QIMR Berghofer
Medical Research Institute

QIMR Berghofer
Research Integrity
Framework

	Research Integrity Framework	Effective:	7 December 2021
		Version:	1
		Authorised by:	Grant Ramm
		Approved by:	Council

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1 BACKGROUND

QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute ('the Institute') was established following proclamation of the *Queensland Institute of Medical Research Act 1945* (Qld) ('the QIMR Act') for the purpose of research into any branch or branches of medical science.

Since that time, the Institute has established itself as a leading medical research institute with a long history of research contributing to improved health outcomes for Queenslanders and more broadly.

2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Framework is to:

- Articulate the Institute's approach to research integrity;
- Outline the Institute's mechanisms to manage and mitigate risks to research integrity;
- Specify institutional and individual researcher accountabilities in relation to upholding and maintaining research integrity and conducting ethical research;
- Catalogue the Institute's obligations under relevant legislation, codes, guidelines and regulations for the maintenance of research integrity;
- Outline the Institute's mechanisms for managing and mitigating the risks associated with breaches in research integrity; and
- Require a record of key actions undertaken by the Institute to demonstrate ongoing improvement initiatives and actions planned.

2.2 Scope

This framework applies to all research activity conducted by staff, researchers, contractors and students on behalf of the Institute and in partnership with third parties.

3 DEFINITIONS

The terms listed below in Table 1 should be read within the context of this Framework.

Term	Definition
Animal Ethics Committee (AEC)	The primary responsibility of an animal ethics committee is to ensure, on behalf of the Institute, that all activities relating to the care and use of animals are conducted in accordance with the Animal Code. The two main roles of an AEC are to ethically review proposals to use animals for scientific purposes and to monitor animal care and use. Animal ethics committees provide an avenue for public participation in the regulation of animal research. The Institute has an animal ethics committee that is reviewed internally and externally in accordance with the Animal Code.
Animal Code	Animal Code refers to the *Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes,* as amended from time to time.
Australian Research Council (ARC)	The Australian Research Council is a Commonwealth entity that advises the Australian Government on research matters, and administers the National Competitive Grants Program ('NCGP'), a component of Australia's investment in research and development, and has responsibility for ERA.
Council	Council refers to the Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research, as created by the QIMR Act.
Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA)	Excellence in Research for Australia is Australia's national research evaluation framework. ERA identifies and promotes excellence across the full spectrum of research activity in Australia's higher education institutions.
Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)	Human research ethics committees review research proposals involving human participants to ensure that they are ethically acceptable.
Integrity Mentors (IM)	Integrity Mentors are trained mentors who will attend researcher seminars and presentations to provide feedback to researchers on the quality of the data and research design as part of an ongoing mentoring program for all scientists presenting data.
National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)	The National Health and Medical Research Council is a non-corporate Commonwealth Entity in the Health portfolio that funds high quality health and medical research to build research capability, support researchers, encourage the translation of research into better health outcomes and promote the highest ethical standards for health and medical research.
Research Code	Research Code refers to the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018*, as amended from time to time.

Research Integrity Advisers (RIA)	A Research Integrity Adviser is an experienced researcher/scientist appointed by QIMR Berghofer to provide confidential advice to researchers, and employees who are unsure about a research conduct issue and may be considering whether to make a complaint. RIAs will explain the options open to the person(s) considering, making or having made a complaint. RIAs do not investigate complaints or contact the person who is the subject of the complaint or their supervisor.
Research Integrity Team	The Research Integrity Team is responsible for managing research integrity at the Institute and reports to the Designated Officer.
Designated Officer(s)	The Designated Officer, currently the Deputy Director, is responsible for oversight of this Framework, and for receiving complaints about the conduct of research or potential breaches of the Research Code and to oversee their management and investigation where required.

4   EXTERNAL OBLIGATIONS

As a leading medical research organisation, the Institute is committed to upholding the highest standards of integrity, in line with the standards and expectations of:

- The National Health and Medical Research Council;
- Sector benchmarks;
- Funding organisations;
- Queensland and Federal Governments;
- Relevant legislation, guidelines, codes and regulations;
- Commercial and educational partners; and
- The general public of Australia.

The Research Code and the *Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018* are endorsed by peak bodies and national funding agencies. It is not a legislative instrument, but compliance is required in order to receive research funds from most agencies, including the NHMRC.

