

Application & review guide for applicants using REAMS

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Introduction to this guide

This document is part of a suite of guidance for Lancaster University staff and/or post graduate researchers (Masters Research (MRES) students, PhD, doctorate and MPhil) to assist them in making a research ethics application using REAMS (Research Ethics Application Management System), the University's online system for submitting ethics applications for review and approval by the Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs).

Exceptions to this guide:

- Does not apply to undergraduate or Taught Masters students and they need to use their departmental/school ethics approval process.
- Does not apply to amendments to approved ethics applications as there is a separate guide for that process which is accessible from the REAMS webpage, here: [REAMS Web-guidance - Lancaster University](#)

Introduction to REAMS

REAMS (Research Ethics Application Management System) is an online system that can be accessed by Lancaster University researchers (applicants) as long as they have access to the internet. REAMS is designed to react to the information which the applicant inputs so it can tailor their application form appropriately.

The application form allows applicants to answer key questions, add in-depth explanations and upload relevant documents.

When an application is completed and signed it is automatically submitted to the appropriate Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) for review. Feedback from the FREC can be seen in the comments on the application form in REAMS. REAMS allows an applicant to revise their application and resubmit it with revisions. An application may go through several rounds of revisions until the ‘reviewer’ feels the application can be submitted for a final approval check to the Chair of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Info: Throughout the REAMS application form guidance, advice and tips are provided via a set of on-screen buttons.



Key Glossary

Acronym	Meaning
REAMS	Research Ethics Management System
RSO	Research Services Office
REO	Research Ethics Officer
FREC / REC	Faculty Research Ethics Committee
NHS / HRA	National Health Service / Health Research Authority

Useful Links

Item	Link
Research Ethics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committees • Email Addresses 	https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/research-services/research-integrity-ethics--governance/research-ethics/
REAMS login and Guidance	https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/research-services/research-integrity-ethics--governance/research-ethics/reams-web-guidance/
REAMS technical (system) support	RSO Systems email pure-support@lancaster.ac.uk
LU Sponsorship for NHS related research	Guidance for Health and Social Care Research and Sponsorship at Lancaster

Research Ethics Contacts

If you have any question regarding this guidance, you can contact the relevant Research Ethics Committee Officer using the links in the Research Ethics page (refer to the table above). Also, there is additional information and document templates on the Faculty Research Ethics webpages here:

- **FHASS & LUMS (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences & Lancaster University Management School)**
- **FST (Faculty of Science and Technology)**
- **FHM (Faculty of Health and Medicine)**

Brief outline of the application and review process

1. Applicants log into REAMS and create a new application.
 2. At the end of the form, applications are checked for completeness.
 - Incomplete applications are returned to applicants so they can provide enough information for the initial ethics review to be carried out.
 - Complete applications are sent to a Faculty Research Ethics Committee member, called a ‘reviewer’.
 3. Reviewers undertake a review of the submitted ethics application.
 - If necessary, an application is returned to the applicant for revision.
 - If this is not necessary, the application is sent to the Ethics Committee Chair.
 4. The Chair will do a final check of the submitted application.
 - If they have any queries, the application is returned to the applicant for further information/ revisions.
 - If the Chair does not have any queries the applications is approved.
 5. Applicants receive a formal notification of approval via an email which is automatically sent from REAMS.
- IMPORTANT!** Please remember that research must not start until written approval has been received.

Info: This process can take around 6 to 8 weeks to complete but can take longer if the application is ethically complex, requires multiple revisions, or revisions take a long time to complete.

Logging into REAMS

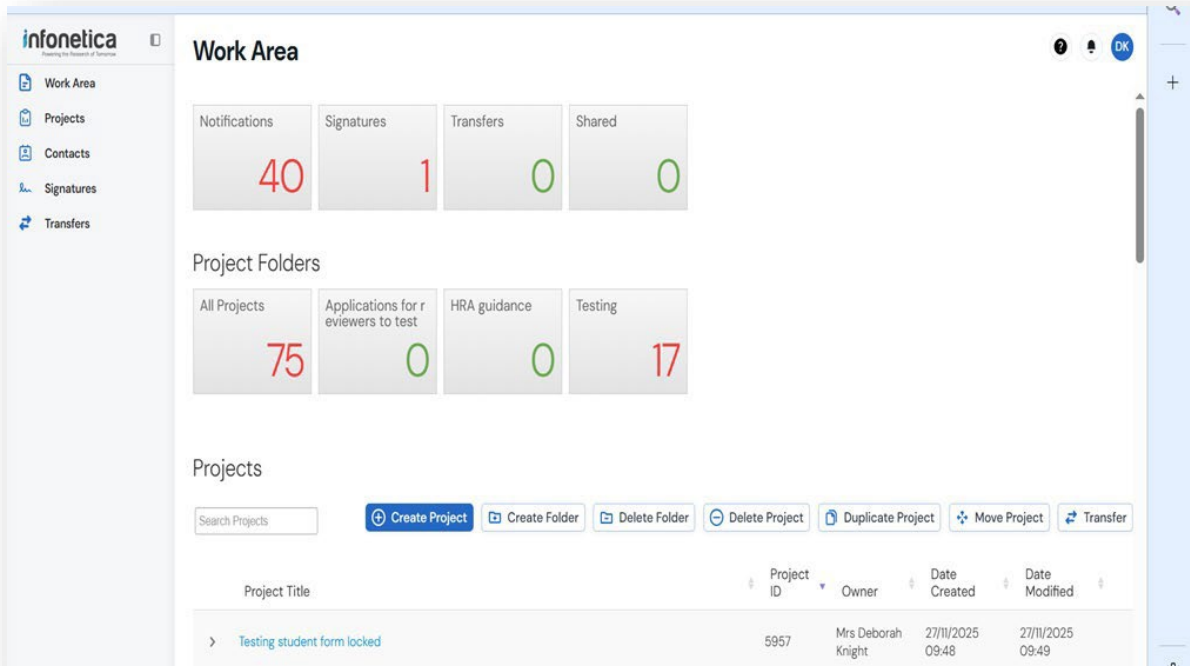
REAMS can be accessed from this link <https://reams.lancaster-university.uk/ActivityForm/Index>

- Login name: your Lancaster e-mail address
- Password: Default is Lancaster1 until you change it.

For problems logging in, please contact REAMS Support: RSO Systems reams-support@lancaster.ac.uk

The Work Area screen

When logged in, applicants are presented with the Work Area screen which gives an overview of all their applications in progress, submitted, and approved.



Along the left side bar (Which you may need to hover over to make it appear) is a menu for the following options:

Work Area: This allows an applicant to go back to the Work Area screen at any point.

Projects: This allows the applicant to view all their ethics applications.

