



Minutes Meeting of the University Research Ethics Committee

Date:	16 th May 2018
Present:	Professor Peter Bath in the Chair
Secretary:	Mrs Lindsay Unwin
Minute Secretary:	Miss Anita Kenny
In attendance:	Dr Jo Bates; Dr Jennifer Burr; Ms Lauriane Chalmin-Pui; Dr Richard Cooper; Ms Maria Clark; Mr Jez Cope; Ms Anne Cutler; Ms Margaret Ellis; Dr Carmen Levick; Dr Eleanor Stillman; Dr Yog Upadhyay; Dr Ana Vivas.
Observer:	Dr Andrew Isaac
Apologies:	Ms Harriet Baird; The Venerable Robert Fitzharris; Dr Karen Ford; Dr Claudia Mazza; Professor David Petley.

Action by

1. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14TH FEBRUARY 2018**

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.

Under item 11 it was noted that it has been confirmed by the developers of the ethics system that reviewers' names are only visible to the supervisor if the supervisor is also one of the reviewers of the application. A discussion was had regarding the conflict between the desire for transparency and concerns regarding potential power dynamics, with the risk of reviewers feeling coerced into approving an application should they be directly identifiable. There was a view that identifying reviewers fosters open constructive dialogue and the opportunity for ethics "conversations" to take place. The view was also expressed that, as academics and professional service staff, reviewers should be prepared to defend their decisions. The Committee **recommended** that a consultation should take place with Principal Ethics Contacts in departments and a paper be brought to the next meeting.

Research
Services

Under item 11 there was an action for Research Services to develop wording (to be included in the ethics approval letter) to inform researchers of their responsibility for the management of their data both during and after their project has ended. The Committee was asked to consider whether only data management should be highlighted within the ethics approval letter or whether other responsibilities currently set out in the 'declaration' section of the application form should be re-iterated in an appendix to the approval letter. After a short discussion the Committee **recommended** that an appendix should be added to the ethics approval letter to set out researcher responsibilities.

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3. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair reported that the GDPR sub-group held its 2nd meeting in March to consider the changes needed to the specialist guidance paper on data protection, the information sheet/consent form guidance, and the online ethics system in response to GDPR. The proposed documents were then circulated to all members in April for comment and the Chair expressed his thanks to those who responded. Final versions were agreed by Chair's action due to urgency and were made available online last week. This also included guidance and recommended text for informing participants of additional information required for GDPR. Email communications have also been sent to all staff and students, and to ethics contacts in departments to alert them to the changes and the new guidance.

Open briefing meetings for staff and students were held on 16 and 20 April and were well attended (over 100 at each). A recording is now available online on the dedicated UREC GDPR webpage.

Changes to the online ethics system as a result of GDPR are being taken forward by Epigenesys and they aim to have these ready in time for 25 May.

Further work is needed with reference to GDPR and the external/lay reviewer process – the Secretary plans to draft some information to be provided to them (akin to an information sheet), which will explain what data we hold, how long they will be held for etc. There has been some discussion of introducing an expectation that they need to undertake the University's Data Protection/information security training, but they would need to be given University accounts to access this. The Secretary has spoken to the Research Services contracts team about putting non-disclosure agreements in place with external reviewers – they are still working on the implications of GDPR for contracts but will be able to help with this in due course.

The Chair advised the Committee of recent cases of breach of ethics approval.

- 1 PGT student case has been investigated - the student had completed two interviews without ethics approval. The student mistakenly thought that ethics approval had been granted (when actually compulsory changes had been required) and also mistakenly thought that the approval covered a second module, for which he undertook the interviews. The student was facing a difficult situation at home, which he felt probably contributed to this situation. As the student admitted culpability it was agreed that the case should be closed without further investigation, on the proviso that the interview data are destroyed.
- One new case is under investigation; a UG student. The outcome of the investigation will be reported in due course.

It was noted that the Secretary has had discussions with the Student Conduct and Appeals office in the context of the above investigation. The Student Conduct and Appeals office indicated that, in future, they would like to have sight of

investigation reports received by UREC concerning students in case the situation needs to be referred to formal disciplinary proceedings.

