Summary output

Cuppa Conundrum: Lessons from the present for the future of research integrity – UKRIO & Lancaster University

UKRIO expert webinar | 6 October 2026

On Tuesday 6 October, UKRIO hosted the second of two Cuppa Conundrum events, 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. The session on Tuesday 6 October was open to all and attended by 21 people on the day. The session 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. Should Research Integrity training be compulsory for all research active and adjacent staff? If so, what might this look like and how might it work?
2. How would you revolutionise current research integrity processes at an individual/departmental/institutional level?

Discussion snapshot

- This session invited participants to reflect on the current landscape of research integrity, including considerations of compulsory training, changing the narrative of research enablers and imagining a revolution of current processes and cultures in Higher Education research integrity.
- During the discussion, the following themes emerged:
    - Raising importance and understanding of research integrity training
    - Shared responsibility for all those managing research
    - Difficulties of tracking efficacy and impact of training
    - Resource limitations
    - Shifting mindsets and changing cultures
    - Evolution of processes

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Discussions around Question 1: Should Research Integrity training be compulsory for all research active and adjacent staff? If so, what might this look like and how might it work?

Current research integrity training:

- Most organisations use an external provider for the research integrity training.
- Some organisations have made the training mandatory for their research staff but have noted that there is no escalation for those who do not complete the training.
- There was a suggestion that one potential consequence of not completing the training, could be restricting access to other elements of research such as an ethics application. This alignment of access to other essential elements of the research process such as ethics, with the completion of integrity training could increase the uptake and focus placed on this.
- Mixed reviews about making the training compulsory if it just becomes a tick box exercise for the organisation to fulfil their training needs.
- There was agreement that training needs to be nuanced to suit the needs and types of different researchers (Early Career Researchers, Technicians etc) and to be discipline specific. Currently the training seems to be STEM focused rather than Arts/Humanities focused.

Engagement and impact:

- Most organisations report on who has completed the training but there is variation on how this information is used to improve the training offering for researchers in the future.
    - Tracking efficacy can be much more challenging than engagement numbers. Systems are in place for tracking the number of people engaging in training modules however, there are currently no systems for measuring the longer-term impact of training, how it is used in the everyday and the skills it provides those who complete the training for example.

Format and audience:

- A mixture of different training modes was preferred to make it more useful and effective. This included training in person, online, mentoring, and workshops and adapting the training to suit different groups. It was noted that a lack of resources could make delivering the training more difficult.

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- It was observed that Early Career Researchers (ECRs) are often provided with targeted training due to the desire to embed positive behaviours early on in academic careers.
- There was a shared belief that training needs further uptake by more experienced researchers, who often feel they know how to conduct good research (proven by their long, successful career), yet are often out of touch with modern research practices (e.g., not knowing what paper milling is). In addition, preventing potentially harmful/bad practice of established researchers is equally important.
- It was noted Principal Investigators should also be included in research integrity trainings due to their responsibilities as the leader of research projects.
- The importance of getting buy-in from senior leadership to deliver the training is key as it demonstrates their visible commitment and value of the training. This in turn encourages research staff to engage with the training and to prioritise this.
- Balancing the alignment of what researchers want and what a university needs is difficult. Co-creation could offer a solution to this by developing training with researchers directly. Universities could be concerned with protecting IP and reputation for example, whereas researchers may desire practical strategies for undertaking conscious research. By developing training with a mixture of university positions could lead to a more balanced offering that meets both needs.

Discussions around Question 2: How would you revolutionise current research integrity processes at an individual/departmental/institutional level?

Changes for today:

- Discussed advocacy champions who are grassroot individuals with interest in Research Integrity, who can go to departments and get relevant conversations going, but this needs more buy-in and protected workload space from senior leadership.
- Encourage academic ethics leads to champion research integrity. This could mean creating space in ethics committees for sharing of best practice for example.
- Introduce awards or platforms to champion those who foster a positive research integrity environment. Senior leaders need to engage more personally – and create incentives for constructive engagement – we don't

want to create a policing culture – because that just plays into feelings of 'us and them' and builds resentment.
- Increase levels of communication within organisations on good practice, updates to policies and any new or existing trainings available. This could be achieved by a deeper integration of research integrity focused roles within departments.
- Understand that slow research can equal responsible research being conducted with integrity, reduce the pressures on speed and researchers needing to instantly look for the next opportunity. By improving quality, this can have impact in legacy terms. The demands on academics to 'publish or perish' and have a constant stream of research output can reduce the focus on quality and integrity in research. If more time was allocated to researchers, then integrity could have more prevalence in the research process.