Contacts: This allows the applicant to update their contact details within REAMS.

Signatures: This allows the applicant to see which of their applications have been signed.

Transfers: This allows an applicant to view any ethics applications where they have transferred ownership of an application to a different applicant at Lancaster University

About halfway down on the main page under the subheading ‘Projects’ there is an area containing some tabs for the following options:

Create Project/Create Folder/Delete Folder/Delete Project/Duplicate Project/Move Project/Transfer: These allow an applicant to create and delete folders. They are useful for organising applications especially if an applicant has several applications. For example, a folder can be set up to organise approved applications or completed projects, etc.

Create Project: This allows an applicant to start the process of completing a new ethics application.

Delete Project: This allows an applicant to delete an ethics application from REAMS if required.

Duplicate Project: This allows an applicant to duplicate an ethics application. This can be useful, for example, when starting a new ethics application which has similar elements to a previous application as it removes the need to re-type much of the information. This feature allows the applicant to tailor it to the new research project. This does not affect the original application. To note, the applicant will be prompted to input a new title, so it is clear they are starting a new ethics application.

Transfer Project: This allows an applicant to transfer ownership of a project application to a different applicant at Lancaster University. This removes access from the original owner. This is rarely used but it is there in case an applicant needs to transfer ownership and if this happens after the application has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee, it will also constitute a substantial amendment. There is separate guidance on how to submit an amendment on this webpage under the subheading ‘Amendments Guidance’.

The main, area of the screen called the ‘Work Area’ shows several folders which are called ‘tiles’ with text and numbers, as well as a list of applications. When you click on the tiles they open different views (pages) of ethics applications. These include:

Notifications: This page displays a list of notifications of actions that have occurred. Applicants can click on these notifications to read more details and open the application form.

Signatures: This page displays any requests for a project to be electronically signed off as part of the processing and submission process.

Transfers: This page displays any requests for an applicant to transfer an ethics application to another applicant.

Shared: This page displays a list of ethics applications that have been shared with the applicant by another applicant. Note, this is not the same as transferring ownership of an application.

Creating a new ethics application in REAMS

Before an applicant starts an application, they should ensure that all members such as themselves, their supervisor, any co-investigators and team members are added to REAMS. To add people in REAMS:

Info: Applicants can edit contact details from this page, as well as delete contacts if required.

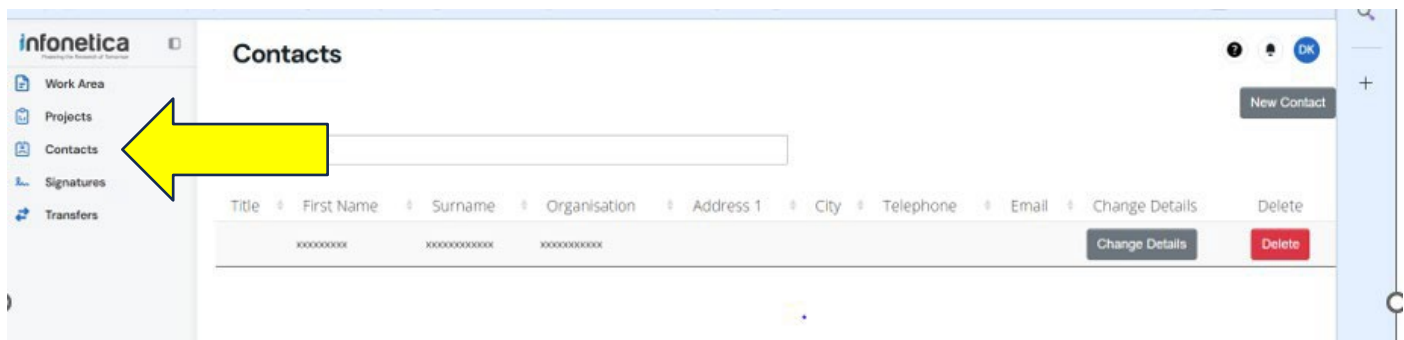
Click on ‘Contacts’ in the left side bar, as per the yellow arrow in the screenshot below.

Click on New Contact and add the relevant details.

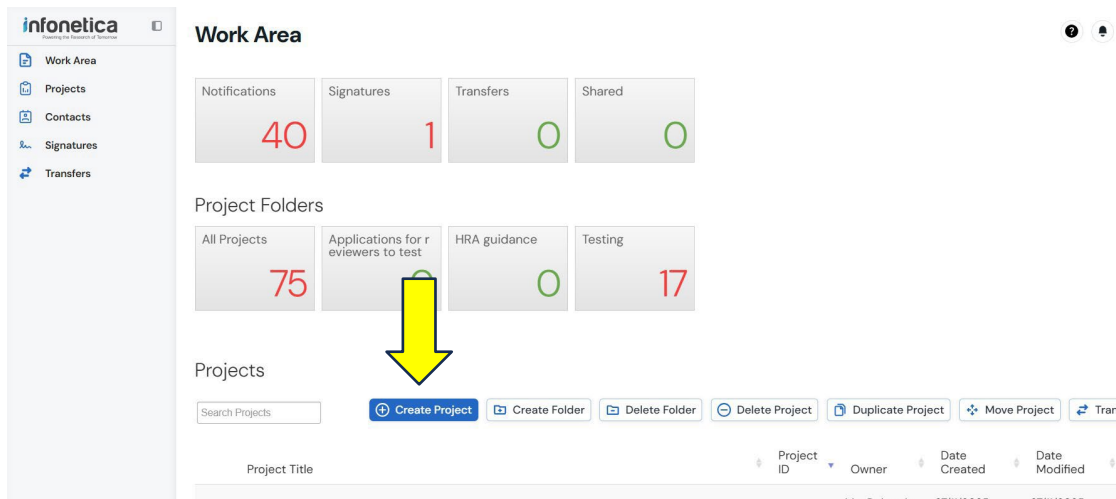
Click SAVE and repeat as required.

