



Minutes Meeting of the University Research Ethics Committee

Date:	14 th February 2018
Present:	Professor Peter Bath in the Chair
Secretary:	Mrs Lindsay Unwin
Minute Secretary:	Miss Anita Kenny
In attendance:	Ms Harriet Baird; Dr Jo Bates; Dr Jennifer Burr; Ms Maria Clark; Mr Jez Cope; Ms Anne Cutler; Ms Margaret Ellis; Dr Karen Ford; Professor David Petley; Dr Eleanor Stillman; Dr Ana Vivas
Apologies:	Ms Lauriane Chalmin-Pui; Dr Richard Cooper; Dr Carmen Levick; Dr Yog Upadhyay

Action by

1. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15TH November 2017**
The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.
2. **MATTERS ARISING ON THE MINUTES**
The Committee were informed that all matters arising were either complete or in progress.

In relation to item 4, it was noted that section 5 of the 'General Principles and Statements' section of the Ethics Policy implicitly covers the need for students who participate in work placements to obtain ethics approval if they undertake research involving human participants or personal data whilst on their placement. However, after some discussion it was felt that this needed to be expressed explicitly. The Committee **recommended** that an appropriate phrase be added to this effect, and included in the changes to the Policy being put forward to Senate in line with the GDPR. Research Services

3. **CHAIR'S REPORT**
The Chair reported that a sub-group of the Committee had been set up to consider the proposed changes to the Ethics Policy in light of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The group included Dr Bates, Ms Cutler and Ms Clark, with Professor Bath as Chair and Mrs Unwin as Secretary (the Minute Secretary was also in attendance). The first meeting took place in January. The resulting proposed policy changes are to be discussed under item 4 with a view to endorsement so these can be put forward to Senate and hopefully approved before GDPR comes into force on 25 May.

A second meeting of the sub-group is due to take place in March to consider the specialist guidance paper on anonymity, confidentiality and data protection, the information sheet/consent form guidance, online ethics system and any further issues.

Open briefing meetings are scheduled for 16 and 20 April and will be advertised shortly. The Secretary will also be attending a workshop 'Managing GDPR in the academic research sector' organised by the Medical Research Council on 8 March.

The Chair advised the Committee of a recent case of breach of ethics approval - 1 PGT student case is being investigated in which two interviews took place without ethics approval. The Department had asked whether they can just tell the student that the interviews are inadmissible for the dissertation, and not investigate further. They were told that the investigation should take place to understand fully what happened and to identify whether there are any learning points for the Department, and for fairness and consistency in handling such situations.

The Chair reported that the online self-declaration process for the use of existing data is being piloted in ScHARR, the Information School and the Management School. No full applications have yet been submitted – a number have started it and then not completed the process. Some issues have arisen in ScHARR relating to the possibility of an external data provider being able to re-identify participants following analysis (Q3 in the questionnaire) – a clarification to the wording of this question has been requested to make it clear that this might become possible through publication, or sharing the findings with the data provider. In order to enable this part of the system to be made available to all as soon as possible, arrangements have been made for a 'dummy application' to be submitted to check the process is working. Discussions are also underway to introduce an amendments process to the system.

Following on from the workshop in May 2017 looking at the ethics and integrity challenges of research in developing countries, a guidance leaflet has been produced – this was circulated to all staff and PGRs in the recent ethics & integrity bulletin, and is available on the ethics & integrity webpages.

The Committee was advised that Urban Studies and Planning has requested approval for a 'preliminary ethics review process' for studies involving co-production of research (e.g. with community groups). This is to address PhD student projects where there is no clear distinction between setting up the arrangements for a project, and commencing the data collection. They have proposed that students submit an ethics application for the preliminary stages of a project (identifying and recruiting co-production partners, setting up the arrangements), and then submit another application for the 'formal' data collection stage of the research – this has been approved by Chair's action.

The Committee was advised that, due to the re-structuring of the former Student Services department, a meeting is due to take place in March to discuss future ethics arrangements with the heads of the 3 new departments. Outcomes will be reported at the next meeting.

