

Cancer Research UK annual statement on research integrity

If you have any questions about this template, please contact:
RIsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk.

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	Cancer Research UK
1B. Type of organisation: higher education institution/industry/independent research performing organisation/other (please state)	Research Funding Charity
1C. Date statement approved by governing body (DD/MM/YY)	Statement covering period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023 Approved by the Scientific Executive Board on 09/09/2024
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page (if applicable)	https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/funding-for-researchers/applying-for-funding/policies-that-affect-your-grant/guidelines-for-scientific-conduct
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Dan Burkwood, Director of Research Operations and Communications
	Email address: dan.burkwood@cancer.org.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: Sue Russell, Senior Policy and Governance Manager
	Email address: sue.russell@cancer.org.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

Please describe how the organisation maintains high standards of research integrity and promotes positive research culture. It should include information on the support provided to researchers to understand standards, values and behaviours, such as training, support and guidance for researchers at different career stages/ disciplines. You may find it helpful to consider the following broad headings:

- Policies and systems
- Communications and engagement
- Culture, development and leadership
- Monitoring and reporting

Culture, development and leadership

In order to beat cancer, Cancer Research UK (CRUK) supports the best cancer researchers and fund the highest quality research to make this a reality. Led by our senior leaders, under CRUK's [Research Strategy](#), one of our key enablers is to create a positive research environment and culture so researchers can develop ideas in a supportive, collaborative environment and fulfil their potential.

Our work to promote [positive research culture](#) encompasses different areas including research integrity, career development, equality, diversity and inclusion, open science, research assessment, tackling bullying and harassment. We aim to proactively engage or lead on these sector issues and proactively participate in Concordat Signatories groups and initiatives including for research integrity and researcher development. We expect everyone involved in our research funding to follow the principles, standards and practices for the proper management of research including the principles set out in these Concordats.

Policies and systems

Under our Grants Management Policy Board (GMPB), we regularly review and improve how we assess and fund research and our funding policies. Relevant funding policies – described in more detail in subsequent sections – strive to promote positive research culture and high standards of research quality and include for example: [Research integrity: guidelines for research conduct](#); [Dignity at work in research](#); [Data sharing and management](#); [Open access policy](#); [Recruitment of human participants in research](#); [Conflicts of interest policy: CRUK-funded researchers and commercial organisations](#); [Continuing Professional Development \(CPD\) policy](#); [Use of generative AI in CRUK funding applications](#); [Environmental Sustainability in Research policy](#); [Requirements in integration of sex in experimental design](#). Funding policies and requirements form part of our Grant Conditions.

Further policies, plans or statements that contribute to a positive research culture

and reduce research waste include: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Research action plan, Researcher Development Concordat action plan; Flexible research careers policies.

CRUK submits annual sector statements under the Understanding Animal Research Concordat, Research Integrity Concordat and Researcher Development Concordat.

Communication and engagement

CRUK is an active member of sector-wide forums that aim to foster good research practices and a positive environment. We share best practice and lessons learned as part of: Research Integrity Concordat Signatories Group; Researcher Development Concordat Group; Forum to Tackle Bullying and Harassment in Research and Innovation; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Science and Health Research (EDIS); Public Engagement in Data Research Initiative (PEDRI). We are a founding member of the Research Funders Policies Group where we have collaborated to develop joint funding assurance processes and policy positions. CRUK also regularly engages the UK Committee on Research Integrity (UK CORI), the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN), the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and NC3Rs. We regularly promote training or career support initiatives to CRUK-funded researchers, including webinars run by UKRN, UKRIO and NC3Rs. We convene our research community to discuss feedback on new approaches to improve research integrity and broader research culture.

Monitoring and reporting

Following review by our Grants Management Policy Board comprised of Research and Operations Heads, our Grant Conditions and funding policies are reviewed regularly by our Scientific Executive Board (SEB) comprising Executive Board members and our Chief Scientist and Chief Clinician. Our Research Committee comprising CRUK Trustees review key principles of important funding policies alongside anonymised high-level summaries of the number and types of investigations into allegations of research misconduct and bullying and harassment reported to CRUK. CRUK is also committed to ensuring our trials are registered and results reported for transparency. This means researchers can gain the greatest possible insight from data generated – and maximise benefit for people affected by cancer. We monitor registration and reporting compliance and have shown leadership in this area by publishing these results on our website. The next review is due to be undertaken in 2024/25.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

Please provide an update on any changes made during the period, such as new initiatives, training, developments, also ongoing changes that are still underway. Drawing on Commitment 3 of the Concordat, please note any new or revised policies, practices and procedures to support researchers; training on research ethics and research integrity; training and mentoring opportunities to support the development of researchers' skills throughout their careers.

