

## Research Integrity Report 2021/22

Lancaster University has continued to uphold its culture of high research integrity in 2021-22. Lancaster's Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs) aimed to review all ethical applications within 7-8 weeks, and all applications were overseen by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). The total number of FREC applications received 2018-19 to 2021-22 are shown in Table 1, together with those funded projects identified by the researcher as not needing ethical review via the research costing governance checklist.

**Table 1: Submitted Research Ethics Applications**

|                               | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Total FREC reviewed</b>    | 581     | 565     | 542     | 636     |
| <b>FREC review not needed</b> | 154     | 139     | 146     | 206     |

*Note: historic figures differ from previous annual reports as we have chosen, for clarity and because we anticipate further growth in this area, to report sponsored clinical projects that undergo ethical approval via the NHS Research Ethics Committee separately in table 2 below.*

All research projects that require approval from the Health Research Authority gain appropriate ethical review (via either the NHS Research Ethics Committee or relevant FREC) and project sponsorship prior to commencing. Where sponsorship is provided by Lancaster University the process is managed by a Clinical Research Governance Officer with both academic and senior professional service oversight. Related policies, procedures and templates are [available to researchers on our webpages](#) and table 2 shows the number of sponsored projects over the last four years.

**Table 2: Sponsored Clinical Research Projects**

|                        | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Total sponsored</b> | 35      | 26      | 16      | 23      |

A digital research ethical approval management system (REAMS) was launched in August 2021 for one pilot faculty, followed by a full institutional roll out from November 2021. This introduced a new self-review process allowing applicants to self-review projects that are deemed by the university as minimal risk and therefore do not need FREC review. Each application reviewed in this way was checked throughout the year to ensure the use of this new process was appropriate. REAMS is designed to reduce administrative load for applicants, academic reviewers and professional services staff; saving valuable time whilst enhancing the experience for the academic community to further foster an environment of excellent research integrity. A user survey and system review will take place during 2022/23 to identify areas of improvement.

University activities to support and strengthen the understanding and application of research integrity issues throughout the year includes a mapping of internal processes and policies against the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. Following this a new guide to all related policies and procedures was created for researchers and is [available on our webpages](#). In addition, the University Research Committee expanded UREC's terms of reference to include oversight of all research integrity issues (renamed the University Research Ethics and Integrity Committee). This expansion was made to further strengthen our research integrity culture and to give single committee oversight of ethics, research misconduct, information governance and meeting the Concordat commitments. Research with animals and clinical trials remains with their respective established committees.

Training is offered to all new research staff at Lancaster which covers a range of topics including research integrity, and specific online research integrity training is available to all staff and students via our webpages. During 2021-22 a survey on ethical training provision for staff and post-graduate researchers across the institution was completed; recommendations for improvements and sharing of best practice will be discussed and implemented during 2022-23.

## Research Misconduct

Lancaster is committed to the highest standards of research integrity and takes any concerns raised about the conduct of research undertaken by any staff or research students very seriously. In order to ensure that both internal staff and students and external individuals feel able to report suspected instances of research misconduct we ensure that all our research webpages are publically available to encourage an open environment, this includes information about our research misconduct procedure, which was updated in 2021 in line with the [procedure published by the UK Research Integrity Office](#). The [Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research](#) provides a transparent, timely, robust and fair process for dealing with allegations of misconduct. Further revisions to this procedure are planned for 2022-23.

Two research misconduct complaints were raised in 2021-22 (Table 3). The first was agreed to be a misunderstanding by the PhD student concerned and addressed through awareness raising with the relevant department. The other was deemed not to be research misconduct and was directed to the appropriate university departments for follow-up. In addition, during this year a misconduct case raised during 2020-21 was resolved after the screening panel found there was no case for misconduct.

Table 3: Record of Research Misconduct Complaints

| Academic Year | Complaint Raised | Formal Investigation Completed | Allegations Upheld (whole or in part) |
|---------------|------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2018-19       | 4                | 0                              | 0                                     |
| 2019-20       | 2                | 0                              | 0                                     |
| 2020-21       | 3                | 1                              | 1                                     |
| 2021-22       | 2                | 0                              | 0                                     |