Annual statement from the **Medical Research Council** on Research Integrity and Scientific Misconduct for the period 1st April 2015 - 31st March 2016

1. Summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues

* A new policy and guidance on declarations of interest for MRC staff was published in August 2015.
* Head Office staff have provided individual advice to MRC-funded scientists and colleagues managing the peer review process in relation to potential misconduct and other related issues, to ensure that good practice is followed and allegations are appropriately dealt with.
* In response to increasing concerns about the lack of reproducibility of research results, particularly in pre-clinical biomedical research, the MRC worked with AMS, BBSRC and the Wellcome Trust to organise a symposium in April 2015, the report of which, *Reproducibility and reliability of biomedical research; improving research practice[[1]](#footnote-1)*, was published in October 2015. Since then the MRC has been working with other funders to develop and implement ways to improve the rigour and reliability of research, including modifications to the peer review process for grant applications and strengthening requirements for training in statistics and experimental design in PhD programmes. Research misconduct is not thought to be a major contributor to problems with reproducibility, but many actions to raise awareness of the problem and promote good practice are also relevant to research integrity.

1. Assurances that the processes employers have in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation.

* The MRC’s ‘Scientific misconduct policy and procedure’ was updated in November 2014. One allegation has been handled satisfactorily following the updated procedure.

1. High-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct/Statistics

The following information concerns allegations relating to current or former MRC employees or PhD students or to work undertaken in MRC establishments.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of full investigations that were underway during the year | 0 |
| Of these the number that started during the year | 0 |
| Number of investigations completed during the year: i) upheld  ii)not upheld | 0 |
| 0 |
| Number of allegations that did not proceed to a full investigation[[2]](#footnote-2) | 1 |

As an indicator of scale, the average number of MRC full time equivalent employees during 2015/16 was 2135[[3]](#footnote-3).

[However, of course this does not represent a true denominator as it includes many staff unlikely ever to be in a position to commit research misconduct].

1. <http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/policy/policy-projects/reproducibility-and-reliability-of-biomedical-research/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The one allegation investigated was dismissed following the screening stage and did not proceed to full investigation. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This does not include locally employed staff in the MRC Units in The Gambia and Uganda [↑](#footnote-ref-3)