Funding policies

During this period, CRUK published **two new funding policies or requirements** on:

- **Use of generative Artificial Intelligence tools:** new policy to set out CRUK's position on the use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in CRUK funding applications. The policy aims to ensure researchers it funds can engage with, and benefit from, the opportunities of generative AI tools, whilst protecting against potential ethical, legal and integrity issues to maintain the high standards of the research CRUK funds. Broader guidance for researchers on the use of generative AI was also published to help mitigate these risks. CRUK also led the development of a joint statement with other major UK funders to agree and align a joint approach.
- **Sex in experimental design:** CRUK introduced new requirements on the integration of sex in experimental design to align with the Medical Research Council's (MRC) guidance. This policy aims to ensure CRUK funds the best quality medical research, which is relevant to, and benefits, all.

During this period, CRUK also consulted with its research community to scope requirements for a **new funding policy on Environmental Sustainability of Research**. This policy – planned for publication in 2024 – aimed to set requirements for researchers we fund and their institutions to reduce the environmental impact of research CRUK funds. This includes an expectation that researchers/institutions should reduce general wastage in research by conducting research in an open and robust manner, specifically by following requirements set out in (for example) our Open Access-, Data Sharing and Management- and Research Integrity policies.

CRUK **revised the following policies** which are published on our website:

- Data Sharing and Management Policy
- Dignity at Work in Research Policy
- Flexible Careers/Long term leave Policy
- Salaries of Investigators Policy

Practices to support our research community

During this period, we strengthened research integrity related activities in these areas:

Research Integrity Advisors

CRUK held an away day for our CRUK Institute Research Integrity advisors to discuss common issues together and potential areas of collaboration. We held sessions with various CRUK teams to discuss hot topics including data sharing/management, trusted research, generative AI, electronic lab notebooks and horizon scanning. We were joined by the UK Committee for Research Integrity and UK Research Integrity Office to discuss challenges, opportunities and forthcoming projects.

Research data strategy progress

Under its **research data strategy**, during 2023, CRUK:

- Set up its own **trusted research environment (TRE)** for UK researchers who

- do not have a suitable, safe set-up to store and analyse patient data;
- Kicked off a **data webinar series for its research community**, running sessions on research data 101 and making data FAIR;
- Ran an **Unconference for its research data community** to inform strategy plans;
- **Co-developed Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) plan** for RDS with people affected by cancer;
- Introduced **Data Champions onto CRUK funding committees**. The role of Data Champions is to amplify excellence in data sharing and data-enabled research when reviewing proposals.
- Used various levers to **promote the sharing of research data** more readily, e.g. policies, updating Grant Conditions.
- Launched a **new funding call** for data-driven research that develops new, scalable and generalisable solutions to common challenges in **children and young people's cancers**.
- Launched a new funding partnership with the independent patient-led organisation **use MY data** to support the development of their vital work.
- Recruited to a **new patient and public panel** to support decision-making on commercial access to CRUK funded datasets.

Partnerships and practices with other funders

During this period, CRUK:

- **partnered with NC3Rs on an evolved co-funded grant scheme** announced in 2024. Partnership and Impact awards focus on establishing partnerships between 3Rs method developers and end users to accelerate uptake into routine practice.
- **promoted Registered Reports and CRUK's Registered Reports Funding Partnership** and hosted a webinar for other major UK research funders and a shared a blog post with one of our publisher partners for Peer Review Week 2023.
- Participated in a funders' forum organised by NC3Rs following on from the Rawle **report on the 3Rs in animal research**. CRUK has/will update its animal research policy and processes to reflect good practice.
- chaired the Research Funders Policies Group, including hosting a **webinar for funders on Trusted Research**.
- was an active member of the **joint funders' pilot on funding assurance** – a recommendation from the Tickell report for funders to align. This assurance procedure includes reviewing research integrity policies at institutions.

Research Integrity Concordat Signatories Group

CRUK was an active member of the Research Integrity Concordat Signatories Group in 2023, including:

- analysing survey feedback on the **pilot annual statement template on research integrity**.
- forming part of a working group planning the **refresh of the Research Integrity Concordat** in 2024.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

This should include a reflection on the previous year's activity including a review of progress and impact of initiatives if known relating to activities referenced in the previous year's statement. Note any issues that have hindered progress, e.g. resourcing or other issues.