For problems adding contacts or their details, please contact REAMS Support:

reams-support@lancaster.ac.uk

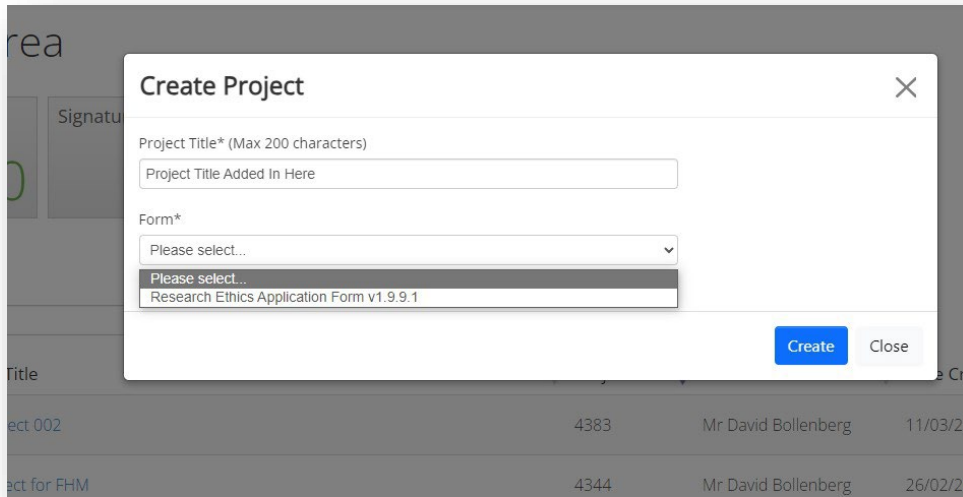


When an applicant is ready to create an ethics application they must click on the ‘Create Project’ button in the Work Area, as shown in the screenshot below, under the yellow arrow.



This will present the applicant with the ‘Create Project’ naming box shown below. (‘Project’ here in REAMS means ‘ethics application’ so essentially you are creating an ethics application).

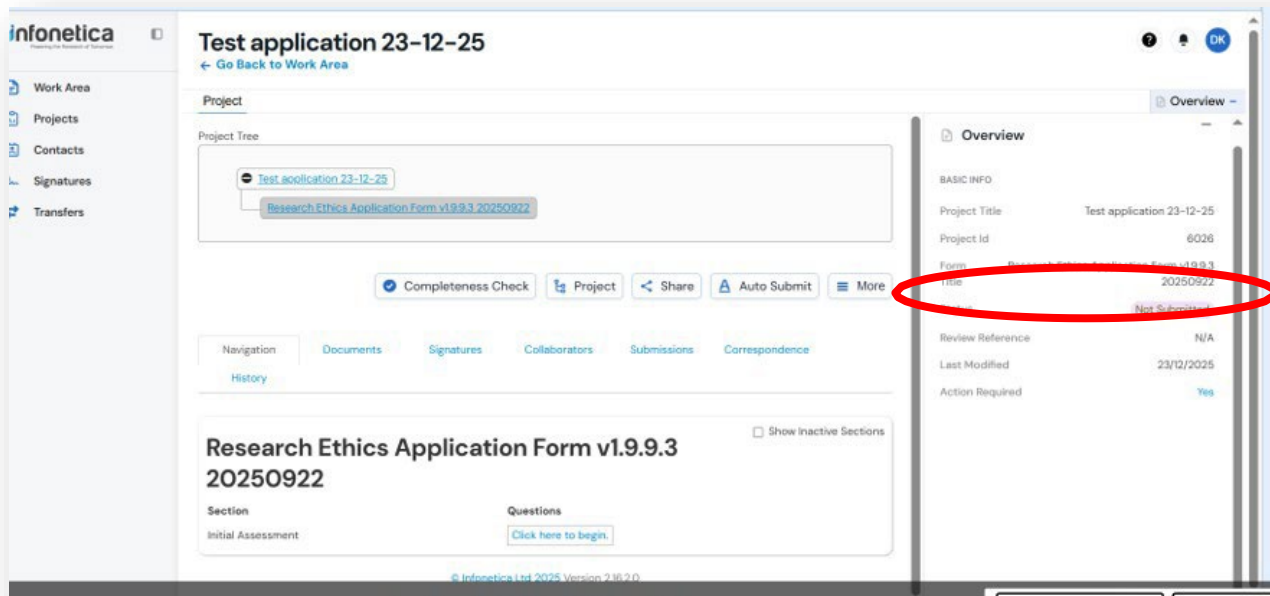
Applicants must insert the title of their research project and select the application form from the drop down menu. (To note, when creating a new ethics application there is only one option in this drop-down menu and the exact version number may differ from this example due to future updates to the form).



Note: As mentioned earlier, applicants can use the ‘Duplicate Project’ option as a short cut to duplicate a similar, previously created ethics application. This creates a new ethics application using all the data of the original application and allows applicants to edit the details to create a new ethics application for a different, new, research project. Applicants are advised to carefully check the final application before submitting it to their Faculty Research Ethics Committee for review to ensure no irrelevant or incorrect information remains from the original application. Edits to the new application do not affect the original.

Project Application Overview Page

When an applicant has created a new ethics application in the Work Area page and clicked on the Create Project button, they are presented with the first page of the application process. The four-digit number in the right sidebar is the unique identifier (the ‘project ID’) for the application, as shown in the red oval shape, in the screenshot below.



There are several new buttons as shown in the screenshot above:

Completeness Check: This checks the form and lists any areas that need further attention prior to being submitted.

Project: This gives the applicant an overview of the application form structure.

Share: This allows the applicant to add (Lancaster University) collaborators to the application.

More: Click on this button and the drop-down menu will give you the option to:

