

Research Integrity Report 2019/20

Lancaster University has continued to uphold its culture of high research integrity in 2019-20 despite ongoing issues relating to the global Covid-19 pandemic. Lancaster’s devolved Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs) have continued to provide timely review of ethical applications overseen by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). The total number of FREC applications are shown in the table below with those funded projects identified by the researcher as not needing ethical review via the research costing governance checklist.

Submitted Research Ethics Applications

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Total reviewed	590	586	618
FREC review not needed	232	154	139

Face-to-face research was paused in March 2020 due to Covid-19. In order to allow the continuation of research activities, amendments to adjust to online research protocols were fast tracked by the FRECs. Researchers were allowed to restart face-to-face activities from August 2020, however only where necessary and to be regularly assessed against updated government advice. Researchers are also required to ensure the reassessment of health and safety risks prior to ethical review. All communications on process adjustments during this period are publically available on our [webpages](#) and were communicated directly to researchers via their departments. Researchers can have two protocols ethically approved, for both face-to-face and online research, so that they can adjust their activities appropriately during the pandemic to protect both researchers and participants.

UREC’s ongoing monitoring of ethical review processes has resulted in the formalisation of a sub-REC for PhD students in Educational Research as a result of their high standards of supervisor review. Other UREC oversight work has included discussions on the review of archival and social media based research and the ongoing implementation of a digital system for ethical review to be launched in 2020-21 (delayed by the need to respond to the pandemic). Additional university plans to support and strengthen the understanding and application of research integrity issues in 2020-21 includes; a review on integrity training across the institution and the expansion of UREC’s terms of reference to include oversight of all integrity issues.

Lancaster University is committed to the highest standards of research integrity and takes any concerns raised about the conduct of research undertaken by any staff or students very seriously. In order to ensure that both internal and external individuals feel comfortable to report suspected instances of misconduct we ensure that all our research webpages are as publically available as possible to encourage an open environment, this includes information about our misconduct procedure. Training is offered to all new research staff at Lancaster which covers a range of topics including integrity, and specific online integrity training is available to all staff and students via our webpages.

Two research misconduct complaints were raised in 2019-20. The first was dismissed in line with our [research misconduct policy](#) following an informal review. The second was deemed not to be research misconduct and therefore was referred to the appropriate internal governance procedure. The policy currently provides a transparent, timely, robust and fair process for dealing with allegations but a revised version will be published in early 2021 following Research Committee approval. The changes, approved by UREC approved in Oct 2020, are in line with the [procedure published by the UK Research Integrity Office](#).

Academic Year	Complaint Raised	Formal Investigation Completed	Allegations Upheld (whole or in part)
2017-18	1	0	0
2018-19	4	0	0
2019-20	2	0	0