

## **BRUNEL UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of the sixty-fifth meeting of the University Research Ethics Committee, held 28 November 2013**

Present: David Anderson-Ford (Chair), Peter Hobson (Deputy Chair), Sheila Bannerman, Sue Broadhurst, Laurence Brooks, Jan Fidrmuc, Joan Gandy, Andrew George, Derek Healy, Koen Matthys, Natasha Slutskaya, Mary Pat Sullivan, Zidong Wang

Visitors: Jim Benson, Damilola Macaulay

Apologies: Federico Ferretti, Richard Godfrey, Ashraf Khir, Tina Ramkalawan, Jim Wood

**Reserved (FOI)    Release date**

#### **537.    Declarations of interest**

The Chair declared an interest in item 6 on the agenda (AREC Framework).

**Action:**

#### **538.    Minutes**

The minutes of the sixty-fourth meeting held on 18 July 2013 were RECEIVED and ACCEPTED as a true record.

**Action:**

#### **539.    Matters arising**

##### **539.1.    Review of SRECs**

The Chair introduced the final report on the review of the School Research Ethics Committees (SRECs), and noted the importance of the UUK concordat on research integrity and the AREC Framework on the operation of research ethics committees.

The Chair reviewed the recommendations set out in the report:

- The use of the short form would need to be reviewed
- Guidance is needed for the short form, similar to the Question-Specific Guidance which exists for the long form
- Renewed efforts should be made to find a solution to electronic submission and approval of applications.
- The role of the Research Ethics Officer (REO) needs clarification and recognition
- SRECs should examine the frequency of meetings.
- The UREC needs to provide more training for SREC administrators and reviewers
- The UREC needs to provide more information on consent and overseas collaboration.

A concern was raised regarding use of the long form as opposed to the short form. The Chair explained that the intention was not to discard the short form, but to ensure it was used appropriately.

The Committee NOTED the report.

**Action:**

#### 539.2. Composition and Terms of Reference

The Chair reviewed the changes which had been proposed for the composition of the Committee and its Terms of Reference (TOR), and pointed out the modifications which had been proposed following discussion with various parties:

- The Biological and Genetic Modification Sub-Committee would remain as a sub-committee of the Health & Safety Committee
- The Animal Research Ethics Committee would become a sub-committee of the UREC, and its Chair and Certificate of Designation Holder would become members of the UREC
- The number of co-opted members of the University would be increased to four.

The Committee APPROVED the revised composition and TOR.

**Action:**

#### 540. Visa requirements

The Chair reviewed the reason for issuing the current guidance on visas, and why an 'exceptional circumstances' clause was included. He noted that the exceptional circumstances clause may conflict with the UUK concordat on research integrity.

Council had requested reconsideration of the exceptional circumstances clause.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- No instances of exceptional circumstances had been raised in the two years since the guidance was published
- Caution was needed as the practice of **not** obtaining appropriate visas might actually be occurring; the Chair noted that the application form had been modified to specifically ask the question about visas
- Removing the clause might have the effect of binding researchers' hands, and preventing them from carrying out valuable research
- It was suggested that the issue might be better viewed as related to which committee should provide approval for exceptional circumstances; to ensure approval was given at an appropriate level, it might be better to refer such applications to Council via the Secretary to Council
- It was noted that the issue was not just an issue of the safety of participants and/or researchers, but also whether the research itself was ethical.

The Chair summarised the choices as follows:

1. Keep the current guidance, including the exceptional circumstances clause, as is
2. Remove the exceptional circumstances clause
3. Retain the exceptional circumstances clause, but indicate that the application would be referred to Council via the Secretary to Council for a final decision.

A further suggestion was made to remove the exceptional circumstances clause from its current location in the Code (paragraph 41), and put it in a separate paragraph to cover **any** instances where exceptional circumstances might apply. Such applications would be reviewed by the UREC, and then referred to the Secretary to Council for consideration of the exceptional circumstances.

The Committee **ACCEPTED** the suggestion above. The Chair would draft the exceptional circumstances paragraph for the Code, and submit it to the Committee for review prior to the January 2014 meeting of Council.

**Action: DA-F**

#### 541. AREC Framework

The Chair gave a presentation on the AREC Framework for University Research Ethics Committees. He asked the Committee to note that UUK had recommended adoption of the Framework.

The Chair recommended that SRECs look at the self-assessment tool included in the Framework, and would ask a couple of SRECs to volunteer to pilot the Framework.

The self-assessment tool would also be applied to the UREC.

**Action: REOs;  
DA-F**

542.	Information redacted	(RESERVED)	X	December 2014
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Information redacted

Information redacted

Information redacted

**Action:** Information redacted

**543. School of Social Sciences Expedited Review form**

The Chair commended the proposed form to the Committee, as a form which would be used across the various departmental Research Ethics Committees (DRECs) in the School.

The Committee APPROVED the form.

**Action:**

**544. Research integrity update**

The Chair provided an update on work to embed the UUK concordat within the University. A working group was in place and functioning. A final draft for consultation on research integrity was planned for January 2014.

**Action:**

**545. Transformation programme**

The Chair opened discussion on the effects of the TxP on the composition of the UREC.

It was noted that Senate had approved the preferred option for the proposed Colleges, and this would be considered at the Council meeting in December.

The Chair requested that the Committee give some thought to how the UREC would adapt to the new structure, and be prepared to discuss it at the next meeting (23 January 2014).

**Action: ALL**

**546. Revised Declaration of Helsinki**

The Chair reviewed the revised Declaration, and noted that those areas of the University where ethics review applications were submitted to LRECs should pay particular attention to the modifications.

**Action:**

**547. Any other business**

**547.1. Use of Social Media for research**

The Chair made the Committee aware that the British Psychological Society had updated their guidelines on using the internet for research (<http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/inf206-guidelines-for-internet-mediated-research.pdf>).

**Action:**

**547.2. Academy of Social Sciences**

The Chair informed the Committee that the Academy of Social Sciences was in the process of drafting a general ethics code for social science research (<http://www.acss.org.uk/Ethics/Professional%20Briefings%203%20Ethics%20r.pdf>).

**548. Meeting dates**

23 January 2014

27 March 2014

22 May 2014

24 July 2014

All meetings would start at 1000 and be held in WBB 102 unless otherwise noted.

**Action:**

ML 28/11/13

## RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE – NOVEMBER 2013 -- ACTION SHEET

Minute	Item	Action	Action by
540	Visa requirements	Draft paragraph for code	DA-F
541	AREC Framework	Apply self-assessment tool	REOs; DA-F
542	Information redacted	Circulate SOP to UREC	DA-F; ML
545	Transformation programme	Prepare to discuss options for UREC membership	ALL