The Committee discussed the implications of this, and noted that it is currently unclear how UREC investigations and Student Conduct and Appeals office policies and procedures should interact. As part of this, it was noted that students should be made aware of their entitlement to have representation at meetings undertaken as part of internal investigations.

The Committee **recommended** that the Chair and Secretary consider these Chair and Secretary issues further with a view to developing a clear position statement, in Secretary collaboration with the Student Conduct and Appeals office.

The Committee were advised of the outcome of the applications for funding of projects designed to promote research ethics and/or integrity (as agreed at the meeting in February, a funding opportunity was promoted within departments for small projects). Nine applications were received, and funding was offered to the following five applications:

- Development of video scenarios and related teaching resources (School of Education)
- Workshop on interdisciplinary research with refugee communities (interdisciplinary – Faculty of Social Sciences)
- Workshop on the ethical challenges of participatory research with children (School of Education)
- Workshop on the relationship between postcolonial theory, feminism and contemporary research ethics (interdisciplinary – Faculty of Social Sciences)
- Lone worker training (School of Law)

Funding of these projects constituted a total spend from the UREC's budget of £3,782.48. The Chair reported that the key reasons for not funding projects were:

- Limited relevance/benefit to University staff/students in terms of raising awareness/engagement with ethics or integrity;
- Significant costs requested (e.g. flights and accommodation for external speakers).

The Chair reported that there was also considerable interest in the Committee making this opportunity available again in future. The Committee **recommended** Research Services that, subject to budget allocation, a proportion of the budget be ring fenced with Services a view to continuing the funding opportunity in future years.

4. **FURTHER CHANGES TO ETHICS POLICY IN LINE WITH GDPR**

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

There was significant discussion about the proposed changes to be made to the 'General Principles and Statements', section 4, paragraph 1, concerning data protection training for staff and students, particularly whether it should be compulsory for students to complete the training if they will be collecting personal data as part of their research. It was noted that CiCS have confirmed

that students would have access to the Information Security training via MUSE, in the same way as staff. There was discussion about the challenges for departments of making this compulsory, particularly in terms of how departments would monitor/enforce the training where there are large numbers of students undertaking dissertation research at the same time. One suggestion was that students could be asked to upload confirmation of their completion of the training as part of their ethics application (it was noted that a certificate is produced on completion of the training). It was also suggested that a question could be added to the online system asking if applicants had undertaken the Information Security training.

The Committee **recommended** that the implications of making the training compulsory for students should be given further consideration by the Chair and Research Services in the first instance, with a view to potentially introducing this at a later date. It was noted that if implemented, appropriate guidance and support for departments would need to be provided, including a transitional period to help departments adjust to the new requirement. The Committee also **recommended** that, for now, the Policy should recommend that the training is undertaken by students who will be using personal data in their research, and that the proposed wording should be adjusted accordingly.

The Committee discussed the proposed changes in Research Ethics Policy Note no.2; it was noted that a number of sections had been altered to remove references to 'consent' being used as the legal basis since, on further reflection it was agreed by the sub-group that this could cause confusion.

The Committee noted that in Research Ethics Policy Note no. 4, the term 'Common Law Duty of Confidence' had been replaced with the term 'Common Law Duty of Confidentiality', as this is a more universally recognised term.

The Committee **recommended** that in Research Ethics Policy Note no. 6, section 1 in the penultimate paragraph, the subjects that may increase the vulnerability of participants should be presented as a bullet pointed list, as is the case in other areas of the Policy.

The Chair extended the Committee's thanks again to the sub-group (Dr Bates, Ms Clark, Ms Cutler, the Secretary, and the Minute Secretary) for all their work on updating the ethics policy and guidance in line with GDPR.

5. **REPORT ON SURVEY OF ETHICS POLICY**

The Chair introduced the item, and thanked the Minute Secretary for her work on the report to ensure that it was delivered in a timely manner.