Reflecting on the reporting period, we aimed to increase efforts **to gain feedback from our research community on research culture issues and to promote and share good practice** among our community, including by:

- **seeking feedback from our grant applicants and expert reviewers** on:
 - CRUK introducing narrative CVs in order to evolve our approach from their survey feedback
 - CRUK's Observing Panels and Committees scheme which asks Early to mid-career researchers who observe to give feedback on the transparency and fairness of our funding review processes. As of August 2023, nearly 150 researchers observed.
- **publishing case studies from researchers** on how CRUK's Equality Diversity and Inclusion in research initiatives help to drive change.
- **running seminars on our work to promote positive research culture** to our network of funded researchers, academic institutions and sector bodies such as **ARMA where we ran a virtual study tour**. These gave the opportunity for our research community to give feedback on funding policy areas CRUK was developing.
- sharing insights from our CRUK Institute Research Integrity Advisors in seven blogs on topics including FAIR data, colour blindness, referencing, integrating training into research culture and generative AI.
- sharing our progress one year on from **CRUK signing the Shared Commitment to Public Involvement**.

Plans for future developments: over the coming year in 2024, we will:

- participate in the **World Conference in Research Integrity**;
- review our **policies and approach to research integrity and dignity at work** informed by global developments and recent lessons learned;
- work with other members of the **Research Integrity Concordat Signatories Group to refresh the Concordat**;
- undertake an **operational review of our CRUK core-funded Institutes** which will include reviewing good research conduct and practices;
- work with other funders to **review our approach to funding policy assurance**;
- **refresh our EDI in research strategy**, including expanding our plans to reduce cancer inequalities in research and improve research culture;
- **publish insights from our observing panels and committees scheme** including anonymised feedback from Observers on the fairness and transparency of our funding review processes.

2D. Case study on good practice (optional)

Please describe an anonymised brief, exemplar case study that can be shared as good practice with other organisations. A wide range of case studies are valuable, including small, local implementations. Case studies may also include the impact of implementations or lessons learned.

During 2023-2024 under its Research Data Strategy, CRUK is building communities to deliver on the strategy – both among research communities as well as with people affected by cancer and the wider public.

For people affected by cancer and the public, CRUK is delivering against its PPIE Plan by embedding PPIE across the RDS including creating new ongoing and ad hoc opportunities for people to influence data-driven research, as well as new resources to increase understanding and awareness of the use of patient data in cancer research. These new opportunities will be galvanised underneath a new Cancer Data Patient & Public Community which will launch later in 2024. A key learning has been the importance of partnership working with organisations who are already active in this area, e.g. use MY data, Understanding Patient Data, Health Data Research UK so that our efforts are complementary rather than duplicative. Issues of public trust are often fed back by patient and public communities, particularly in relation to re-identification of data, unique sensitivity of health data, specific concerns of marginalised communities, commercial access and data security/fear of hacking.

For researchers, a new Data Community Support Unit (DCSU) is being set up to help shape researcher-led data activities and support a connected and collaborative data community. The DCSU aims to help tackle common challenges, share best practices and drive data culture change focussing on different research data challenge areas:

- Health systems data
- Spatial biology data
- Data and samples reuse
- Public involvement and diversity
- Data and compute infrastructure
- Training and careers

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

Please provide:

- a brief summary of relevant organisation policies/ processes (e.g. research misconduct procedure, whistle-blowing policy, bullying/harassment policy; appointment of a third party to act as confidential liaison for persons wishing to raise concerns) and brief information on the periodic review of research misconduct processes (e.g. date of last review; any major changes during the period under review; date when processes will next be reviewed).
- information on how the organisation creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct (e.g. code of practice for research, whistle-blowing, research misconduct procedure, informal liaison process, website signposting for reporting systems, training, mentoring, reflection and evaluation of policies, practices and procedures).
- anonymised key lessons learned from any investigations into allegations of misconduct which either identified opportunities for improvements in the organisation's investigation procedure and/or related policies / processes/ culture or which showed that they were working well.

Research Integrity: Guidelines for Research Conduct: These guidelines set out how researcher communities and Host Institutions that receive CRUK funding are expected to maintain good research conduct and support research integrity. These state that, in the event of an allegation of research misconduct relating to a CRUK-funded researcher, it is the responsibility of the Host Institution that holds the CRUK grant to carry out an impartial, fair and timely investigation of all allegations of research misconduct made against its staff and/or students. CRUK's policy sets out that CRUK should be notified about any allegations no later than the point at which a decision is made to conduct a formal investigation. The Host Institution must keep CRUK informed during the process of investigation and on completion of the investigation, it must provide CRUK with the outcome of the investigation as soon as it is known and provide the final investigation report. Investigations should conclude promptly and in general within one year of receiving the allegation. This policy was last reviewed in October 2021 and will next be reviewed in September 2024 following lessons learned from CRUK's attendance at the World Conference on Research Integrity.

