

SENATE

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (UREC)

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 12 JUNE 2013

Present: Dr R Chapman (Chair); Dr K Appleton; Mr S Beer; Mr D Gobbett; Dr C Hodges; Ms E Jack; Dr G Roushan; Prof H Schutkowski.

In Attendance: Mrs J Hastings-Taylor (Secretary); Ms M Jarvis (Legal Services Team, for Item 11); Mr G Rayment (Committee Clerk)

Apologies: Dr J Cobb; Dr M Hind; Dr D Lilleker;

OPERATIONAL MATTERS

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (6 March 2013)

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record subject to the following amendments:

Item 4, third paragraph – amend to read “...which was necessary...” instead of “...which was not necessary...”

Item 10.1 Amend to read "Mr D Gobbett confirmed that he had recently taken on responsibility for the consultation activities of Dorset County Council. The Council has a contract with Bournemouth University to assist it with the organisation of the Citizens Panel and the analysis of Panel consultations. Following Mr Gobbett's concern that there could therefore be...."

1.1 Matters Arising

1.1.1 Social Media Policy (minute 1.1.1): It was confirmed that the online ethics checklist had been amended to include the phrasing recommended by the Committee.

1.1.2 Journalistic and Academic Research approaches to ethics (minute 3): Dr Lilleker had e-mailed an update report to Members in respect of possible conflicts of approach between journalistic and academic research approaches to ethical issues. The Committee noted that a working group was being established to consider the issues in further detail.

1.1.3 Update: Special Inquiry (minute 3): The Chair informed Members that he understood that the case involving a Media School student (which had been subject to a special Research Ethics panel discussion) was now the subject of legal action. It was agreed that the Committee should seek an update on this matter for the next meeting.

ACTION: To seek an update on developments (as above).
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ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY: Mrs Hastings-Taylor

1.1.4 Research Ethical Approval (minute 5): The Chair confirmed that he had written to the School of Applied Sciences recommending a second peer review, as agreed by the Committee at the previous meeting.

2 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP & STRUCTURE

2.1 Committee Chair

- 2.1.1 Following on from previous discussions, Dr Chapman informed members that he had formally notified the Chair of the University Board that he would be standing-down as Chair of the Committee and that this would be his final meeting. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Prof Bennett) was leading the efforts to recruit a new, independent Chair and possible candidates had been identified and contacted. Members would be notified once an appointment had been confirmed.

2.2 Secondary Ethics Representatives

- 2.2.1 Mrs Hastings-Taylor confirmed that secondary ethics representatives had now been identified for each School, although a further representative would need to be identified shortly for DEC to replace Dr Cobb. It was agreed that, in determining the quoracy of the Committee, each School would be counted only once when considering the total number of 'voting' members present. If both the primary and secondary representatives from any given School were present therefore, the secondary representative would be considered as being 'in attendance' only and would not count towards the quorum. All representatives would receive meeting invitations and papers.

2.3 Research Manager

- 2.3.1 Dr Corrina Dickson, who had previously acted as Secretary to the Committee and led on the work to produce the Research Ethics Code of Practice, would be re-joining the Committee in her current role as Research Development Manager.

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE UPDATE

- 3.1 Minor updates to the Committee's Terms of Reference were presented. These comprised a specific reference to the Committee's responsibility for reviewing the Research Ethics Code of Practice; an update to the management and support provision; and the addition of the Research Development Manager to the membership (as above).
- 3.2 Members agreed a minor amendment to the wording of responsibility 5 to read "to receive regular training..." rather than "to attend regular training...". Subject to this, the revised Terms of Reference were recommended to Senate for approval.

4 MEDIA SCHOOL EU GRANT

- 4.1 Mrs Hastings-Taylor informed Members of certain requirements which had arisen in respect of a Media School bid for EU funding in respect of a computer animation project. The EU funding body had concluded that there was a possibility that the research outputs could have potential military uses. For this reason they had sought additional assurances and imposed the condition that an independent ethics adviser be appointed. They had subsequently agreed that this could be the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee. Members noted this development.

5 RESEARCH ETHICS E-MODULE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- 5.1 Mrs Hastings-Taylor presented a report on the Implementation Plan for the Research Ethics E-module Training Course, which had recently been agreed by the University Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee (URKEC). URKEC had welcomed the proposals and asked that they be presented to the University Leadership Team with a view to ensuring that all Schools were aware and to encourage Deans of Schools to include the requirement for this mandatory training in their staff appraisal processes. Research Ethics Representatives were also asked to help raise awareness of the system and the new requirement via their own School Committees.

- 5.2 The mandatory requirement to complete the on-line module applied to all academic staff (including demonstrators and technical staff) as well as existing and new entrant postgraduate researchers (PGRs). The module would be launched on 1st July 2013 and staff and current PGRs would have until 1st October to complete it. New incoming PGRs would have 3 months from the commencement of their studies in which to complete the module. Completion was measured by achieving a pass in the online test which concluded the module. Any feedback on the module could be provided directly to Mrs Hastings-Taylor.