It was noted that 137 responses were received, and overall, responses had been extremely positive.

83.3% of respondents found the 'General Principles and Statements' document to be very useful or useful as an introduction to the Ethics Policy, and almost 91% felt that it was very clear or clear.

Similarly, almost 88% felt that the 'Research Ethics Procedure' document was very useful or useful, and 88% considered it to be very clear or clear.

The 'pre-existing' Policy Notes (those available prior to the review of the Ethics Policy in 2016); were rated as very useful or useful by 91%, and to be very clear or clear by 92% of respondents.

With regard to the new Research Ethics Policy Notes, they were found to be very useful or useful by 87.6% of respondents, and 92.9% felt that it was very clear or clear. [N.B. The term 'New Research Ethics Policy Notes' referred to the three new documents that have been produced by the UREC either as part of, or since, the 2016 review of the Ethics Policy. These are: Re-Use of Existing Data in Research, Research Involving Social Media Data, and Demonstrating the Impact of Research. This was made clear in the introductory text within the questionnaire.]

The Committee noted that there were a number of useful comments from respondents in response to the 'free text' questions, particularly in relation to suggestions for communicating and ensuring easy access to the policy, and that these comments would be considered in the planning of future work.

The Committee **recommended** that a summary of the findings be prepared for the Senate report.

Research
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6. **SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK FROM ETHICS REVIEWER WORKSHOPS**

The Chair introduced the item, and thanked the Minute Secretary and Secretary for their work on the report.

The Committee noted that feedback was received from 81 attendees (a 41% response rate) and welcomed the high level of positive feedback.

Overall 94.9% of the respondents felt that the presentations were excellent or good; similarly, 96.1% felt that the discussions were excellent or good.

Regarding the format of the event 97.4% commented that the format of the event was appropriate and 96.8% felt that the event was clearly organised.

In response to the relevance of the workshop 100% responded that it was very relevant (84.6%) or quite relevant (15.4%).

100% of respondents reported that they enjoyed the workshop and 100% felt they had sufficient opportunity to participate; 92.5% said they would attend a similar event in future.

The Committee noted that there were a number of useful comments from respondents in response to the 'free text' questions, particularly in relation to suggestions for communicating and ensuring easy access to the policy, and that these comments would be considered in the planning of future events.

The Committee **recommended** that more experienced reviewers should be encouraged to attend the training via the promotional materials, as an opportunity to re-familiarise themselves with the ethics policy and procedures, and to be exposed to ethics applications from other departments; it was also noted that the workshops benefit from attendance of experienced reviewers.

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The Committee **recommended** that the possibility of attaching CPD points to participation in the session be investigated further. Research Services

The Committee **recommended** that a summary of the feedback be prepared for the Senate report. Research Services

7. **CHANGES TO ETHICS POLICY RE SAFEGUARDING CASE**

The Secretary introduced the paper to the Committee, which followed on from a concern that was raised and discussed at the previous meeting. A discussion was had regarding the clarity of the suggested amendments.

The Committee **recommended** that the proposed new text should be amended to include that the researcher should contact their supervisor or line manager once the immediate situation had been dealt with. Research Services

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

The Chair invited the Faculty representatives to report on any activities which had taken place since the last meeting.

The representative for the Faculty of Science, Dr Stillman, reported that an ethics meeting will take place next week to be supported by the Minute Secretary. This is to be followed by a 1-hour drop-in session supported by the Secretary and the Minute Secretary.

The representative for the Faculty of Social Sciences, Dr Bates, reported that a meeting recently took place supported by the Secretary. There was discussion of a number of issues, particularly the implications of GDPR. The attendees responded well to the suggestion of an Open Hour drop-in session.

The representative for the Faculty of the Arts and Humanities, Dr Levick, reported that a number of informal meetings had taken place and that she had delivered a presentation to the School of English on the new GDPR and ethical implications for the School.

The representative for the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health, Dr Cooper, reported that he had responded to a number of email enquiries and that he would be working with the Minute Secretary to arrange a meeting before the end of the academic year.