Ambitious changes:

- Reframe the narrative around Professional Service staff that support researchers through training and processes and are. working toward best practice rather than being seen as a barrier.
- A mindset shift in senior leadership that emphasises the importance of researchers working responsibly and with integrity will help foster a more positive research culture and environment. There has been a tendency to focus on rankings and award prestige rather than on research culture.
- Aim for evolutionary revolution. Constant shifting and evolving in response to the sector, the needs of the institution and researchers and provide safe spaces for questions and learning from all. By creating an environment in which research integrity is viewed as an ever-shifting field, with new considerations in response to technologies (AI), and the wider research landscape, academics and professional service staff could produce a much more collegiate and supportive culture that constantly reflects on best practices.
- Eliminate the "us vs them" narratives, whether that means Professional Services vs Academics, Staff on the ground vs Senior Leadership, Employee vs institution etc.
- Fostering a change and growth mindset and embracing new ways of working and thinking. Although this would be initially difficult, it would help reduce the silos of knowledge in institutions.
- Look beyond research culture. Shift the levels of workload felt by staff, individual burdens of compliance – share the load, and the increasing expectations on Principal Investigators. The current system of HE research places large demands on the PI with an increasing list of responsibilities in the position. The ideal would be developing a culture in which compliance

and research integrity are shared responsibilities between research teams, collaborating with professional service staff and built in opportunities for training for researchers in these roles.

- Train researchers how to communicate – with each other, communities, leaders, public participants, interviewees, patients, etc depending on the needs of their research specialisms. Communication is a vital skill for prospective researchers if they are wanting to conduct interviews, work with public participants or co-design research. Equipping ECR's with these skills at the outset of their career could prevent potential cases of misconduct as their research career develops.
- A training on how to change culture around research integrity – and how to improve communication so that we can have more of these difficult discussions earlier. At the moment training is about the 'rules' – the does and don'ts – but we also need to train around the psychological things that can change culture for the better.

Further reading & resources

Lancaster University 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/

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List of attendees

Name	Organisation	Role
Fiona Knight	Bournemouth University	Head of Research Excellence and Governance
Irene Kavanagh	University College Cork	Research Officer (Lead Research Culture & Integrity)
Dilyana Tineva	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)	Research Integrity Officer
Ruth Dooley	University of Galway	Research Support Office & Integrity trainer
Marie-Anne O'Neill	University of Chester	Research Governance & Culture Manager
Rija Bobby	Coventry University	Assistant Professor and PhD student
Sophie Lowe	Coventry University	Research Ethics & Integrity Manager
Noreen Brennan	University of Galway	Researcher Development Manager
Kayleigh Swords	Mary Immaculate College	Research Systems Manager
Stacey Wagstaff	Newcastle University	Research Integrity and Compliance Manager
Rosie Bellamy	University of Warwick	Head of Research Integrity and Quality Assurance
Rob Clucas	Edinburgh Napier University	Associate Professor
Dorota Zurek	Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT)	Research Officer
Athanasios Katsoulis	Anglia Ruskin University	Postgraduate Researcher
Denise Downey	Teagasc	Research Development Manager
Miriam Hay	UCL	Research Support and Governance Officer
Charlotte McMahon	Leeds Beckett University	Research Ethics and Integrity Manager
Stefan Kaluzny-Baldis	Taylor and Francis	Research Integrity Assistant
Rachael Jane Rigby	Lancaster University	Senior Lecturer in Biomedicine

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Victor Drummond	Loughborough University London	PhD Researcher & Research Associate
Mairead Murray	HSE	Senior Research Manager
Anton Muszanskyj	Nottingham Trent University	Head of Research Policy and Governance
Catherine Dean	Dublin City University	Research Ethics and Integrity Officer
Jean McAvoy	The Open University	Professor of Psychological Research Methods

Thank you

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