Dignity at Work in Research policy: This policy sets out our position and commitment to fostering a culture in research where everyone is treated with dignity. In relation to tackling bullying and harassment, it outlines the conditions that anyone involved in our research activities and their Host Institutions must meet when applying for funding and for the duration of their funding. The policy also applies to members of our funding Committees and Panels. Under our policy, Host Institutions funded by CRUK must: have an effective workplace conduct policy and take reasonable steps to implement it; disclose any active formal disciplinary

findings for bullying and harassment against applicants; and notify us of formal investigations into CRUK researchers. This policy is reviewed every two years. It was last reviewed in January 2023 when minor revisions were made due to being fit for purpose. The policy will next be reviewed in January 2025.

Reporting investigations into allegations of research misconduct and bullying and harassment to CRUK: Both policies outline why CRUK asks to be informed about investigation and provides reassurance on what we do with the information. When investigations are reported to us, matters are addressed fairly, promptly and in a confidential, restricted access manner. We will only take a response on upheld findings that is appropriate as a funder and work with the Host Institution to minimise the impact on any staff working on the affected grant(s) should sanctions be taken. Any information shared with CRUK is stored in accordance with data protection law requirements and updated and/or deleted in line with our retention policy and reviewed regularly to assess whether it can be removed.

Lessons learned: In 2024, we will update our research integrity policy to incorporate lessons learned from recent investigations including to:

- clarify expectations of both individuals and Host Institutions;
- outline more clearly why CRUK has a legitimate interest in being notified of investigations, in handling this data and what we do with information reported to us;
- outline the timeframe in which we require Host Institutions to report a decision to start an investigation to CRUK;
- outline the process for circumstances when researchers get in touch with CRUK directly to raise concerns;
- specify what CRUK requires to be reported by the Host Institution following the outcome of an investigation;
- align our policy approach with other major research funders.

Supporting research integrity as an ‘employer of researchers’: CRUK is primarily a funder of research: we support research through the provision of research grants to academic research institutions such as universities and research hospitals. In addition to our grant funding activity, we are also an ‘employer’ of a small number of researchers in the broad sense described in the Concordat. Researchers are employed directly or indirectly by Cancer Research Horizons (CRH - CRUK’s innovation engine) and our Centre for Drug Development (CDD). These research teams work differently and with inherently different performance incentives from those who work in higher education institutions, to which the Concordat is primarily directed. For example, researchers employed by CRUK are not required to apply for research grants, nor is their performance evaluated via publication metrics. As far as possible CRUK seeks to act in accordance with the spirit and intention of the Concordat. The CDD’s practices are regulated by Good Laboratory, Manufacturing and Clinical Practice Guidelines (GLP, GMP and GCP Guidelines, respectively) and is subject to audit and inspection by the Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency; all CDD staff receive training accordingly. CRH has policies and procedures to support the integrity of its research, which forms part of

the induction and training of all researchers. Any misconduct of CRUK-employed researchers can be reported to the concerned individual's line manager, the Executive Director of Research & Innovation or via our Whistleblower Policy. Any allegation would then be investigated under our employment policies. There have been no allegations of research misconduct in relation to any CRUK-employed researchers during the reporting period.

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

Please complete the table on the number of **formal investigations completed during the period under review** (including investigations which completed during this period but started in a previous academic year). Information from ongoing investigations should not be submitted.

An organisation's procedure may include an initial, preliminary, or screening stage to determine whether a formal investigation needs to be completed. These allegations should be included in the first column but only those that proceeded past this stage, to formal investigations, should be included in the second column.

Note: The table below lists completed investigations into allegations of research misconduct reported to CRUK during the period of **1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023**. Other investigations were reported during/before this period are ongoing.

Type of allegation	Number of allegations			
	Number of allegations reported to organisation	Number of formal investigations	Number upheld in part after formal investigation	Number upheld in full after formal investigation
Fabrication				
Falsification				
Plagiarism	<i>1 (previous years)</i>	<i>1 (previous years)</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations				
Misrepresentation				
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)	<i>1 (previous years)</i>	<i>1 (previous years)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
Other* Image duplication/manipulation	<i>1 (previous years)</i>	<i>1 (previous years)</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
Total:	3	3	1	0

***If you listed any allegations under the 'Other' category, please give a brief, high-level summary of their type here. Do not give any identifying or confidential information when responding.**