

Summary output

Cuppa Conundrum: Navigating interventions in research integrity – UKRIO & Lancaster University

UKRIO Expert Webinar | 24 September 2026

On Thursday 24 September, UKRIO hosted the first of two Cuppa Conundrums, led by staff at Lancaster University: Dr Dan Craddock, Becky Gordon, Professor Mark Levine and Dr Richard Philpot.

The Cuppa Conundrum format was developed by Lancaster University as an informal way to discuss issues surrounding research integrity and to encourage open and honest discussion and feedback. Cuppa Conundrums are informal, discussion-based sessions designed to prompt reflection and dialogue around contemporary issues in research and academia. The session was open to all and attended by 15 people on the day. Attendees followed the Chatham House Rule, and this output provides an anonymised summary of the key discussion themes that arose during the Cuppa Conundrum.

Guiding Questions

1. How can the wellbeing of those involved in research integrity case processes be looked after?
2. Who holds the responsibility for reporting potential cases of research misconduct and what barriers currently exist to speaking out?

Discussion Snapshot

This Cuppa Conundrum invited participants to reflect on the current landscape of research integrity, including barriers to speaking out, supporting the wellbeing of those involved in research integrity processes and the broader issues of research culture which impacts reporting potential breaches in research integrity.

During the discussion, the following themes emerged:

- Impact of the process on individuals and institutions
- Wellbeing and support

- Empowering researchers to raise concerns
- Positive and supportive research culture
- Shared responsibility
- Shifting terminologies

Discussions around Question 1: How can the wellbeing of those involved in research integrity case processes be looked after?

Process:

- When to involve others during the research integrity process and who should be involved.
- Importance of maintaining confidentiality during the process.
- Using appropriate terminology, e.g. 'screening' rather than 'investigation' aids in the daunting connotations of the latter term for the respondents.
- Resourcing is often an issue, with small teams responsible for research integrity processes at institutions.
- The issue of conflict of interest when it is a small team or organisation and how best to manage this.
- Importance of timely communications – being realistic about timelines, the procedure and managing expectations.

Gaps between policy and practice:

- Organisations often have a research integrity policy which they train people in, but this often does not match with the lived experience of the research integrity process as it unfolds, e.g. grey areas, implicit power dynamics.
- Lasting emotional impact on individuals, regardless of the outcome.
- Responsibility should be with institutions to check in with staff to monitor and support wellbeing.
- Limitations of a peer support system which would not work in all situations, e.g. cases involving people outside of the university, students, or non-academic staff, so different types of support are needed.

Changing perceptions:

- The perceptions of research and ethics governance staff can sometimes be pejorative and not true to the realities of the roles, with researchers viewing them as a corporate protection for universities. There needs to be a different outlook to positively benefit the research culture of institutions.
- Breaking down barriers and encouraging researchers to see ethics and integrity as supportive and good practice rather than simply regulatory.

Discussions around Question 2: Who holds the responsibility for reporting potential cases of research misconduct and what barriers currently exist to speaking out?

Accountability of institutions:

- Staff should not be left on their own to handle responsibilities of a potential breach in research integrity cases.
- There is a gap between an issue being raised informally and a case 'going nuclear' in the severity of consequences for claimants and respondents. Is there a way to formalise best practice that happens informally in the between stages of an issue being raised and beginning formal proceedings?
- Learning when to escalate issues through peer support, effective screening processes and shared responsibilities can contribute to a more positive research environment.
- Differences between institutions and countries in which alternative terminology or processes are used can make cross-institutional cases difficult to manage.

Accountability of individuals:

- Potential consequences for one's career if speaking out in a culture that is not receptive to these processes.
- Difficult to challenge hierarchies and make departments responsible for good academic practice alone.
- Knowing what to do next can prevent initial speaking out.

Possible solutions:

- Participants discussed the development of a flowchart of procedures and actions to take as being useful to tackle the issue of not knowing how procedures unfold.
- Potential to develop a common vocabulary around the above questions – and to go beyond the search for legal definitions – to encompass the social, emotional, and moral dimensions of taking responsibility for research integrity.
- Providing support and training, so individuals have a better understanding about the research integrity and research ethics policies and processes.
- Where possible to resolve concerns informally before it is escalated.

- Reflecting on the learnings from the process for future cases.

Further reading & resources

Lancaster University. (2026). Cuppa Conundrum Facilitator guide. Available at: <https://osf.io/agjt3/files/uf3we>

Lancaster University. (2026). Cuppa Conundrum Podcast series, Reimagining Research Culture. Available at: <https://open.spotify.com/show/3dineWPW6jNZfQMZhnfOtb>

Lancaster University. (2026). Reimagining Research Practices project information pages. Available at: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/research-culture/reimagining-research-practices/>

UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO). (2025). Detailed template procedure for investigating breaches of research integrity. Available at: <https://ukrio.org/detailed-template-procedure-for-the-investigation-of-breaches-of-research-integrity/>

UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO). (2025). Barriers to investigating and reporting research misconduct. Available at: <https://ukrio.org/ukrio-resources/barriers-to-investigating-and-reporting-research-misconduct/>

List of attendees

Name	Organisation	Role
Alison Ashby	University of the Built Environment	Academic Quality and Governance Manager
Daljinder Chalmers	Keele University	Lecturer in Health Psychology
Linda Enow	Birmingham Newman University	Senior Lecturer
Maddy Hill	University of Birmingham	Research Ethics, Governance and Integrity Manager
Cuong Dao	University of Bradford	Assistant Professor
Sophie Lowe	Coventry University	Research Ethics and Integrity Manager
Catherine Hitchins	University of East London	Ethics, Integrity and Compliance Manager
Lyn Grove	London School of Economics & Political Science	Senior Research Ethics and Integrity Manager
Dilyana Tineva	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)	Research Integrity Officer
Sheungting Lo	University of Chester	Ethics Committee Member
Stephanie Armstrong	University of Bristol	Head of Research Governance
Helen Senior	University of Queensland	PhD student
Fran Baber	University of Bath	Research Integrity Manager
Lynsey McAllister	University of South Wales	Research Governance Manager
Toni Wheeler	University of Oxford	Senior Research Compliance and Strategy Manager

Thank you

We would like to thank all the participants for generously contributing their time, insights and perspectives.