

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
HELD ON 12TH MARCH 2008**

Present: Dr P Johnstone (Chair)
Mr D Gobbett, Mr G Forbes, Mr M Hind, Dr I Hanson, and Dr A Ladkin,

Mr Forbes acted as the Committee Secretary

Apologies: Rev Dr D Hart, Dr J Cobb, Prof J Fletcher, Ms J Hanson Dr J Kiely, Dr D Lilliker, and Dr G Roushan

ACTION

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16TH JANUARY

1.1 The minutes were confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

2 MATTERS ARISING

2.1 With reference to minute 2.1, it was agreed that the Chair and the Committee Secretary would investigate and report back to the Committee on policy and practice at other institutions with regard to the businesses and organisations that are excluded from research contact on ethical grounds.

PJ/GF

3 RESEARCH INVOLVING THE USE OF HUMAN TISSUE

3.1 With reference to minute 2.2 and 4.1 of the last meeting, it was noted that the secretary had held a meeting with staff concerned with human tissue research and the code of practice had been amended to reflect points made.

3.2 One result of the meeting was that the School of Conservation Science had been seeking guidance from the Human Tissue Authority with a view to applying for the appropriate licence to allow the storage of human tissue, public display of materials covered by the Act and a licence to carry out anatomical examinations. It was noted that although the HTA did not require a licence for research involving remains more than 100 years old at 1st September 2006, it was clear that the University did store more recent material, e.g. from the time of the first world war or from police forensic examinations. In some cases it was not immediately clear how old a research specimen might be and that it would be prudent to have a HTA licence to ensure compliance with the law. There was also a need to ensure that, as far as possible, the HTA implications of future research should be factored into licence applications. In addition it had been determined that the School did not share a HTA licence with the Anglo-European College of Chiropractic as reported at the last meeting.

3.3 It was agreed that at the next Research 20:20 meeting the Chair would ask all Deputy Deans (Research and Enterprise) to check to see if their Schools made use of human tissue and if so refer to the details of the licensing regime that were available at the Human Tissue Authority website and report back to this committee, even if only with a 'nil return'.

PJ

4 RESEARCH ETHICS CODE OF PRACTICE

4.1 The Committee noted and approved section 16 of the code which had been updated to reflect the requirements of the Human Tissue Act.

- 4.2 The Committee considered and approved section 17-20 of the code dealing with data protection and freedom of information, storage and retention of documents and research related exemptions from the requirements of the Data Protection Act. It was agreed that a link would be inserted into the text so that readers could access more information about the University's general data protection policy and guidelines.
- 4.3 It was agreed that Mr Hind would review and update Appendix 1 of the code to reflect HCS's current procedure. Given that the School had its own procedure for ethical review of projects it was likely that the appendix would only need to give a brief overview of the process adopted and a link to the relevant document/contact. The secretary reported that he had checked, and where necessary updated, the links to the documents cited in the other appendices. It was agreed that appendix 4 would no longer be needed; more up to date information could be accessed on the national database provided by the NHS research system.

MH

5 RESEARCH ETHICS INITIAL REVIEW FORM AND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS QUESTIONNAIRE

- 5.1 The Committee considered the human participants questionnaire and agreed that the following amendments should be made:
- Under the first bullet point of para 2 the second sentence to read; 'Projects with ethical concerns should be subject to peer review within the School.'
- The third bullet point should be amended to show that for all other projects the Deputy Dean and /or the School ethics Advisor or other nominated person would be responsible for ethical review and for giving guidance about the process of peer review if required. In the same point it should be made clear that even if a funding body specified review by the University Ethics Committee, it would be expected that peer review take place at School level and a report of the outcome made the UREC.
- The beginning of paragraph 3 to be amended to read: 'Researchers completing this form may contact their School's representative on the University Research Ethics Committee for guidance. If, after consideration by the School...'
- 5.2 Under the Name and Status of the Lead researcher it should be explained that for students the Lead Researcher will be the supervisor. Under Name and status of other researchers applicants may give the name of the research student if a post-graduate project is being undertaken.
- In section A second question the reference should be to 'inexperienced researchers.
- In section B the title to be amended to 'Potentially Vulnerable Groups' as should the same reference under Chaperoning participants.
- In section C there should be a distinction between NHS patients and healthy volunteers and a requirement to explain the handling of handling of ethically sensitive issues.
- In section D it should be made clear that it is normally expected that participants will be aware of observation by researchers.
- In section E Director of Education should be replaced by Director responsible for education
- In section F it should be stated that 'Participants should normally be informed of the right to withdraw from the research unless their data has been anonymised.'

GF

In section H the guidance for those selecting answers marked with * should state: 'If serious questions remain about a conflict of interest after the School ethics review has been completed then...'

A comment should be added to the form to remind researchers that their review of ethical matters should also take into account any cultural, ethnic, religious or political sensitivities likely to be encountered during research.

The instructions for action after completing the form should be amended to read: 'When the form has been completed it should be checked to see if any answers with an * have been selected and if so the form should be sent with any required statement to the School nominated person for peer review and consideration by the School Research Committee if required by section 2 of the guidance on page 1.'

6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the University Research Ethics Committee would be on 2nd July at 2.15pm in the 5th Floor Committee room of Poole House.