The Committee was advised that the Chair and Secretary spoke at a workshop on the ethics of social media research on 13th February at the University of Cambridge.

The Chair reported that three members of the Committee complete their terms of membership at the end of this academic year; the representatives for the Faculty of Engineering, the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health, and the Faculty of Science. The representative for the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health has agreed to stay on for another term; the Chair passed on the Committee's thanks to Dr Cooper for this. Dr Stillman and Dr Mazza will be stepping down and their posts will be advertised shortly. The Chair thanked the representatives for their work on behalf of the Committee.

4. **PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE ETHICS POLICY RE GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION**

The Committee considered the changes to the Ethics Policy outlined in the paper and made a number of recommendations for amendments.

In the 'General Principles and Statements', section 1.1, 'Participants Rights', the Committee **recommended** that the final bullet point which reads "erasure of their data if and when it is no longer required for research purposes" should read "request erasure of their data if and when it is no longer required for research purposes". Research Services

The Committee **recommended** that in the 'Research Ethics Approval Procedure', section 3.1.4, the 8th bullet point in the list of potentially highly sensitive topics be amended from "criminal activities" to "criminal or illegal activities", and the section in brackets should be deleted. Research Services

In Research Ethics Policy Note no.2, section 1, 'Transparency and Consent' the Committee **recommended** that the final bullet point which reads "the consequences of non-participation (such as alternative treatments in the case of some medical research, or alternative school activities in the case of some educational research)" should read "the consequences of non-participation (such as alternative treatments in the case of some medical research, or alternative educational activities in the case of some educational research)". The Committee also **recommended** that the numbering and formatting of subtitles be checked for accuracy and consistency. Research Services

In Research Ethics Policy Note no. 4, paragraph 7, the Committee **recommended** that the second sentence be amended for clarity, as follows: 'This requires that the participant be provided with appropriate information about the uses to which data will be put...'. Research Services

The Committee **recommended** that in Research Ethics Policy Note no. 6, in the penultimate paragraph of section 1, 'The Concept of Vulnerability', the list of potentially highly sensitive topics be amended to include "criminal or illegal activities" rather than "criminal activities", and the section in brackets should be deleted. Research Services

The Committee discussed the definition of personal data provided in Research Ethics Policy Note no. 9, and debated whether a "natural person" was an alternative definition for a "living person". As a result of this discussion the Committee **recommended** that the term "natural person" be replaced throughout the Ethics Policy with "natural (living) person". Research Services

The Committee had a detailed discussion about Research Ethics Policy Note no. 14, section 5, paragraph 2. After careful consideration the Committee **recommended** that the wording “If engaging with participants online, where it may be difficult to establish the age of the participant, consideration should be given to steps that may be taken to verify the participants’ age, or discourage the involvement of under 18s” should be changed to “If engaging with participants online, where it may be difficult to establish the age of the participant, consideration should be given to steps that may be taken to verify the participants’ age, and researchers must carefully consider the legal and ethical dimensions of involving participants under the age of 18.”

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Pending the above amendments, the Committee endorsed the revisions to the Ethics Policy and **recommended** that they be put forward to Senate for approval.

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Services

The Chair extended the Committee’s thanks to the Secretary, Dr Bates, Ms Clark and Ms Cutler for their work on GDPR in the sub group.

5. **IMPLICATIONS OF GDPR FOR COMMITTEE WORKING PRACTICES**

The Secretary introduced the item, and proposed that a specific privacy statement may be required to cover the use of personal data as part of UREC activities. Ms Cutler advised that University-level Privacy Notices would cover GDPR requirements for the core business of the University, including the working practices of University committees.

The format and contents of the minutes and other papers were discussed and Ms Cutler confirmed that it was unlikely that any issues would arise from these; it was also noted that the papers could continue to be sent by email to external representatives.

6. **PROPOSED CHANGES TO ETHICS POLICY RE SAFEGUARDING CASE**

The Committee discussed the proposed additions to the Ethics Policy that had been drafted in response to a recent incident that had arisen on a research project.

