course structure by embedding the pre-course work we expect participants to complete, be able to measure their understanding of the topic before and after the course as well as be able to create a pathway of follow up events/articles to refresh the topic at regular time points. The course will maintain an in-person/live component with faculty panel members as this is consistently commented upon as highly useful in the feedback we receive and enables us to ensure group leaders are receiving a refresher on this topic in the process.

- The ICR will continue its participation in the UKRIO Annual Subscriber Day and other events organized by UKRIO.

- In 2025, the ICR will have an internal audit focused on design and operating effectiveness of controls and processes undertaken at the initiation phase in relation to the onboarding and integrity of research partner organisations.

- An essential area addressed through the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice concordat is the requirement of laboratory accreditation (such as LEAF and My Green Lab silver) for future grant funding by the beginning of 2026. The ICR will continue to work with all our research teams to attain certification to these levels.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of 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 Procedure for Investigating Misconduct in Research which is available on the ICR's website. The procedure was written in line with UKRIO's "Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research" (version 2.0) and describes 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.

3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken

Type of allegation	Number of allegations			
	Number of allegations reported to the organisation	Number of formal investigations	Number upheld in part after formal investigation	Number upheld in full after formal investigation
Fabrication	0	0	0	0
Falsification	0	0	0	0
Plagiarism	0	0	0	0
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations	0	0	0	0
Misrepresentation (e.g., data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or	3	1^	0	0

publication history)				
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct	0	0	0	0
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)	0	0	0	0
*Other**	0	0	0	0
Total:	3	1^	0	0

^Allegation not upheld after the formal investigation.