The Animal Code and the *National Statement for Ethical Conduct in Human Research* ('the National Statement') operate in addition to the Research Code, to set out the Australian requirements for research integrity (the 'External Standards'). The External Standards are also subject to relevant Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation

which may reflect provisions within the National codes, statements and guidelines. In Queensland, relevant legislation includes the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001* (Qld) ('the Act') and the *Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2012* (Qld).

The External Standards require that an institute adopts policies and enact procedures which assure compliance with their provisions. Receipt of funding from national agencies requires such compliance. The Institute will work to develop and improve the policies and procedures to support the External Standards.

5   PRINCIPLES

The Research Code articulates the broad principles that characterise an ethical research culture and conduct as:

- *Honesty in developing, undertaking and reporting of research;*
- *Rigour in developing, undertaking and reporting of research;*
- *Transparency in declaring interests, reporting and archiving adequately all research methodology, data and findings;*
- *Fairness in the treatment of others;*
- *Respect for research participants, the wider community, animals and the environment;*
- *Recognition of the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be engaged in research that affects or is of particular significance to them;*
- *Accountability for developing, undertaking and reporting of research; and*
- *Promotion of responsible research practices.*

In accordance with the Research Code, and to reflect the Institute's individual mission and identity, the Institute has adopted the following principles in relation to the commissioning, planning, practice, conduct, culture and oversight of research at the Institute:

- **Rigour:** *The research carried out at the Institute must adhere to the most rigorous scientific standards. The Institute's standard for rigorous research practices establishes trust in the Institute's development, undertaking and reporting of research. Systems and processes and their continuous review mechanisms reflect the Institute's principles.*

- **Transparency and Honesty**: *The Institute maintains a positive culture of responsible research that supports transparency and honesty in research.*

Researchers must do their utmost to ensure the accuracy of reporting of research and compliance with relevant laws, regulations, guidelines and policies.

- **Respect:** *The Institute promotes the open exchange of ideas, methodologies, data and reporting of research with respect and recognition for ethical conduct relating to research participants, the community, animals and the environment.*

- **Recognition:** *The Institute recognises the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be consulted and engaged in research and is committed to continuously improve its engagement and partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*

- **Collaboration and Engagement:** *Staff, students, researchers and collaborators and contractors, form an integral part of promoting responsible research practices that are aligned with the Research Code and the Institute's mission. The Institute promotes a zero-tolerance culture for bullying, harassment and research misconduct.*

- **Improvement:** *The Institute strives to continuously improve its research practices. Opportunities for training and development and the required resources to enable the Institute to conduct research at the highest quality are fundamental to the Institute's mission.*

- **Accountability:** *The Institute is accountable for ensuring that all research undertaken complies with any agreements and/or terms and conditions relating to the project and that all research is conducted according to the Institute's governance, policy and management framework and is subject to oversight.*
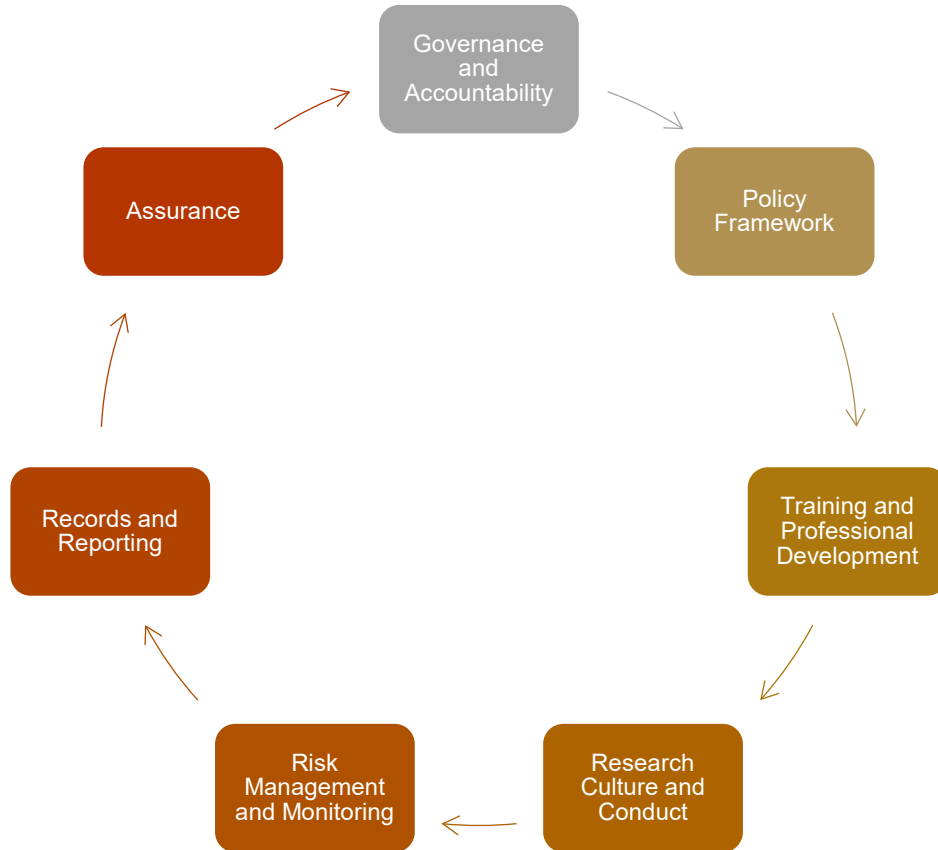
6   RESEARCH INTEGRITY MODEL

