

**St. George's, University of London**  
**Research Integrity Annual Statement 2017**

**Introduction**

St George's, University of London (SGUL) is committed to ensuring that research at SGUL is conducted to rigorous standards and aims to maintain an environment that facilitates this. The Concordat to Support Research Integrity outlines five commitments that Higher Education Institutes should meet. These commitments include maintaining high research standards; ensuring compliance with ethical and legal frameworks; supporting a culture of integrity; dealing with research misconduct appropriately; and strengthening integrity. This document outlines what activities SGUL has undertaken in 2017 to support research integrity within the institution.

In May 2017, SGUL launched its new strategic plan, outlining the direction of the University over the next 5 years. Research is included as a specific part of this strategy, with aims including providing an inspiring research environment to enable researchers to reach their full potential. There was wide-ranging consultation throughout the university, where staff from all institutes and services within the university were engaged in active discussion on the operational implementation of the new strategy. This included a number of "world café" sessions focussed on different areas relevant to the university, including a session on research and one on education and students.

**Supporting and strengthening research integrity**

SGUL has had a Research Misconduct Procedure since 2012. This year, the procedure has been reviewed and now includes an executive summary. The new version has been published on the public-facing SGUL website and on the internal staff portal.

An overarching ethics policy for the university is in the final drafting stages and should be implemented before the end of the 2017-2018 academic year.

There has been a restructure of the Joint Research and Enterprise Office (JREO), which provides research and enterprise services for SGUL and St George's NHS Trust, with Heads appointed for the JREO Sections. The new Heads of Research Governance & Delivery and Research Funding are reviewing the current processes for research governance and funding and improving them where necessary.

Training activities for students this year have included seminar/workshop sessions on research governance, research ethics and integrity at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. For postgraduate students, the Common Postgraduate Framework (CPF) involves a series of research-related lectures, running from October to January. All postgraduate students, regardless of the qualification being undertaken, are required to attend these sessions. Guest lectures are given by various members of university staff and include research methodologies, appropriate statistics, publishing and communicating results, public and patient engagement in research and research ethics and law. There are plans for further integrity training opportunities to be developed for students and for early career researchers and post-doctoral students.

The JREO directs research staff requiring Good Clinical Practice (GCP) training to undertake a recognised GCP course and recommends the NIHR's online or local training courses. The

JREO aims to be offering St. George's as a venue for NIHR GCP training courses, which St. George's staff (both SGUL and Trust) can attend, from January 2018. The JREO's SOP on training is currently being updated to reflect Health Research Authority (HRA) and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) guidance with reference to GCP training, and with respect to the recently published UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research (which supersedes the Research Governance Framework). The SOP will also stipulate requirements and recommendations for training for research staff with participant contact, particularly with reference to consent training, study-specific and SOP-specific training. The JREO supports a pragmatic training programme for researchers and is looking to host events both for internal and external researchers.

All new members of staff at the University are invited to attend a Welcome Seminar. These are usually held once a quarter and cover the background to the University, health and safety and freedom of information requests. There are plans for the next calendar year to also include a session on research integrity at Welcome Seminars so that all new members of staff receive some degree of research integrity awareness training. The Dean of Research, Mark Fisher, has also given talks on research at St. George's.

A staff publication/circular highlighting key areas of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity is in development and is currently with the internal Communications team in preparation for circulation to all University staff.

In February 2017, the JREO received notification from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) of a routine inspection and requested a dossier of information to be submitted. This was submitted within the deadline given. Further communication on the inspection date has not yet been communicated to the University by the MHRA. Several MHRA routine inspection preparation workshops were held by the JREO in the first half of 2017 to assist staff in preparing for the inspection.

The JREO has conducted an analysis of the University's compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and reported its findings to the Research Strategy Committee on two occasions in 2017. This has led to greater awareness at a senior level of the detail contained within the Concordat and has facilitated cross-departmental collaboration on research integrity activities.

### **St. George's Research Ethics Committee (SGREC)**

In March 2017, the Chair of the SGREC and the University's Research Integrity Lead, Dr Rachel Allen, stepped down from her position as Chair. Sandra Ashton from the Molecular and Clinical Sciences Institute was recruited and took up this position in July 2017. Dr Allen remains on the Committee as Deputy Chair and as a representative of the Institute for Infection and Immunity.

