

BRUNEL UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the seventy-ninth meeting of the University Research Ethics Committee, held 22 March 2016

Present: Peter Hobson (Chair), Joan Gandy, David Anderson-Ford, Richard Godfrey, Alex Nowicky, Tina Ramkalawan, Janice Guthrie, Jac Aldous, Jo Lakey, Fiona Denney, Malcolm Clarke, Kalpna Bose (visitor), Kate Dunbar (Secretary)

Apologies: John Park, Ali Milani, Pauldy Ottermans, Hua Zhao, Geoff Rodgers, Piotr Cieplak, Derek Healy, Tracey Henshaw, Jim Wood, Sheila Bannerman, Clare Williams, Laurence Brooks, Mary Pat Sullivan

668. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Action:

669. Minutes

The minutes of the seventy-eighth meeting held on 28 January 2016 were RECEIVED and ACCEPTED as a true record.

Action:

670. Matters arising

670.1. Electronic applications (658.1)

No comments were made on this item.

670.2. Policy statement on umbrella approval (658.2)

The Committee was informed that a policy statement had been written and published on the UREC IntraBrunel webpage.

Action: PH, KD

671. Items to Note

671.1 HTA Sub-Committee and AWERB

There was no representation from the HTA-C.

On behalf of the AWERB, UREC members were invited to visit the new rodent facility (the Pash Centre); anyone wishing to arrange a visit should email the Secretary, who would make arrangements.

671.3 BREO Statistics

The Committee was informed that since implementation of the BREO system, the UREC has reviewed a total of 24 applications. The University as a whole has approved 893 low risk applications and 270 medium/high risk applications – a total of 1,163.

It was commented that in CEDPS the College Research Office now deal with the majority of applications. This has led to an increased perception that the burden of review has been somewhat lifted from the academic community. Caution was urged in this regard as, for example, academic supervisors must maintain a responsibility for applications produced by their students. It was also observed that further training should be provided for reviewers due to variation in thoroughness of review and the risk or delay when resubmissions are requested to be seen by the reviewer in cases requiring minor changes.

671.2 Responsible Research & Innovation Tools

The Chair informed the Committee of this new online facility, arising out of an EU funded project, and encouraged members to visit it and comment upon it. The webpage can be found [here](#).

Action:

672. Composition of the UREC

No change was suggested with regard to the Committee's current composition.

Action:

673. Review of policy documentation including application form

The Committee was informed that the UREC policy review was underway with amended policy documents expected to be circulated for comment next term.

Action:

674. UREC audit of University procedures

The Committee was updated on the planned audit which will be commenced next term with an expectation that it will be completed by Christmas 2016. The audit will include a review of all current group or 'umbrella' approvals.

Action:

675. Research misconduct cases

There was no update since the previous meeting. The Chair reiterated his concern that procedures should be reviewed to make the process of reporting easier for students or early career researchers. There was discussion about training on how to recognise potential misconduct and using anonymised case studies to illustrate these points in real terms. A need was also identified to alert students to their rights surrounding ownership of data, authorship and publication. It was suggested that information on these matters could be added to the student handbook to assist those who do not engage with training opportunities.

Action: PH

676. Any other business

676.1 Recruitment of research participants by external commercial organisations

After considerable discussion the Committee agreed that this matter should be referred to the University Ethics Advisory Committee for a decision, on the basis that this relates to market research rather than academic research. It may also raise issues of institutional image or reputation.

676.2 Secondary data

Discussion centred on the definition of secondary data and the difficulties in anonymising data for future use. The Chair raised the issue of social media research and there was discussion on the complexities of using data from social media sources, often against the terms and conditions of the websites concerned. The Committee was asked to decide whether research involving secondary data should carry a requirement to obtain research ethics approval; it was decided that where data can be defined as secondary and anonymous, the requirement for research ethics review may be waived. The Chair agreed to draft a statement on what constitutes secondary data and the conditions upon which research ethics review would be required; this will be circulated to the Committee for comment in due course. It was also suggested that the Association for Research Ethics should be consulted to gauge best practice in other institutions.

676.3 UREC annual report to Council

The Committee was informed that the draft report will be circulated for comment before submission in mid-April. [Note: following the meeting the draft report was circulated to members with a comment deadline of 6 April]

Action: PH, KD

677. Meeting dates for 2015/16 academic year

26 May 2016

26 July 2016

Please note meetings will alternate between Tuesdays and Thursdays. All meetings start at 10:00 unless otherwise notified.

Action:

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE - MARCH 2016 -- ACTION SHEET

Minute	Item	Action	Action by
676.2	Secondary data	Chair to circulate draft statement on secondary data for comment by members. Secretary to invite comment from AfRE on secondary data policy outside Brunel.	PH, KD
675	Research misconduct cases	Further consideration to be given with regard to raising student awareness of their rights relating to data ownership, authorship and publication.	PH