Research Ethics Guide (REG)

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Section 1. Introduction to REG
This document introduces the different principles for responsible and ethical conduct of research. Some of these sections are not exhaustive and links are provided to the relevant detailed policy. It is the responsibility of the researchers and research institutions to familiarize themselves with these policies prior to conducting any research. QNRF seeks to ensure the quality and integrity of the research it funds by developing, implementing, coordinating and overseeing policies and procedures that provide standards and consistency for the process of monitoring research conducted under QNRF awards.

In fostering scientific integrity, QNRF wants to ensure that (1) scientific findings are credible and; (2) QNRF code of conduct and processes are transparent for all grant applicants.

Section 2. Human Subject, Vertebrate Animals and Safe Laboratory Practices
Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) - Qatar provides leadership in protection of the rights, welfare and well-being of human subjects involved in research conducted or supported by QNRF. MoPH offers guidance, maintains regulatory oversight and gives advice on ethical and regulatory issues in biomedical and socio-behavioral research.

In implementing MoPH's regulations, the QNRF process includes checkpoints to ensure compliance with guidelines outlined in MoPH's publication titled, “Policies, Regulations and Guidelines for Research Involving Human Subjects.” A QNRF grant application, that involves or plans to involve human subjects, containing inadequate or unacceptable plans for protecting human subjects will not receive QNRF funding. The QNRF peer-review system evaluates the adequacy of protections for human subjects in each grant application and any concerns raised by reviewers must be resolved to the satisfaction of QNRF before an award can be issued.


MoPH’s “Policies, Regulations and Guidelines for Research Involving Laboratory Animals” regulates the care and use of vertebrate animals involved in research throughout Qatar. The QNRF peer-review system evaluates justifications for use of the vertebrate animals in grant applications and descriptions for their use in research. Any concerns raised during the peer review must be resolved to the satisfaction of QNRF and the QNRF program before an award can be issued.

All QNRF supported research activities that involve animals are regulated by the MoPH through its guidelines and policies.

Based on the MoPH requirements for training, QNRF requires education on the protection of human subjects, laboratory animals and about research misconduct for all investigators submitting QNRF applications for grants. The Submitting Institution/Awardee is not required to submit the training certificates to QNRF for review. However, a copy must be made available to QNRF upon request.

Section 3. Research Misconduct
Research misconduct is defined as fabrication, falsification or plagiarism in proposing, performing or reviewing research or in reporting research results, according to QNRF’s policy on research misconduct (link).

- Fabrication is defined as making up data or results and recording or reporting them.
- Falsification is defined as manipulating research materials, equipment or processes and changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
- Plagiarism is defined as appropriating another person’s ideas, processes, results or words without giving credit.
- A finding of research misconduct requires the following:
  - There must be a significant departure from accepted practices of the relevant research community.
  - The misconduct must be committed intentionally, knowingly or recklessly.
  - The allegation must be proven by a preponderance of the evidence.

Research misconduct does not include honest errors or differences of opinion. All institutions receiving QNRF funding must have written policies and procedures for addressing allegations of research misconduct.

QNRF’s identification of findings of research misconduct may result in special award conditions and/or enforcement actions, depending on the specific circumstances involved.

QNRF will refer any allegations of research misconduct to the investigator’s institution for inquiry. If an allegation warrants an investigation, a summary of the findings of the research misconduct investigation must be reported to QNRF by the RO as soon as the investigation findings are final, and all the involved parties have accepted the findings.

QNRF may take one or more actions, depending on the severity and duration of noncompliance, that may result in special award conditions and/or enforcement actions depending on the specific circumstances involved. QNRF will undertake any such action(s) in accordance with the applicable policies.

Section 4. Plagiarism

QNRF considers plagiarism to include both the theft or misappropriation of intellectual property and the substantial unattributed textual copying of another’s work. It does not include authorship or credit disputes.
The theft or misappropriation of intellectual property includes the unauthorized use of ideas or unique methods obtained by a privileged communication, such as a grant or manuscript review. Substantial unattributed textual copying of another’s work means the unattributed verbatim or nearly verbatim copying of sentences and paragraphs which materially mislead the ordinary reader regarding the contributions of the author.

QNRF enforces a zero-tolerance policy to plagiarism in all its supported projects and in the applications for funding, and uses the plagiarism detector iThenticate as part of its review process. QNRF may accept limited use of identical or nearly-identical phrases which describe a commonly-used methodology.

Therefore, an applicant or grantee’s failure to comply with the terms and conditions of award, including confirmed instances of research misconduct, may cause QNRF to take one or more actions, depending on the severity and duration of the noncompliance. QNRF will undertake any such action in accordance with the applicable policies.

Hence, citing resources properly is necessary for all proposals and reports. Referencing is the practice of acknowledging in your own writing the intellectual work of others. This is done by including citations in your work and providing a list of references. Citation is defined as abbreviated alphanumeric expression embedded in the text, where it will refer to a bibliometric reference. There are different ways for citation, and QNRF accepts all types, as long as it follows the approved standards.

For more information related to Plagiarism, please refer to QNRF’s policy on research misconduct (link).

Section 5. Standards for Research Conduct

QNRF requires awarded institutions to establish safeguards to prevent employees, collaborators, consultants and others who may be involved in grant-supported activities from using their positions for purposes that are, or give the appearance, of being a conflict of interest or an apparent conflict of interest. These safeguards must be reflected in written standards of conduct. The awarded institution is responsible for enforcing its standards of conduct, taking appropriate actions on individual misconduct and in the case of conflict of interest, informing the designated QNRF program officer if the infraction is related to a QNRF award. The awarded institution must promptly report issues involving violations, such as misappropriation of funds, to QNRF.

The awarded institution is not required to submit its standards of conduct to QNRF for review or approval. However, a copy must be made available to each of the awarded institution’s officers, employees and collaborators working on the grant-supported project or activity; and if applicable, and, upon request, to QNRF.

If a suspension or separation action is taken by an awarded institution against an LPI, principal investigator or other key personnel under a QNRF grant, the awarded institution must request prior QNRF approval for any proposed replacement.
An essential element of ensuring the integrity of QNRF funded research is adherence to specific requirements that foster the safe and ethical conduct of research. These are articulated in the Master Research Funding Agreement (MRFA) and RFP terms and conditions that must be agreed to by institutions receiving QNRF funding. When a QNRF awarded institution fails to materially comply with the terms and conditions of the award, including confirmed instances of research misconduct, QNRF may take one or more actions, depending on the severity and duration of the noncompliance in accordance with applicable policies. QNRF may give the awarded institution an opportunity to correct the deficiencies before taking action unless concerns arise that require immediate action. However, even if an awarded institution takes corrective actions, QNRF may take proactive actions to protect its own interests, including placing special conditions on awards or precluding the submitting institution/awardee from obtaining future awards for a specified period; or may take actions designed to prevent future noncompliance, such as closer monitoring; or withhold support, suspend the grant or terminate the grant for cause.

Section 6. Reporting Concerns
If you have scientific questions or concerns about a QNRF grant, you can contact us via support.qnrf.org.

If you want to make a formal allegation, you may consider contacting QNRF as follows:

- Matters regarding research compliance (i.e., protection of human subjects, laboratory animals, environmental health and safety, bio-hazardous materials) and research integrity (i.e., plagiarism, falsification, or fabrication; and conflict of interest) should be reported to the QNRF Office of Research Integrity via ticket to Research Integrity on support.qnrf.org.
- Matters involving fraud, waste and mismanagement in any QNRF funded grants should be reported to the QNRF Office of Compliance via ticket to Compliance on support.qnrf.org.