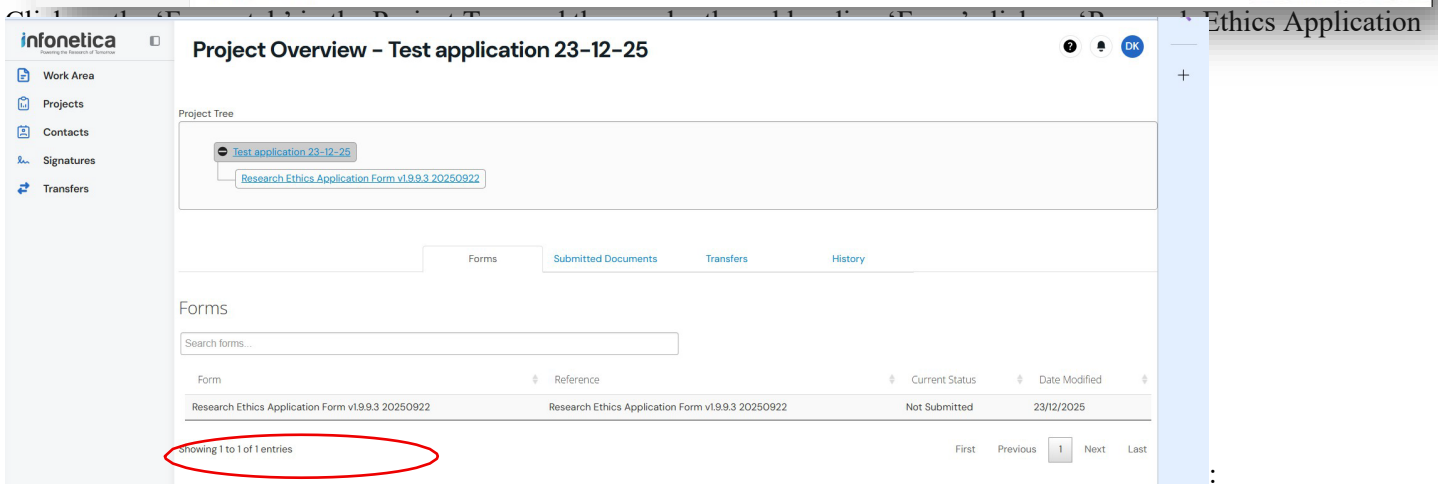
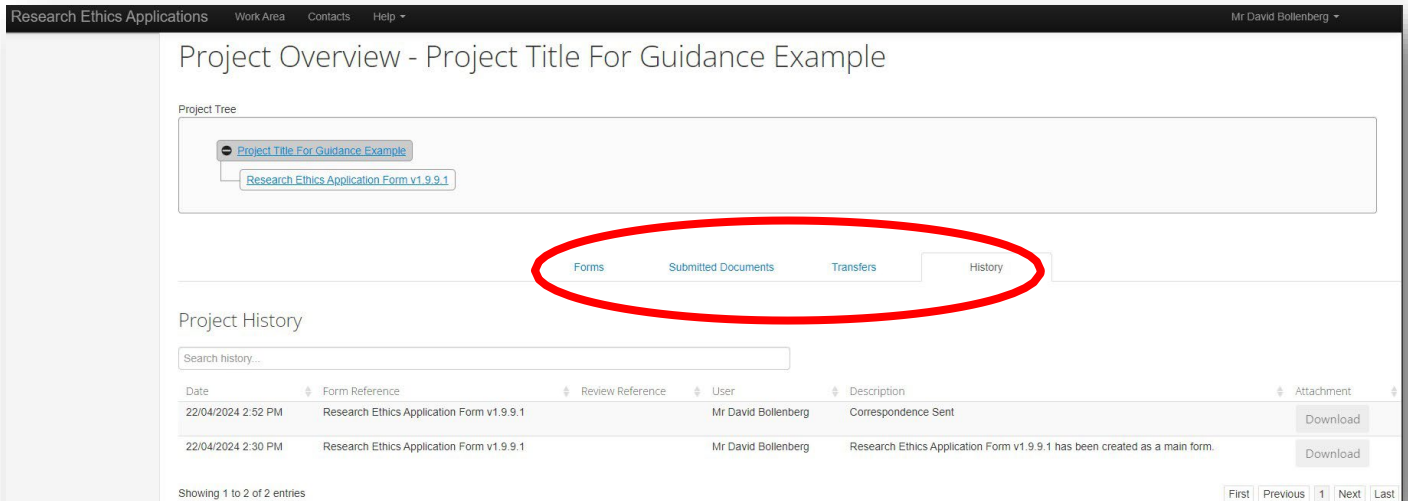
View as PDF: This opens a new browser window with a PDF of the application and

Correspond: This opens the correspondence window, and you can send a message to the Ethics Committee from there.

For each of the options in the ‘Project Tree’ area at the top of the page, there are a series of tabs in the middle of the page which the applicant can click on to access extra information.

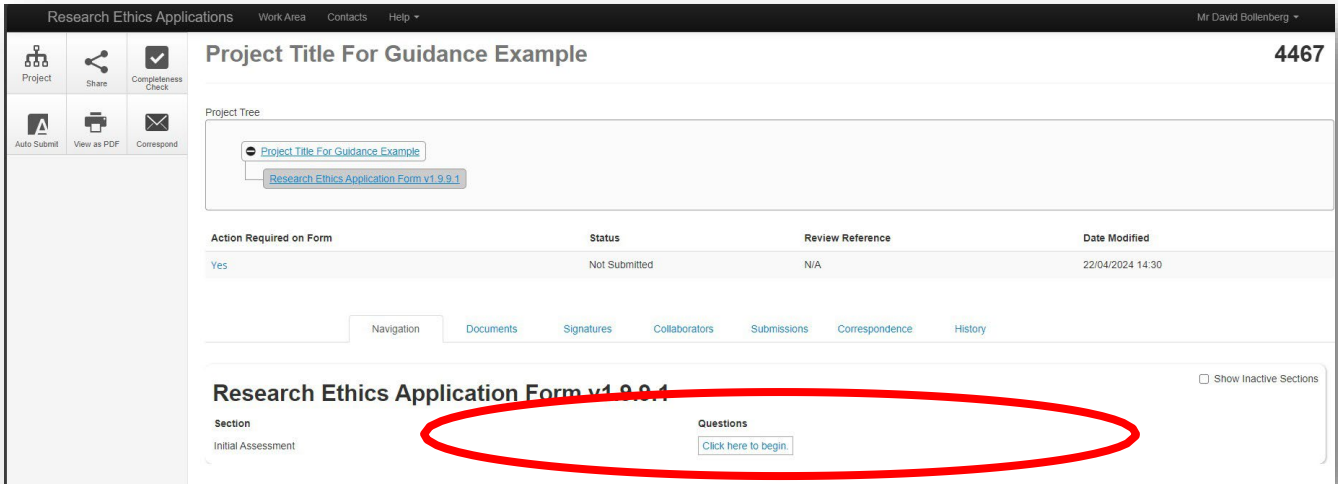
Clicking on ‘Project’ opens up the ‘Project Tree’ where you can access extra information from these tabs as shown in the screenshot below:

- **Forms:** This lists the application forms associated with the application.
- **Submitted Documents:** This lists the documents uploaded by the applicant and associated with the application.
- **Transfers:** This lists any application transfers associated with the application.
- **History:** This lists and dates all major steps in the application process.