The Committee felt that the amendments required further consideration and rewording, to ensure a clear distinction between the remit of the UREC and the University’s Health and Safety procedures. It was also noted that a supervisor or line manager should be the first point of contact in such instances rather than the UREC Secretary.

The Committee **recommended** that the requested amendments be made and a revised paper presented to the Committee at the next meeting.

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Services

7. **DRAFT POSITION PAPER RE ETHICAL REVIEW OF JOINTLY SUPERVISED STUDENTS’ WORK**

A request for clarity on the ethical review of jointly supervised students’ work had arisen from the Annual Update process. The Secretary presented a draft paper for consideration by the Committee.

The Committee discussed the paper and agreed that the position statement was appropriate. The Committee **recommended** that the statement be communicated to departments. Research Services

The Committee thanked the Secretary for her work on the statement.

8. **PROPOSED IDEAS FOR RAISING AWARENESS OF RESEARCH ETHICS & INTEGRITY**

The Secretary advised the Committee on two proposals which had been developed to promote research ethics, or good research practices more generally.

The first was to have a 'competition' to fund small projects designed to promote research ethics or integrity within faculties and departments. This funding could be used to pay speaker expenses, provide catering, pay PGR students or post-doctoral research staff for time spent on developing activities/materials, etc. The Committee felt that this was an excellent idea and **recommended** that the proposal be taken forward, on the proviso that the application process be light touch (e.g. proposals should be limited to one page of A4, listing the purpose, benefit, proposed costs and how the event would be evaluated if appropriate). Research Services

It was noted that, as time was limited before the end of the University's financial year, a deadline for applications of the middle of March would be appropriate, and that the process of considering which applications to award should be equally light-touch. As such, the Committee **recommended** that the Chair, Secretary and Minute Secretary undertake this task on behalf of the Committee. Chair, Secretary, Minute Secretary

The second proposal was to hold 'open hour' drop-in sessions, for each Faculty, in an appropriate location at which staff or students could come and speak to members of UREC to raise queries or discuss concerns (e.g. the relevant Faculty representative and the Secretary/Minute Secretary).

The Committee felt that this was a good opportunity to raise awareness and to offer further support to staff and students, and **recommended** that this proposal be taken forward. Research Services, Faculty Reps

9. **INITIAL HIGH LEVEL ANALYSIS OF THE ETHICS POLICY SURVEY**

A survey was issued by the UREC over December 2017 and January 2018 to collect colleagues' and students' views of the revised Ethics Policy and new Ethics Policy Notes.

A brief high level analysis of quantitative data was produced with a view to a more detailed analysis being presented to the UREC in May. It was noted that the analysis was a useful overview and that there were several interesting data comparisons to be made.

The Committee **recommended** that the Chair, Secretary and Minute Secretary should produce a list of analytical requirements and that, if possible, a PGR student should be identified to undertake the analysis and produce a report for the next meeting, with appropriate payment from the UREC budget. Chair, Secretary, Minute Secretary

10. **INCREASING ENGAGEMENT WITH DEPARTMENTAL ETHICS CONTACTS**

The representative for the International Faculty, Professor Vivas, reported that she is in regular contact with the ethics leads for the four departments, and therefore there is no need to arrange a specific meeting for this.

The representative for Professional Services reported that it would not be possible or appropriate to arrange a meeting with ethics contacts until the arrangements for on-going ethical review had been agreed with the former Student Services departments.

The representative for the Faculty of Science, Dr Stillman, reported that due to unforeseen occurrences the planning of the event for ethics contacts across the Faculty has been delayed but is still being progressed. Dr Stillman was keen to consider combining this with an 'open hour' session as discussed in under item 8.

The representative for the Faculty of Social Sciences, Dr Bates, reported that an event is being planned; she had met with the Minute Secretary and they would shortly be emailing ethics contacts in the Faculty for their suggestions and ideas.

It was noted that the representatives for the Faculties of the Arts and Humanities, Engineering, and Medicine, Dentistry and Health were not in attendance.

