Lancaster University Response to RCUK Assurance Questions: Research Integrity

RCUK Assurance Questions	Lancaster University's response
Please confirm that you have policies and procedures in place that meet Research Integrity and Ethics requirements, including processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct.	The University's policy and procedures covering good research practice and research misconduct are incorporated in the following documents: • Research Code of Practice • Research Grant Handbook • Procedure for Investigating Research Misconduct Advice and guidance of ethical approval processes (including the above documents) are available on central Research Services (RSO) webpages and tailored guidance on each Faculty webpages. University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) is a sub-committee of the University Research Committee therefore any proposed amendments to the documents are reviewed and approved by UREC before being submitted to Research Committee and finally to Senate which has ultimate responsibility for the conduct of research at Lancaster. The UREC remit and membership are also reviewed annually. UREC has devolved approval powers to three Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FREC) who review all applications for ethical approval. PIs self-identify those projects which do not need ethical approval via the University's ACP costing tool.
How often are these reviewed and when were they last reviewed?	Integrity and ethics procedures, processes and documents are reviewed regularly by RSO and when appropriate passed to UREC for approval. The most recent amendments to the documents took place in early 2016 when the new procedures were approved for devolved ethical approval for three Faculty Research Ethics Committees.
Please provide the publicly accessible web links to these policies and the name of the senior officer responsible for dealing with cases of misconduct.	The senior officer responsible for dealing with cases of misconduct is the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise or in the absence of the PVC or where there is a conflict of interest, the University Chief Administration Officer and Secretary. The first point of contact for external queries regarding research misconduct is the Head of Research Services. Contact details are publicly available here:

	http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/support-for-researchers/research-services/research-integrity-ethics--governance/research-misconduct/ RSO ensure that the funder is aware of any allegations of research misconduct as early as possible and are kept informed of investigation outcomes.
How are these policies disseminated to staff? *Please indicate if any special provision is made for new employees (including post-graduate students) and also how staff awareness is maintained.*	The Code of Practice and Procedures documents together with other resources are available to all members of the university from the Research Services website. The Code of Practice is highlighted to all new research and academic staff in the information pack with their contract of employment. Staff submitting research proposals for external funding must complete a governance section in ACP which signposts the documents. Staff are asked to confirm annually that all the research they conduct (whether externally funded or not) complies with the Code of Practice and is submitted for ethical review where appropriate (including all research involving human participants or animals, risk to the research team or the environment).
Please outline any actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues (for example, postgraduate and researcher training, or process reviews).	The university has an on-line research integrity training module (Epigeum Research Integrity). http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/support-for-researchers/research-services/research-governance--ethics/training/. There is also training/awareness raising for researchers through the Organisational and Educational Development (OED) Researcher Development Programme which delivers a suite of training events on an annual basis. Research integrity and the ethics process is also highlighted in the Welcome to Lancaster lunch events for all new staff. Training for postgraduate students: An introduction to ethics forms part of the induction programme for postgraduate research students during which they receive details of a range of ethics and integrity related resources.

	Research Training Programme modules on ethics are provided by all faculties which provides the opportunity for some of the content to be discipline specific. Research students receive details of the training provided by all faculties (e.g. http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fhm/study/phd-study/research-training/practical-research-ethics/) and have the opportunity to attend events organised by any faculty. The Research Training Programme Steering Group includes representatives from all faculties and has an overview of the training available and considers where joint training modules are required. Online learning resources in ethics are provided for distance learning students. Other training available to staff and students: • The Library organises a Research Bites series of short, informal sessions for the research community (staff and students) aiming to deliver useful information, start discussions and answer questions. A number of the topics have relevance to the understanding and application of research integrity issues. • Researcher Ethics Network - open to all staff and research students (has involved lunchtime seminars with a mixture of presentations and open discussion) and for 17/18 this is being re-invigorated with the organisation of a conference with a theme of 'risky research' and will include invited external speakers. The PGR training offers across the faculties, the Library, Careers and ISS cover fairly comprehensively the four quadrants of the Researcher Development Framework.
The Research Councils expect that the research they support will be carried out to a high ethical standard. Please explain the arrangements you have in place for reviewing that any research funded by the Councils is planned and conducted in accordance with such ethical standards.	Principal Investigators (PI) have responsibility to manage their research in an ethical manner in keeping with the University's and funder's requirements. For each awarded research grant the PI must confirm that they have read the Code of Practice and will abide by it with respect to that specific project. The PI must also confirm that they will provide other members of their research team (staff and students) with guidance on the good practice and ethical standards that are expected in accordance with the Code of Practice. Lancaster has different levels of ethical review proportionate to the nature of the research.

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	Projects that do not involve any specific ethical risk factors (no human participants, no apparent risk to research team, no apparent environmental risk, no conflicts of interest etc.) are self-certified by the PI via ACP. The PI must confirm that they have read and will abide by the Code of Practice and that they will give appropriate guidance to their research team. Projects that involve human participants or other ethical considerations but do not raise significant concerns are reviewed through an expedited process through the relevant FREC. Where human participants are involved this will include details of how participants will be recruited and copies of participant information sheets, consent forms etc. Projects that have been approved by a recognised external ethics committee (such as NHS committees, other university committees) also follow an expedited route to obtain authorisation. The FRECs review projects fully where they involve vulnerable participants or have other more significant ethical considerations. Staff are encouraged to submit projects to FRECs at an early stage in their development in order to receive advice on potential ethical issues or to seek advice from FREC chairs or Research Ethics Officers.
How many formal investigations of research misconduct have been completed in the past three completed academic years which relate to **researchers funded by or responsible for funding from Research Councils** (including supervisors of postgraduate awards)?	<table><tr><th>Academic Year</th><th>Formal Complaint Raised</th><th>Investigation Completed</th><th>Allegations Upheld (whole or in part)</th></tr><tr><td>2014-15</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>2015-16</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>2016-17</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td></tr></table>