This year, the SGREC published its first annual report which was submitted to the Research Strategy Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017. This covered the period from the Committee's beginnings in 2015 up until December 2016. In future, the reporting period will cover the academic year to allow for institutional comparisons; therefore the next report will cover the period September 2016 to August 2017.

Efforts to expand the SGREC are ongoing, with recruitment of new members from each of the University's Institutes underway. There are also plans in place to recruit more members

with clinical experience, as well as external and lay members. The Committee's Terms of Reference and *Modus Operandi* are also currently undergoing thorough review and revision by Committee members.

Several changes to the process for applying to the SGREC for ethical approval have been made or are in the process of changing. This includes processes for proportionate review of lower risk research and assessment of all research projects to ascertain the level of scrutiny required. Signposting to regulatory approvals and other research ethics committees (such as the need for ethical approval from a HRA REC) is also in place, and several SOPs are in development.

### **Addressing Research Misconduct**

The Research Misconduct Policy and Procedure details the process to be followed by University staff and students in the event that they suspect research misconduct. The procedure is also followed by St. George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Staff and students can report instances of research misconduct to Named Persons; for SGUL this is the Dean for Research and within the Trust it is the Medical Director.

The procedure outlines the principles against which allegations of research misconduct are measured and processed, ensuring investigations are conducted fairly and transparently.

There was one allegation of research misconduct in 2016 brought by a research supervisor suggesting that a group member had produced and analysed statistically untrue data. The case was examined by the Dean of Research and an expert panel in December 2016 through the informal process. The panel concluded unanimously that no attempt had been made to falsify data or mislead in its interpretation. The allegation of research misconduct was not upheld (report completed January 2017).

### **External Engagement**

St. George's participated in the International Clinical trials day, this year given the tagline "I am Research".

SGUL is continuing its subscription to the UK Research Integrity Office, a charity that provides advice and guidance to universities, students and staff on matters of research integrity.

### **List of relevant policies and procedures**

- Anti-bribery policy

[https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/Policies/Anti-Bribery\\_Policy\\_-\\_25\\_October\\_2011.pdf](https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/Policies/Anti-Bribery_Policy_-_25_October_2011.pdf)

- Gifts and hospitality policy

[https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/financial/160301\\_SGUL\\_Gifts\\_and\\_Hospitality\\_Policy\\_Final.pdf](https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/financial/160301_SGUL_Gifts_and_Hospitality_Policy_Final.pdf)

- Donations and gift acceptance policy

[https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/Gift\\_Acceptance\\_Policy\\_OCT\\_15.pdf](https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/Gift_Acceptance_Policy_OCT_15.pdf)

- Anti-fraud policy

[https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/Policies/Anti\\_Fraud\\_Policy\\_-Final-\\_V5.pdf](https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/Policies/Anti_Fraud_Policy_-Final-_V5.pdf)

- Crowdfunding policy

<https://portal.sgul.ac.uk/research/research-office/crowdfunding-policy-2017.pdf/view?>

- Data protection policy

[https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/Policies/SOP\\_DataProtection.pdf](https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/Policies/SOP_DataProtection.pdf)

- Freedom of information policy

[https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/FOI\\_Policy\\_v4\\_approved.pdf](https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/FOI_Policy_v4_approved.pdf)

- Research data management policy

[https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/Policies/SGUL\\_RDM\\_Policy\\_May\\_2016.pdf](https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/Policies/SGUL_RDM_Policy_May_2016.pdf)

- Research publications policy

[https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/Policies/Research\\_Publications\\_Policy\\_v07.pdf](https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/Policies/Research_Publications_Policy_v07.pdf)

- Research misconduct policy and procedure

<https://www.sgul.ac.uk/about-us/governance/policies#research-policies>

- Research misconduct or fraud SOP

<https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/education-and-research/research/standard-operating-procedures-and-templates/>

- Intellectual property policy

<https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/Policies/IPPolicy2016.pdf>

- Procedure for considering allegations of assessment irregularity

<https://www.sgul.ac.uk/about-us/governance/policies#student-policies>

- Use of animals in research policy

[https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/Policies/Use\\_of\\_animals\\_in\\_research\\_policy\\_July\\_2016.pdf](https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/Policies/Use_of_animals_in_research_policy_July_2016.pdf)

- Whistleblowing and public interest disclosure

[https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/Whistleblowing\\_Public\\_Interest\\_Disclosure\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/Whistleblowing_Public_Interest_Disclosure_Policy.pdf)