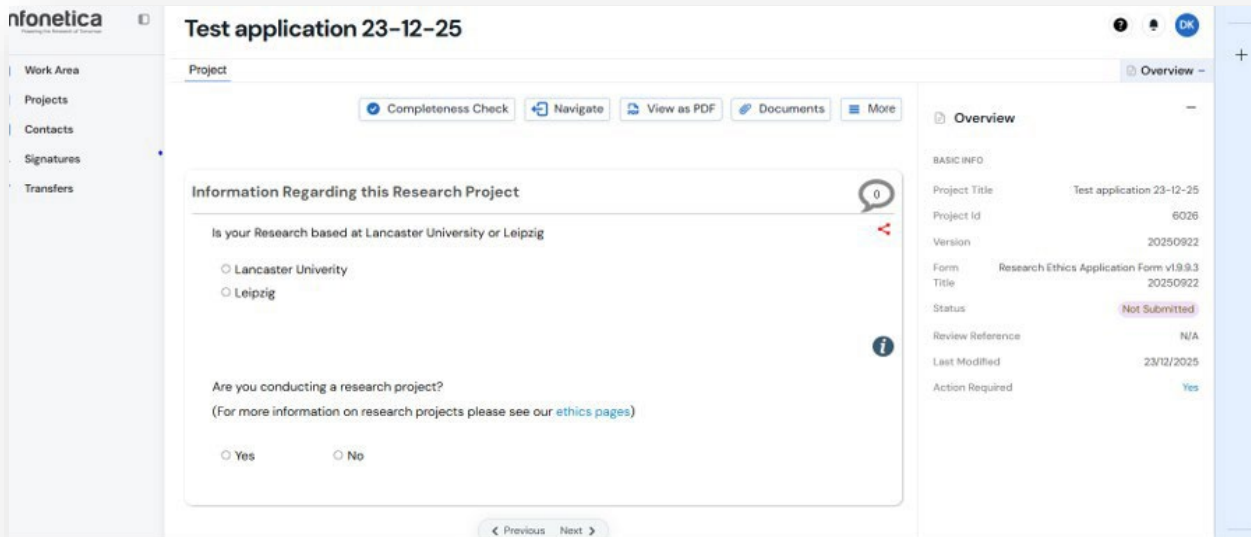


You will then be presented with the following options, as shown in the screenshot below:

- **Navigation:** This gives the applicant a list of all sections of their application which can be clicked on to easily jump to each section.
- **Documents:** This lists the documents uploaded by the applicant and associated with the application.
- **Signatures:** This allows the applicant to manage any signatures and signature requests connected to the application.
- **Collaborators:** This allows the applicant to manage the details of collaborators connected to the application.
- **Submissions:** This lists the application's submissions details for the application, when submitted.
- **Correspondence:** This allows the applicant to send a message to the Research Ethics Officers and/or the reviewer if the application has been reviewed by a member of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.
- **History:** This lists and dates all major steps in the application process.



To open the application, the applicant must click the small button in the middle of the screen labelled in blue text “Click here to begin” – see the red circle in the screenshot above. The menu is then updated with new menu buttons:

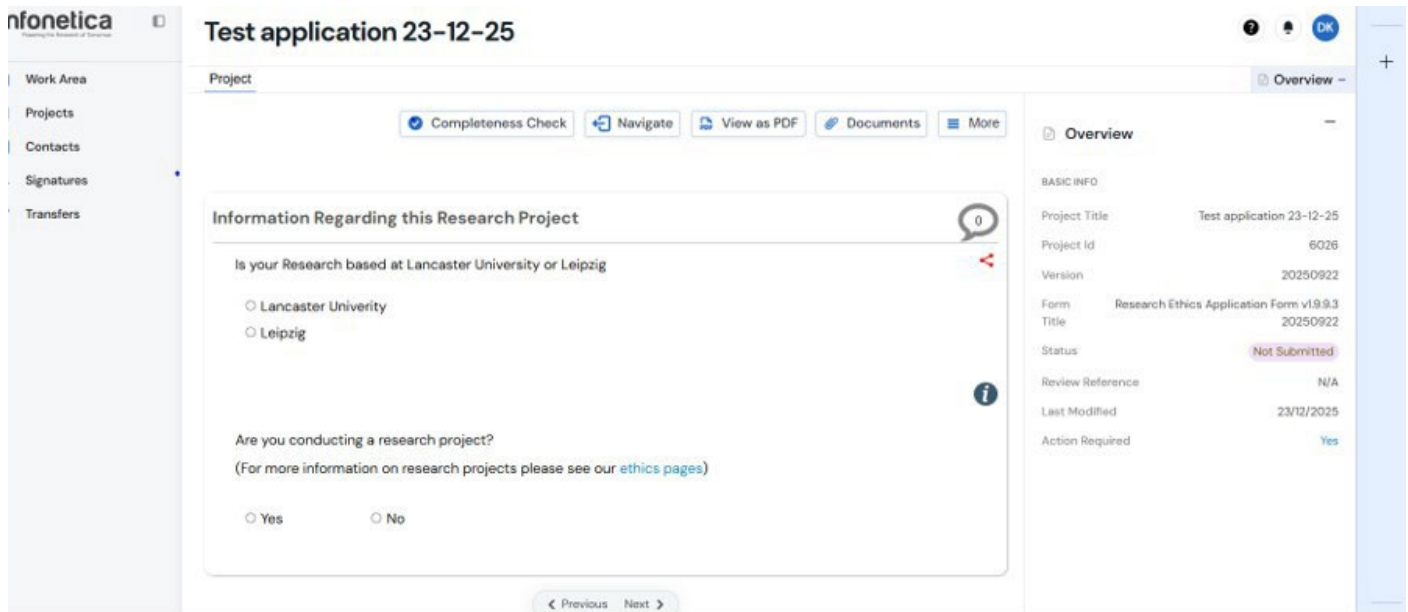


- **Previous:** Moves back to the previous page in the application.
- **Next:** Moves forward to the next page in the application.
- **Navigate:** This gives the applicant a list of all sections of their application which can be clicked on to easily jump to those sections.
- **View as PDF:** This opens a new browser window with a PDF of the application.
- **Documents:** This allows the applicant to manage any documents they have uploaded to the application.
- **More:** This is a dropdown menu which enables you to navigate to the following:
- **Signatures:** This allows the applicant to manage any signatures and signature requests connected to the application.

- **Save:** This saves the form at the point the applicant clicks the button.
- **Share:** This allows the applicant to add collaborators to the application.
- **Collaborators:** This allows the applicant to manage the details of collaborators connected to the application.
- **Completeness Check:** This checks the form and lists any areas that need further attention prior to being submitted.

Completing an application in REAMS

When an applicant has created a new ethics application and clicked the “Click here to begin” button, REAMS presents a set of initial filter questions that will help it build the form as shown in the extract, screenshot below:



The screenshot shows the REAMS application interface. The main content area is titled "Test application 23-12-25" and is in the "Project" section. It contains a form titled "Information Regarding this Research Project" with two questions:

- Is your Research based at Lancaster University or Leipzig?**
 - Lancaster University
 - Leipzig
- Are you conducting a research project?**
 - Yes
 - No


(For more information on research projects please see our [ethics pages](#))

The right sidebar shows an "Overview" panel with the following information:

BASIC INFO	
Project Title	Test application 23-12-25
Project Id	6026
Version	20250922
Form	Research Ethics Application Form v1.9.3
Title	20250922
Status	Not Submitted
Review Reference	N/A
Last Modified	23/12/2025
Action Required	Yes