The Institute adopts a holistic approach to research integrity which encompasses governance oversight and guidance through:

- Appropriate policies to promote the principles outlined above;
- Educational processes for our researchers and support staff;
- Promotion of a positive culture;
- Provisions of mechanisms to ensure responsible conduct;
- Risk management processes; and
- Accurate and timely reporting, record keeping and assurance activities.

Figure 1 represents these key elements as part of the QIMR Research integrity model.

Figure 1: QIMR Research Integrity Model

7 GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Under the QIMR Act, the functions of the Council include:

- To control and manage the Institute;
- To raise and accept moneys for the purposes of the Institute;
- To invest moneys raised or accepted by the Council for the purposes of the Institute; and
- To invest moneys derived from any property or other invested moneys of the Council for the purposes of the Institute.

The Council has ultimate accountability for the corporate governance of the Institute. The Council therefore requires delegates with responsibility for the management, administration and operations of the Institute to report to, and be held accountable to, the Council for the integrity of the Institute.

The Council maintains oversight of research integrity through the following processes conducted by the Institute:

- The establishment of sub-committees including a Finance, Audit and Risk Committee;
- The establishment of an HREC and an AEC;
- Approving the resources required to implement this Framework, including through:
  - o appointment of one or more Research Integrity Officer(s); and
  - o procurement and maintenance of fit for purpose data systems to ensure accurate record keeping;
  - o training of supervisors of research trainees;
- Risk management and monitoring including integrity and ethical related risks;
- Due diligence processes and risk assessment for projects;
- Establishment of mechanisms to receive concerns or complaints about potential breaches of the Research Code;
- Reporting of critical incidents, complaints, student, staff and contractor integrity issues;
- Conducting compliance audits; and
- Mitigation of the risk of fraud and corruption, as far as it is practicable.

8   POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Institute has instituted a robust and transparent policy framework that articulates and defines expectations and which has codified the requirement to maintain and uphold research integrity. All policies are broadly consistent with legislation, standards, and codes for research integrity that govern practice at the Institute and apply at the institutional, individual researcher and support staff level.

Designated Officers must ensure that all staff are familiar with and observe the Institute's research integrity policy framework and that practice is consistent with the requirements as set out in each of the following policies:

- Code of Conduct;
- Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy;
- Misconduct and Serious Misconduct Policy;
- Policy on the Responsible Conduct of Research and Research Misconduct;

- Procedures for Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research; and
- Policy on the Use of Animal for Scientific Purposes.

In addition to the above, staff have a responsibility to understand and comply with all Institute policies and procedures, particularly those which may have an impact on research integrity.

9   TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Institute must ensure that all members of the Institute undergo regular training and professional development to ensure awareness, understanding and practice aligns with the approved policy framework, community expectations and sector guidance and codes to uphold research integrity. This includes:

- Induction processes including policy familiarisation;
- Ethics Training;
- Research Integrity Training, including for Research Integrity Advisors and Integrity Mentors;
- Research Data Management Training; and
- Animal / Experimental Software Training.

Supervisors of research trainees at the Institute must have the appropriate skills, qualifications, training and resources.

Infrastructure and system updates to facilitate best practice research conduct must be implemented wherever possible. Users of these systems must be appropriately trained.

The Institute will have a compulsory, face to face session once a year where the Director and Deputy-Director will set out the expectations on research integrity. Program Directors will be responsible for ensuring that these expectations are understood within their program areas.

10 COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING

The Institute must ensure that appropriate resources are allocated to the Research Integrity Office and the Institute's HREC and AEC to allow them to fulfil their legislative and institutional compliance and monitoring responsibilities.

