

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the fifty-seventh meeting of the University Research Ethics Committee, held 24 May 2012

Present: David Anderson-Ford (Chair), Rory Deane, Joan Gandy, Richard Godfrey, John MacMillan, Christine Piper, Mary Pat Sullivan, Zidong Wang, Jim Wood, Mary Liddell (Secretary)

Apologies: Sheila Bannerman, Brian Betts, Laurence Brooks, Tina Ramkalawan

Reserved (FOI) Release date

477. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Action:

478. Minutes

The minutes of the fifty-sixth meeting held on 29 March 2012 were RECEIVED and ACCEPTED as a true record.

Action:

479. Matters arising

479.1. Electronic submission system for research ethics (474.1)

The Chair reported that at the next meeting of the UKREC Forum, there would be a presentation of the IRAS interface.

The Secretary reported that it might be possible to construct an electronic submission system with appropriate workflow in-house through the use of SharePoint 2010. All REOs should provide the Secretary with information on how the submission process worked in their School/Department. This information would be passed on to the Computer Centre for inclusion in a SharePoint site.

Action: REOs

479.2. Papers before Council (474.2)

The Chair reported that he and the Secretary would work on revision of Committee documents in the next month.

**Action: DA-F,
ML**

479.3. Amended expedited review form for SHSSC (474.3)

The form had not yet been submitted to the Committee for approval.

Action: DA-F

479.4. Review of SRECs (474.4)

The review team would get together after the meeting to put this in train.

**Action: DA-F,
JW, JG**

479.5. Promulgation strategy for Ethical Framework (474.6)

The Secretary reported that no action had yet been taken. She would try to ensure the current Ethical Framework was posted on the Brunel website as soon as possible.

Action: ML

479.6. Annual report to Council and Senate (474.7)

The Committee was informed that Council had seen the report, and the revised TOR had been accepted. It would go to Senate on 06 June.

The Chair informed the Committee that it was stated in the minutes from the last Council meeting that applications for ethics review for projects where appropriate visa clearance was not intended to be obtained would have to be reviewed by the Health and Safety Committee as well as the UREC. The Chair would contact the Secretary to Council for more information about this.

Action: DA-F

479.7. Legal risks to University and researcher (474.8)

The Chair reported that the information in minute 474.8 would be included in the Code of Research Ethics when the overall document review was conducted.

**Action: DA-F,
ML**

480. School reports to UREC

The issues raised in the School reports were discussed. The Committee AGREED the following:

- The Brunel Law School requested that training on specific areas such as use of gatekeepers, risk to researchers and questionnaire design be provided. The UREC would try to organise such training.
- The suggestion that the UREC compile a list of countries where particular types of visas are required in order to conduct research was rejected. It was felt that this would take an excessive amount of time and effort, both in creating the list, and in maintaining it. The Committee AGREED that it was the responsibility of the individual researcher to discover what visa would be required, and to provide some evidence to the SREC/UREC (as necessary) of this.

- Dr. Gandy agreed to provide a list of websites useful for determining visa requirements to the Secretary.
- It was agreed that SISCM should go ahead and port their electronic submission system to the BlackBoard Learn environment if they so desired.
- The issue of late submissions for research ethics review was discussed. Late submission must be accommodated as far as possible, as there might have been mitigating circumstances involved.
- If a researcher was found to have started data collection without waiting for research ethics approval, then the researcher should be told to stop work on the project until approval was obtained. This could be done by the Course Leader (or equivalent), backed up by School management. A misconduct action against a student's supervisor (in the case where a student started working on a project without first having obtained research ethics approval) would be unfair unless there was obvious evidence of collusion.
- If a case such as that described in the preceding bullet point arose, and School management was not willing to support the Course Leader in his/her efforts to halt work on a project, then the Chair of the UREC should be informed.

A query was raised as to whether it would be possible to indicate on the School report pro-forma the number of approvals and rejections by application type (i.e., checklist or full application). REOs were requested to check with the Chairs of their SRECs to see if this would be possible and report back to the UREC.

**Action: REOs,
JG**

481. Ethics of using “scraped” data

It was AGREED to carry this item over to the July meeting.

Action:

482. Compulsory research ethics training for staff

The Chair informed the Committee that participation by members of staff in the formal Research Ethics training sessions had been low. In his opinion, if more supervisors were to attend this training, then less effort would be required by SRECs in reviewing applications for research ethics approval, as fewer of them would need remedial work prior to being fit for approval.

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- It might be more useful to provide training for members of staff who were fulfilling particular roles where knowledge of research ethics was required, rather than requiring all academic staff to attend such training.

- If research ethics training were to be made compulsory, what would the sanction be for not attending such training?
- Could an “exemption” system be operated; i.e., academics working in disciplines where human participants were never used would not be required to attend research ethics training?
- It was apparent that, in some Schools, there was a need for fundamental training in research-related areas (i.e., meaning of “empirical” research, research methodology, questionnaire design) to take place before training in research ethics would be useful. It was suggested that presentations in these areas could take place under a 3-line whip at School/Department meetings with facilitation by the UREC or RSDO.
- It was suggested that training requirements be included as an area for review.

Action:

483. Any other business

The Secretary noted that the date of the July meeting was during Graduation week, and suggested that the meeting take place the week before Graduation (19 July). The Committee AGREED to this.

Action: ML

484. Meeting dates

2011/12

19 July 2012 (Note: this will take place in JC 128)

2012/13

04 October 2012
 22 November 2012
 24 January 2013
 21 March 2013
 23 May 2013
 18 July 2013

ML 25/05/12

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE – MAY 2012 – ACTION SHEET

Minute	Item	Action	Action by
479.1	Electronic submission system for research ethics	Provide Secretary with workflow information	REOs
479.2	Papers before Council	Update documents	DA-F, ML
479.3	Amended expedited review for SHSSC	Submit revised form for approval	DA-F, MPS
479.4	Review of SRECs	Arrange appointments with School REC personnel	DA-F, JW, JG
479.5	Promulgation strategy for Ethical Framework	Put current Framework on web	ML
479.6	Annual Report to Council and Senate	Contact Secretary to Council re: review by H&S Committee	DA-F
479.7	Legal risks to University and researcher	Update documents	DA-F, ML
480	School reports to UREC	Arrange additional research-related training for Schools	DA-F
		Provide list of websites for finding visa requirements to Secretary	JG
		Indicate if School reports can break down approvals/rejections by application type	REOs
483	Any other business	Note date of next meeting	ALL
484	Meeting dates	Note dates for meetings in 2012/13 academic year	ALL