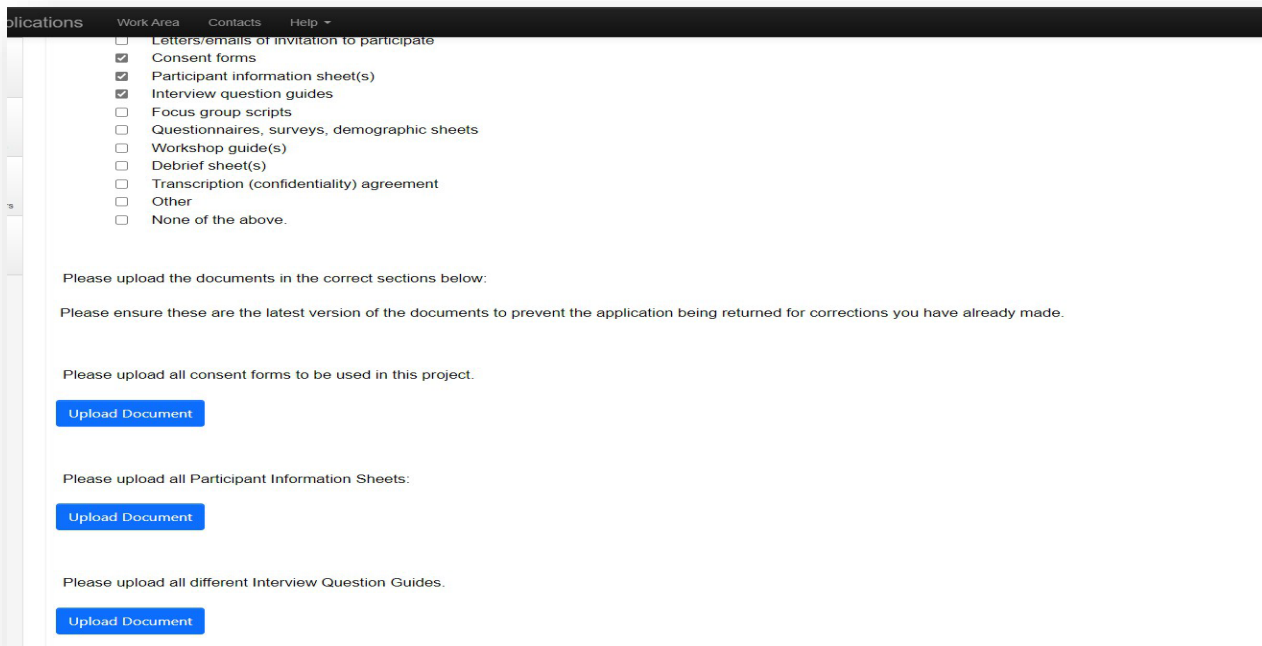
- **Are you conducting a research project?** If the answer is no, REAMS will end the application process as REAMS is only used for research projects.
- **Does your research involve animals?** If the answer is ‘yes’, REAMS will advise the applicant to contact [AWERB](#).
- **Staff and Student type question.** This helps REAMS check that the applicant is eligible to use REAMS as it is not used for undergraduate and Taught Masters students’ projects.
- **Applicant Faculty/Department.** This helps REAMS direct the application to the correct Faculty Research Ethics Committee. These fields are auto populated. But **if you they do not appear automatically, click on your initials at the top of the screen and then on personal details** and populate, refresh and your details should appear in there.
- **NHS / HRA approval needed?** If the answer to either is yes, applicants should follow the guidance on the application form. To note, applicants are strongly advised to check they have worked with the Lancaster University Sponsorship Team to ensure correct NHS and/or HRA approvals are in place to avoid delays. More information is available here [Guidance for Health and Social Care Research and Sponsorship at Lancaster](#) .
- **Approval in Principle:** If the answer to this is yes, the application form will be shorter. To note, Approval in Principle is not full ethical approval. It is considered on the understanding that if the project is to go ahead a full REAMS application form must be completed and submitted for review later on for full review and approval BEFORE research begins. It usually applies to staff who need an opinion on ethical approval for a funder at the time they are submitting their funding applications.

From this point the applicant needs to answer each question until the end of the form. The form will generate questions based on the previous answers given by the applicant.

IMPORTANT! It is beyond the scope of this document to list each question in an application form and present guidance for them. This is a feature that has been built into REAMS and applicants should click  on the 'i' icon (the on-screen information button) to open relevant guidance on each question.

Uploading documents to an application in REAMS

At the end of the form applicants can upload documents, with the form providing an upload button for each category of document selected by the applicant in the tick box area.



The screenshot shows a web interface for uploading documents. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Applications', 'Work Area', 'Contacts', and 'Help'. Below this is a list of document categories with checkboxes:

- Letters/emails of invitation to participate
- Consent forms
- Participant information sheet(s)
- Interview question guides
- Focus group scripts
- Questionnaires, surveys, demographic sheets
- Workshop guide(s)
- Debrief sheet(s)
- Transcription (confidentiality) agreement
- Other
- None of the above.

Below the list, there are three instructions, each followed by a blue 'Upload Document' button:

- Please upload the documents in the correct sections below:
Please ensure these are the latest version of the documents to prevent the application being returned for corrections you have already made.
- Please upload all consent forms to be used in this project.
- Please upload all Participant Information Sheets:
- Please upload all different Interview Question Guides.

When the documents are uploaded the applicant should click the Completeness Check option and ensure all parts of the application form have been completed. The form is ready to be submitted to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee for review.

Students-your supervisor(s) signature(s) will be required and the application will be sent to the supervisor(s) who you named earlier on the application form before you sign it. Please remember to sign the application form yourself, as your application will not be submitted for review until it has been signed by your supervisor(s) and yourself.

Note: signatures within REAMS are electronic, not wet ink. Click on the ‘sign’ button as shown in the screenshot below, above the arrow.

Applications Work Area Contacts Help ▾ Mr David Bollenberg ▾

Declaration

Please Note

Research Services monitors projects entered into the online system, and may select projects for quality control.

All research at Lancaster university must comply with the LU data storage and governance guidance as well as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018. ([Data Protection Guidance webpage](#))

I confirm that I have read and will comply with the LU Data Storage and Governance guidance and that my data use and storage plans comply with the General data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018.

Have you that you have undertaken a health and safety risk assessment for your project through your departmental process? ([Health and Safety Guidance](#))

I have undertaken a health and safety assesment for your project through my departmental process, and where required will follow the appropriate guidance for the control and management of any foreseeable risks.