11 RESEARCH CULTURE AND CONDUCT

The Institute must encourage and support responsible research conduct by maintaining a positive culture of integrity and responsible research that supports transparency and honesty in research. The Institute has an obligation to funding organisations and the Australian community to strive to achieve the highest standards of research integrity.

Individual Researchers must uphold the principles of responsible research conduct as per the Institute's mission as well as those of the Research Code to support a culture of responsible research conduct.

Table 1 sets out the accountabilities for the Institute and individual researchers.

Table 1: Accountabilities – Research Culture and Conduct

Institutional Accountabilities	**Individual Researcher Accountabilities**
R1 Establish and maintain good governance and management practices for responsible research conduct.	R14 Support a culture of responsible research conduct at their institution and in their field of practice.
R2 Identify and comply with relevant laws, regulations, guidelines and policies related to the conduct of research.	R15 Provide guidance and mentorship on responsible research conduct to other researchers or research trainees under their supervision and, where appropriate, monitor their conduct.
R3 Develop and maintain the currency and ready availability of a suite of policies and procedures which ensure that institutional practices are consistent with the principles and responsibilities of the Code.	R16 Undertake and promote education and training in responsible research conduct.
R4 Provide ongoing training and education that promotes and supports responsible research conduct for all researchers and those in other relevant roles.	R17 Comply with the relevant laws, regulations, disciplinary standards, ethics guidelines and institutional policies related to responsible research conduct. Ensure that appropriate approvals are obtained prior to the commencement of research, and that conditions of any approvals are adhered to during the course of research.
R5 Ensure supervisors of research trainees have the appropriate skills, qualifications and resources.	
R6 Identify and train Research Integrity Advisors who assist in the promotion and fostering of responsible research conduct and provide advice to those with concerns about potential breaches of the Code.	R18 Ensure that the ethics principles of research merit and integrity, justice, beneficence and respect are applied to human research.
	R19 Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and respect their legal rights and local laws, customs and protocols.

Institutional Accountabilities

R7 Support the responsible dissemination of research findings. Where necessary, take action to correct the record in a timely manner.

R8 Provide access to facilities for the safe and secure storage and management of research data, records and primary materials and, where possible and appropriate, allow access and reference to these.

R9 Facilitate the prevention and detection of potential breaches of the Code.

R10 Provide mechanisms to receive concerns or complaints about potential breaches of the Code. Investigate and resolve potential breaches of the Code.

R11 Ensure that the process for managing and investigating concerns or complaints about potential breaches of the Code is timely, effective and in accord with procedural fairness.

R12 Support the welfare of all parties involved in an investigation of a potential breach of the Code.

R13 Base findings of investigations on the balance of probabilities and ensure any actions are commensurate with the seriousness of the breach.

Individual Researcher Accountabilities

R20 Ensure that the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) are considered at all stages of research involving animals and minimise the impacts on animals used in research and in so doing support the welfare and wellbeing of these animals.

R21 Adopt methods appropriate to the aims of the research and ensure that conclusions are justified by the results.

R22 Retain clear, accurate, secure and complete records of all research including research data and primary materials. Where possible and appropriate, allow access and reference to these by interested parties.

R23 Disseminate research findings responsibly, accurately and broadly. Where necessary, take action to correct the record in a timely manner.

R24 Disclose and manage actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

R25 Ensure that authors of research outputs are all those, and only those, who have made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to the research and its output, and that they agree to be listed as an author.

R26 Acknowledge those who have contributed to the research.

R27 Cite and acknowledge other relevant work appropriately and accurately.

R28 Participate in peer review in a way that is fair, rigorous and timely and maintains the confidentiality of the content.

R29 Report suspected breaches of the Code to the relevant institution and/or authority.

Source: National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and Universities Australia: The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018

12 RISK MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

The Institute will manage and monitor risks to research integrity through a variety of mechanisms including:

- Identification and disclosures of relevant personal interests and conflicts of interest;
- Identification and reporting of possible research integrity breaches[1];
- Complaint management and reporting;
- Review of policies as required or at least every 2 years;
- Data integrity review[2];
- Ethics training;
- Research Integrity Training;
- Maintenance of a Risk Register;
- Compliance and research integrity audits[2]; and
- Implementation of a fraud and corruption control plan[3].

13 RECORDS AND REPORTING

Researchers must present information truthfully and accurately in the proposing, conducting and reporting of research. All reporting and records are to comply with relevant legislation, policies and guidelines as outlined in part 16 of this Framework.