The representative for the International Faculty also confirmed that there had been no formal activities, but a number of informal meetings and email exchanges particularly regarding GDPR and that she was in regular contact with colleagues across the Faculty.

The Chair advised Dr Vivas that he would be visiting SEERC and would be happy to run a short session on GDPR if Dr Vivas felt this would be helpful. This suggestion was welcomed and discussions to arrange this will take place outside of the meeting.

It was noted that the representative for the Faculty of Engineering was not in attendance.

9. **REPORT ON THE VISIT TO THE SCHOOL OF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY**

The Committee noted the content of the report and that there were no issues arising that required further discussion. The Committee were advised that the Minute Secretary had addressed the list of issues relating to the online ethics system, and will be responding to the School by the end of May.

10. **UPDATE ON ETHICS QUERIES RECEIVED**

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

- A query had been received regarding the publication of Twitter datasets in line with Open Access requirements for reproducibility. The information to be published was a list of Tweet IDs. After discussion with the Chair it was agreed that the Twitter IDs should not be published, the concern being that although Twitter posts are in the public domain, users may not be cognisant that their tweets may be used and they may be identifiable in research. It was noted that the individual who raised this query had raised a concern about differences in the position taken on this issue in different departments, and that in some disciplines there is a strong move towards all research data being made open access, including Twitter data. It was **recommended** that this issue be given further consideration by the Chair and Secretary, with the input of other relevant members of the Committee as required.
- An enquiry was received similar to one reported in February, regarding an ethics application which was currently undergoing review but which had been submitted on behalf of a study club with no affiliation to the University. It was noted that the application had been archived and the applicant informed that external research cannot be reviewed via the University's ethics review procedure. The Committee **recommended** that Research Services draft a position statement regarding requests for ethical review of external research and that this be brought to the Committee for consideration and approval.
- A query had been received from a researcher who wished to publish a journal paper based on their Masters dissertation, but they had not obtained consent from participants to use their data in this way. The Committee agreed with the response that was given to this query; that although this was acceptable under GDPR as there was no personal data involved, from an ethics standpoint this was not acceptable.

Chair,
Research
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Research
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11. **ITEMS TO INCLUDE ON THE SENATE REPORT**

The Committee **recommended** that the Chair and Secretary address this item outside of the meeting.

Chair &
Secretary

12. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

12 September 2018.

13. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Ms Chalmin-Pui highlighted the fact that recent changes to the administrative support structure had impacted on the processing of student ethics applications and subsequently impacted on their research projects. One student had been obliged to wait a month before their application was allocated to reviewers.

Although this has now been resolved at a system level (one administrator for two departments) the arrangement now in place means that the Ethics Administrator is not familiar with staff in their “new” department and does not have knowledge of the expertise of the staff.

The Committee discussed this issue and **recommended** that a reminder to Chair and Heads of Departments of their responsibility for ensuring that appropriate Research Services arrangements are in place to manage the ethics review process should be included in the report to Senate.

The Committee also **recommended** that the issue be followed up with the Research Services Department concerned (in terms of the problem faced by the Ethics Administrator in appointing reviewers from a department with whom she is unfamiliar, it was suggested that she approach the Head of that department to ask for their advice in terms of the strategy to use for this (e.g. a regular rotation, or contacting the Head/an alternate to make a decision about who to appoint in each case). The Committee also noted that this is an ongoing area of potential disruption and risk in the current climate.

The Chair took the opportunity to pass on the Committee’s thanks to the three members of the Committee who have completed their terms of membership. The representatives for the Faculty of Engineering (Dr Mazza), the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health (Dr Cooper), and the Faculty of Science (Dr Stillman). It was noted that the process of appointing to the vacant membership positions is under way.

The Chair also thanked all the other members of the Committee for their work throughout the academic year. In particular, the Chair thanked the Secretary, Mrs Unwin, and Minute Secretary, Miss Kenny, for their continued help and support throughout the year and to Mrs Unwin for her work preparing for the introduction of GDPR.

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