Please read the terms and conditions below:

- You have read and will abide by [Lancaster University's Code of Practice](#) and will ensure that all staff and students involved in the project will also abide by it.
- If appropriate a confidentiality agreement will be used.
- You will complete a data management plan with the Library if appropriate. [Guidance from Library](#).
- You will provide your contact details, as well as those of either your supervisor (for students) or an appropriate person for complaints (such as HoD) to any participants with whom you interact, so they know whom to contact in case of questions or complaints?
- That University policy will be followed for secure storage of identifiable data on all portable devices and if necessary you will seek [guidance from ISS](#).
- That you have completed the ISS Information Security training and passed the assessment.
- That you will abide by Lancaster University's lone working policy for field work if appropriate.
- On behalf of the institution you accept responsibility for the project in relation to promoting good research practice and the prevention of misconduct (including plagiarism and fabrication or misrepresentation of results).
- To the best of your knowledge the information you have provided is correct at the time of submission.
- If anything changes in your research project you will submit an amendment.

Applicant Only: To complete and submit this application please click "Sign" below:

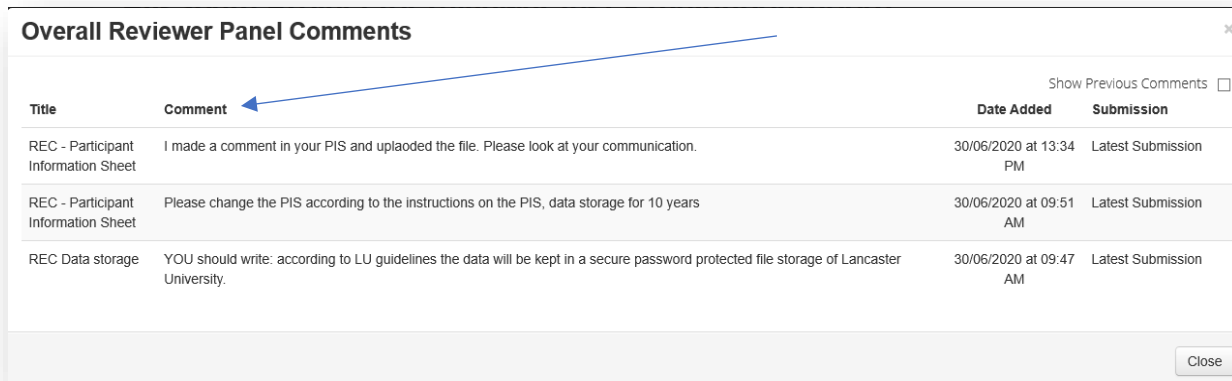
[Sign](#)



Receiving reviewer comments and revising an application in REAMS

Once submitted, applications are reviewed by a member of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC), called a reviewer, who will either send the application to the FREC Chair for approval, or return the application to the applicant with feedback and requests for revisions. Applicants will be alerted, by email, that they need to make revisions. The email will be sent to their Lancaster University email address. It will contain a table of comments from the reviewers and a link to the application.

The e-mail containing a table of the reviewer’s comments, this is also visible within REAMS, in the Overall Reviewer Panel Comments table. Applicants can click on the text in the ‘comment’ column and REAMS will take them directly to the section in the application form.



Title	Comment	Date Added	Submission
REC - Participant Information Sheet	I made a comment in your PIS and uploaded the file. Please look at your communication.	30/06/2020 at 13:34 PM	Latest Submission
REC - Participant Information Sheet	Please change the PIS according to the instructions on the PIS, data storage for 10 years	30/06/2020 at 09:51 AM	Latest Submission
REC Data storage	YOU should write: according to LU guidelines the data will be kept in a secure password protected file storage of Lancaster University.	30/06/2020 at 09:47 AM	Latest Submission

Revisions to sections of the application form

Applicants are directed to the section of the form where a comment from the reviewer has been made, identified by a ‘speech bubble’ icon. Applicants should revise these answers based on the reviewer feedback in the comments.

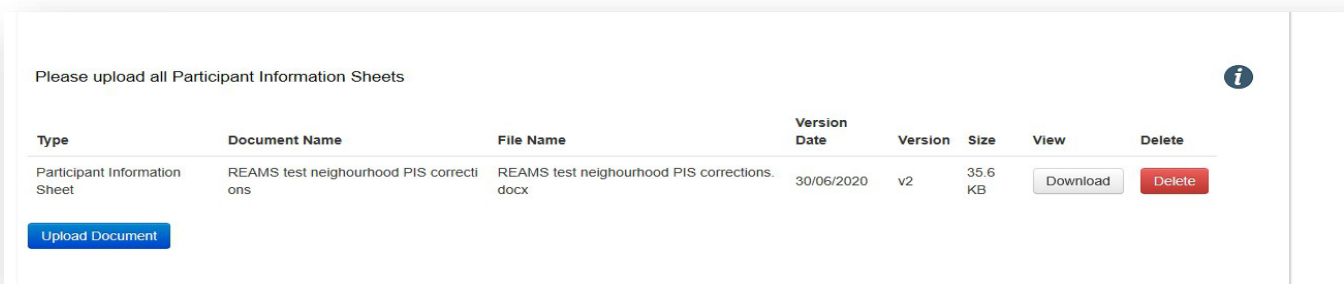
Revisions to uploaded documents

This section refers to revisions to documents that have been uploaded in REAMS.

If the reviewer’s comments ask you to revise documents which have been **uploaded** with your application, you will need to make these changes. To revise and upload new versions of the documents: you should delete the original document(s) in REAMS; make the changes to the document(s) in an application such as ‘Word’; highlight the changes using the **yellow highlighter**, in ‘Word’ for example, so that the changes can be easily seen. **This is important because when the changes are clearly highlighted the reviewer can easily see them therefore it is quicker for them to review the revised document(s).**

To note, it will cause delays if you forget to highlight the changes on the revised version(s) of the document(s) application without highlighting will need to be returned to you. When a document has been revised and the changes have been highlighted save it with a new version number in the REAMS application, so that it is clear this is the new, latest version of the document.

Upload the revised version in REAMS with a new name to make it clear you have uploaded the most up to date version of the document(s) e.g. v2, v3, etc. ('v' here means 'version'). This will avoid confusion that can lead to delays in processing your application. Note: Documents can be viewed in REAMS under the 'Documents' tab.



Clarifying comments made by a reviewer

Applicants who wish to ask for clarification of any comments made by a reviewer should use the Correspondence feature mentioned earlier in this guide. REAMS will email the reviewer to alert them to an applicant's message and similarly email the applicant to alert them to reviewer's messages. Therefore please check your Lancaster University emails regularly in case you receive an email about your application.