The Chair offered to support the Faculty representatives in their endeavours, either through attendance of meetings by the Chair, Secretary or Minute Secretary, through budget to cover reasonable expenses for refreshments and, if an event was envisaged which would require additional organisation and development, by requesting project support from a PGR student (to be paid via the UREC budget).

11. **ETHICS QUERIES RECEIVED**

The Secretary updated the Committee on ethics queries which had been received.

- A query had been received from a researcher who has an honorary contract with the University. They have a project which does not involve the University and have asked if it is possible for the project to go through the University research ethics process. The Committee discussed this in some depth and concluded that if it is not a University project, then it would not be appropriate for the project to be reviewed by the University. The Committee **recommended** that the researcher be contacted to ask whether they would be planning to declare an affiliation to the University at the point of publication. If not, then it would not be appropriate for the project to be reviewed via the University ethics process. Research Services
- A query had been received from a colleague regarding the use of data collected in a national survey. The data on the use of digital devices is being collected by BOS on behalf of JISC. The member of staff wished to know whether they needed ethics approval for the data to be analysed and used in publications and reports. They were advised that the data could be used internally for service improvement; however, if they were to further analyse the data and then publish the findings outside of the University as research, then they would need ethics approval.

- A query had been received from a colleague regarding the lack of anonymity of reviewers within the online ethics system (supervisors are able to see names against comments prior to the application being returned to the applicant). The Committee discussed this and felt that it was important that ethics reviewers should be free to make comments without being identified and that the “blind review” process was key to a fair review. The Committee **recommended** that the developers be contacted and the names of reviewers be removed from any comments visible to the applicant or their supervisor. Research Services
 - An enquiry was received regarding the time frame for ethics approval and how long beyond the stated end date of the project the ethics approval would last. The Committee agreed that the expected end date of the project should also be the end date for the ethics approval for the project. The Committee also agreed that this needed to be made clearer and **recommended** that an amendment to the wording of the approval letter should be made to include the end date of the project. Research Services
The Committee also **recommended** that wording should be developed to inform researchers of their responsibility for the management of their data both during and after their project has ended. Research Services
 - A query had been received from a colleague regarding retrospective ethics approval for the publication of data already collected as part of an internal research project. The colleague was advised that retrospective approval was not allowed (although it was agreed that the findings could be shared internally). The Committee discussed this enquiry and **recommended** that further consideration be given to appropriate awareness raising activities for Professional Services staff in relation to ethics requirements (e.g. a workshop), once the processes for ethical review in the former Student Services departments have been agreed. Research Services
12. **REPORT ON THE VISIT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY**
The Committee noted the contents of the report.
13. **REPORT ON THE VISIT TO THE SCHOOL OF LAW**
The Committee noted the contents of the report. The Committee also noted that the visit report highlighted an application in which a number of suggested amendments were made, which should have been compulsory amendments. It was noted that this situation occurs quite regularly during departmental visits. The Committee felt that ethics reviewers would benefit from having examples available of what constitutes appropriate compulsory amendments and suggested amendments, and **recommended** that further consideration be given to providing guidance/training on this. Research Services
14. **REPORT ON THE VISIT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC**
The Committee noted the contents of the report. It was also noted that the Department stated that they did not have an outward facing ethics webpage. The Committee **recommended** that the Department be asked to ensure that an ethics page is included on their outward facing webpages, since this ensures Research Services

information is readily available to staff and students, is helpful for sharing of good practice between departments, and also highlights both internally and externally that the Department takes its commitment to ethical research seriously.

15. **ITEMS TO INCLUDE ON THE SENATE REPORT**

The Committee **recommended** that, due to time constraints the Chair and Secretary would address this item outside of the meeting. Chair & Secretary

16. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

16 May 2018.

17. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Dr Stillman enquired about the potential impact of the impending industrial action on the ethics review procedure, and how this would be managed. Professor Petley advised Dr Stillman that the Head of each department is responsible for ensuring that appropriate measures are in place, and communications have been sent to Heads of department to advise them in relation to the strike action.

These Minutes were confirmed at
a meeting held on.....

.....Chairman