ACTION: To raise awareness of the mandatory new training module within all Schools and at School Committees.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY: School Research Ethics Representatives

6 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET/SAMPLE CONSENT FORM

- 6.1 Members noted the guidance on preparing a participant information sheet. The Committee endorsed the guidance and sample information sheet, although the Chair noted that the example contained a high level of detail, such as might be expected for a medical study. Some Members agreed that such a level of detail would be excessive for some areas of research and that Supervisors should work with researchers to customise the information sheet as necessary.
- 6.2 The Committee also endorsed the sample consent form, with the caveat that it should be produced on Bournemouth University headed paper in order to meet the legal requirement that the provenance of the form be clearly identifiable.

7 RESEARCH ETHICS CODE OF PRACTICE UPDATE

- 7.1 Mrs Hastings-Taylor briefly updated Members on progress in reviewing the Research Ethics Code of Practice. Work was on-going to update the Code and benchmarking was being undertaken against the guidance in place at other Institutions. It was hoped that a revised draft Code would be ready for presentation in the Autumn. The Committee was also informed that the Academic Misconduct Regulations had been updated (subject to Senate approval) to specifically incorporate offences relating to research ethics.

SCHOOL SPECIFIC MATTERS

8 ETHICS AND ACTIVITY PROPOSAL FORMS (APF)

- 8.1 A proposal had been submitted to the Committee by Dr Lilleker that ethical approval be linked to the new APF process. This was in light of the risk to reputational damage which could arise from unethical or ill-considered research and the requirement from most funders to provide information on ethical checks and approvals.
- 8.2 Following due consideration, Members felt that this proposal would create significant additional work (the potential impact on collaborative projects was noted) and risked extending lead times for approvals. Members also felt that it would add insufficient value to the process and would not improve the chances of grant applications receiving approval. On balance, therefore, the Committee did not support the proposal.
- 8.3 Mrs Hastings-Taylor added that, since 1st January, the RKEO Operations Team had the necessary access to the on-line ethical approval system to be able to check that ethical approval had been given before any funds were released. If members were aware of any cases where funds had been released before approval was given they should notify Mrs Hastings-Taylor so that she could investigate as appropriate.

- 8.4 Members agreed that, whilst they did not support Dr Lillekers' suggestion as presented, they could support the addition of some suitable wording to the APF process to make explicit that funds would not be released until ethical approval had been given. Mrs Hastings-Taylor agreed to discuss this further with colleagues responsible for the APF process. Any proposals arising from these discussions would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

ACTION: Consider further the possibility of including a reference to the requirement for ethical approval within the new APF process.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY: Mrs Hastings-Taylor.

9 OTHER MATTERS RAISED BY SCHOOL ETHICS REPRESENTATIVES

- 9.1 Ms E Jack enquired whether it was possible to allow more than one person to access an ethical approval form through the on-line approval process (so that a supervisor may view the form submitted by a student). Mrs Hastings-Taylor agreed to discuss this further out-of-committee.
- 9.2 Some Members reported problems with the formatting of the pdf document used in the on-line approval process which affected the legibility of some of the information. Mrs Hastings-Taylor agreed to take this matter up with the developer.

ACTION: Discuss pdf formatting issues with the on-line approval system developer.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY: Mrs Hastings-Taylor.

10 REPORTS FROM SCHOOL COMMITTEES

- 10.1 There were no reports for consideration.

TRAINING

11 CPD TRAINING – DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE

- 11.1 The Committee welcomed Ms Jarvis of the University's Legal Services Team who presented Members with a summary update of changes arising from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). The DBS had been formed following a merger of the functions previously carried out by the Criminal Records Bureau and the Independent Safeguarding Authority. Subsequently there had been a scaling-back in those eligible for DBS checks.
- 11.2 Ms Jarvis detailed the changes and highlighted particular points of interest. The checks would now be transferable and would be accessible via an on-line system. Minor convictions and cautions would not now be included (legal services would be able to advise on specific questions regarding what might fall within these definitions). Organisations would now be prohibited from seeking disclosures unless the person in question was undertaking a regulated activity.
- 11.3 The approach to vulnerable adults had also changed significantly. The previous, broad definition of a vulnerable adult had been replaced by a focus on the activity being undertaken as opposed to the individual. There were six categories of regulated activity, including the provision of healthcare, social work and personal care. In addition, those defined as 'observers' of these activities did not qualify for DBS checks. Legal requirements to refer any concerns to the Independent Safeguarding Authority

remained in place, as did the requirement to notify the police of any suspected criminal activity. Staff requiring DBS checks should apply for them themselves on-line and would be required to pay the appropriate fee.

- 11.4 Members welcomed the presentation and debated the impact of the changes. Some expressed concerns at the removal of the requirement for observers to require checks. Members also expressed concerns that the nature of an activity might change in an unforeseen way – such as an interviewee unexpectedly requiring some form of healthcare or personal care during the course of an interview. Mrs Hastings-Taylor explained that work was being undertaken to provide internal guidance and Frequently Asked Questions to support staff in implementing the new requirements. The on-line ethical approval process may also need to be updated. It was agreed to keep the Committee informed of further developments.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 12.1 Members thanked the outgoing Chair for his excellent contribution during his term of appointment and wished him well for the future.

Date of Next Meeting:

To be arranged, pending the appointment of the new Chair.

Geoff Rayment
Committee Clerk
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