Info: Applicants are advised to check their inbox and spam folders to ensure they do not miss important emails

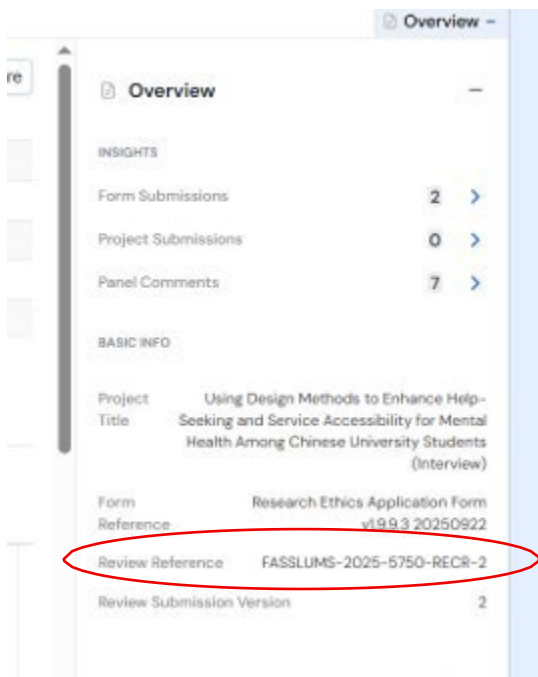
Resubmitting a revised application form

When an applicant has revised their application in REAMS, they should navigate to the last page of the application and sign the declaration again. (Note: if the applicant is a student their supervisor(s) signatures will also be required as explained earlier in this guide). The application will then be resubmitted to the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Committee for review and REAMS will alert the reviewer to review the updated application.. If the reviewer recommends the application for approval, it will be referred to the Committee Chair; or if there are any outstanding issues that have not been resolved the application will be returned to the applicant with further feedback (comments) .

Guidance Appendices

Appendix 1: Important note on the naming structure of application forms

When you revise and resubmit your ethics application a new version of the application form is created. The original application form will have a suffix like **‘RECR-1’** after the ‘review reference’ and will be marked as being superseded when it has been revised and resubmitted. The resubmitted version will have a suffix like **‘RECR-2’** added after the review reference; as shown on the right side of the screen in the ‘Overview bar’ in the screenshot below. The ‘2’ here means it is the second version of the application form that you submitted. Further resubmissions will increase the number each time. Applicants should always ensure they are referring to and working on the **most recent** version.



Appendix 2: Important note on reviewer comments in multiple application form revisions

If a reviewer requests further revisions after the first re-submission, applicants must take care they are answering the correct set of comments. By default, REAMS presents the latest comments to the applicant and it can also display previous comments if the ‘Panel Comments’ option is selected in the ‘Overview’ sidebar, then the ‘Panel Comments’ window opens and you can select ‘Previous’.

Appendix 3: Guidance for applicants in the Economics Department (LUMS)

Applicants must complete the LExEL Statement and have it signed by the Director or the Lab Manager of LExEL before completing an application form in REAMS if their research entails LExEL experiment(s). The signed statement must be uploaded along with any other supporting documents (such as participant information sheet(s), consent form(s), etc.) as part of the ethics application process.

If you need access to the LExEL statement and if you have any questions about LExEL you should contact the Director or the Lab Manager of LExEL in the Economics Department.

Appendix 4: Guidance for applicants requiring amendments to an approved application

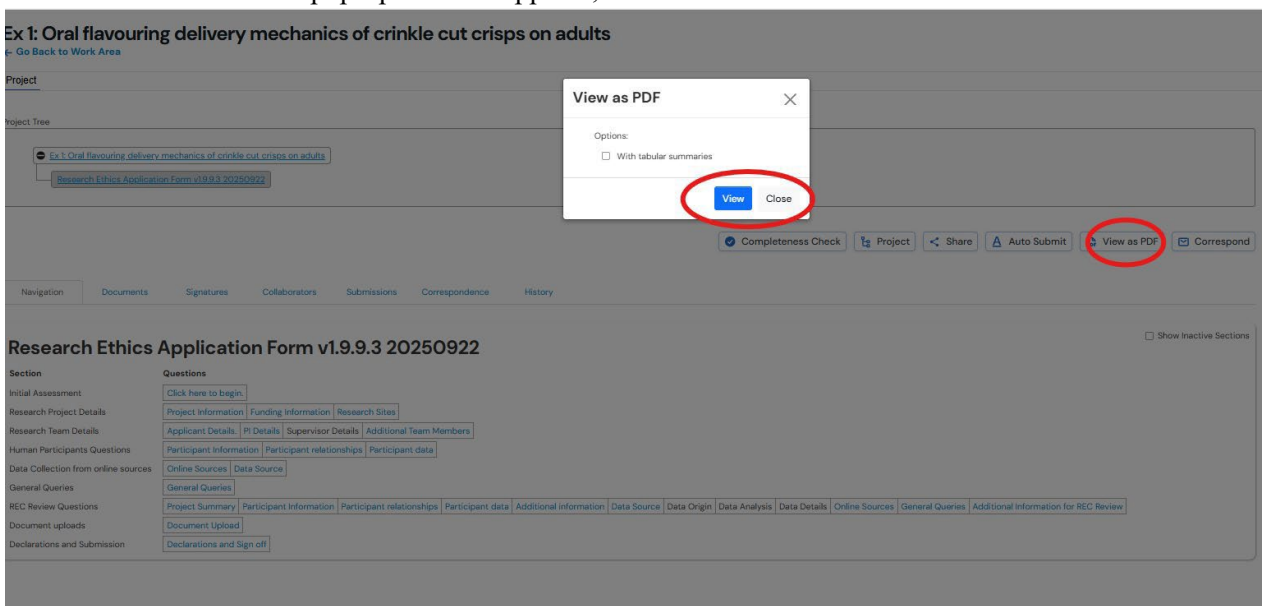
This guide does not cover the process for making an amendment to an ethics application after it has been approved. Applicants seeking to amend an approved application in REAMS are advised to consult the ‘Amendments guidance’ accessible on the REAMS webpage: [REAMS Web-guidance - Lancaster University](#)

Appendix 5: Guidance for applicants who are PhD students in the Educational Research (School of Social Sciences)

PhD students who are in the **Educational Research** will complete their ethics applications in the usual way in REAMS as described above. However, the department has its own ethics committee for reviewing its PhD students’ research ethics applications and the student’s supervisor will usually review their student’s application. Hence, the supervisor will be the ‘reviewer’ for PhD students in the Department of Educational Research; and a Chair of the Department’s Research Ethics Committee will usually approve PhD students’ ethics applications when the application is deemed by the supervisor to be ready to be approved.

Appendix 6: How to make a pdf of your REAMS application form, including uploaded documents.

- In the Project Navigation view of your application, click the button labelled “View as PDF”
- When the small pop-up window appears, click the ‘View’ button



- This will open a new tab in your Browser to display the PDF version of your application, which can be downloaded if required.