Researchers must ensure that all methods and assessments, and primary data including recordings, images, and files are archived according to QIMR policy. Additionally, researchers are encouraged to adopt best practice research guidelines developed for particular experimental paradigms national and internationally.

The Institute will support the responsible dissemination of research findings in line with the Research Code, and where necessary, act to correct the record in a timely manner.

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[1] National Health and Medical Research Council – Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Code - 2018

[2] This may comprise a quality assurance step such as presentation at a seminar, or seeking raw data for some experiments.

[3] Responsibility for compliance audits and fraud and corruption audits sits with a number of areas including: research integrity; Finance and Audit; and the HREC/AEC.

Table 2 sets out the accountabilities for the Institute and individual researchers.

Table 2: Accountabilities – Record Keeping

Institutional Accountabilities	Individual Researcher Accountabilities
• Provision of training for researchers • Ownership, stewardship and control of research data and primary materials • Storage, retention and disposal of data and materials. • Safety, security and confidentiality of data and materials • Provision of access to data and/or material by external collaborators • Provision and maintenance of appropriate facilities • Support for the responsible dissemination of research findings	• Produce evidence-based unbiased primary data through rigorous, well-controlled and documented experimental designs • Retention of clear and accurate records including data and materials • Managing confidential and other sensitive information • Acknowledging the use of others' data • Engagement with relevant training • Disseminate research findings responsibly, accurately and broadly in a timely manner

Source: National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and Universities Australia. Management of Data and Information in Research: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

14 ASSURANCE

The Institute, and in particular the Council, must assure itself that responsible research conduct is fostered and maintained with governance and management practices that comply with relevant laws, regulations, guidelines and policies.

The Institute must ensure appropriate reporting, auditing, monitoring and delegations are in place to enable oversight and accountability across the operations of the Institute and to provide the necessary assurances to the Council.

The Institute is responsible for ensuring the integrity of research and ensuring the QIMR Research Integrity Model and Framework is applied and is applicable to all staff, students, contractors, visiting scientists and the Institute as a whole.

This framework will be subject to review after 12 months after its first approval and then every 2 years or as otherwise required by Council.

15 RESEARCH INTEGRITY PLAN AND DELEGATION

As part of the Institute's commitment to research integrity, the **QIMR Berghofer Research Integrity Plan** will set out relevant requirements for managing research integrity. The plan includes a matrix of controls to highlight the manner in which the Institute will meet its commitments and ensure that there is a record and plan of the Institute's actions. The plan will be overseen by the Institute's Council to ensure currency and to identify any improvements that are necessary to ensure ongoing research integrity.

The Institute's Director and CEO and Deputy Director will have primary responsibility to ensure that the Institute's commitments under this framework are met and are also responsible for the approval of any changes to the Research Integrity Plan.

16 RELATED LEGISLATION, GUIDELINES AND CODES

The following is a list of relevant legislation, codes, guidelines and instruments:

QIMR Berghofer

- *Queensland Institute of Medical Research Act 1945* (Qld)

Australian Government Research Ethics and Research Integrity Guidelines

- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018
- National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018)
- Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 2013 (8th ed)
- AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Research and Guide
- The Code and Authorship: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research
- National Health and Medical Research Council – Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Code - 2018
- National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and Universities Australia. Management of Data and Information in Research: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research
- NHMRC's other Policies and Guidelines as amended from time to time.

Privacy Laws

- *The Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)

- *Information Privacy Act 2009* (Qld)

State Archives of Australia

- Queensland State Archives

State based legislation relating to animal research

- *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001* (Qld)
- *Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2012* (Qld)

Statutory Bodies

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld)
- *Auditor-General Act 2009* (Qld)
- *Criminal Code Act Queensland 1899* (Qld)
- *Crime and Corruption Act 2001* (Qld)
- *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth)
- *Financial Accountability Act 2009* (Qld)
- *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2009* (Qld)
- *Industrial Relations Act 1999* (Qld)
- *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010* (Qld)
- *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994* (Qld)
- *Statutory Bodies and Financial Arrangements Act 1982* (Qld)
- *Statutory Bodies and Financial Arrangements Regulation 2007* (Qld)
- *Right to Information Act 2009* (Qld)
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Qld)

17 CONTACT OFFICER

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18 AMENDMENT HISTORY

Version	Date approved	Date due for review	Date due for renewal
1	07 December 2021	01 December 2022	01 December 2022