

SENATE (with Board representation)

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (UREC)

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 14th APRIL 2010

Present: Dr R Chapman (Chair)
Dr J Cobb; Prof J Fletcher; Mr J Francis; Dr I Hanson; Prof P Hardwick;
Dr P Johnstone; Dr M Hind; Dr B Newland; Dr G Roushan;

In Attendance: Dr C Dickson (Secretary); G Rayment (Committee Clerk).

Apologies: Mr D Gobbett; Dr D Lilleker; Dr P Lugosi.

ACTION

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (25th November 2009)

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record, subject to amending paragraph 3 from '...Dorset Research Trust Forum.' to '...Dorset Research Consortium'.

2. MATTERS ARISING

2.1 Insurance requirements/ Safe data storage

The Secretary had contacted the University's Insurance & Financial Accounting Officer (Dru Joyce) who had confirmed that full information on the various covers were contained in a document which was too large and detailed to publish on-line. Therefore, any specific questions relating to insurance should be directed to Dru Joyce who would liaise with the Insurers as necessary.

Details regarding the requirements for the safe storage of data (e.g. firesafes for both electronic and paper data) had also been obtained and would be circulated to members.

Secretary

2.2 UREC Terms of Reference

The Committee agreed that the Terms of Reference should be reviewed and a sub-group comprising Dr Hind, Prof Fletcher, Dr Johnstone and Dr Dickson would convene to prepare a draft revised version for consideration at the next meeting. This review should aim to clarify the Committee's role (for example, defining the role in relation to Enterprise activity); the monitoring of Schools' registers of approvals; and re-examine point 4 of the ToR which is currently unclear. Consideration might also be given to making explicit the inclusion of non-primary research (such as practice development). The membership of the Committee should be reviewed and consideration given as to whether it should be expanded to include representatives from the Professional Services to cover research ethics issues relevant to their areas.

Dr Hind

2.3 Code of Practice

The Secretary reported that the Code of Practice had been presented to the University Leadership Team and Deans were aware of the need for it to be championed and implemented in all Schools.

3. UPDATE ON DATA STORAGE

- 3.1 Dr Roushan explained that School research ethics representatives had met with representatives from IT services to discuss possible methods of storing research data and associated issues. Investigation had shown that there was currently no standard model of good practice in UK HEI which BU could follow. It was agreed that a set of guidelines would be produced for staff and students. This would include proposals for using the secure H:/ drives for data storage, although it was agreed that consideration would need to be given to the protocol in respect of data belonging to staff who leave the University. The Chair reminded the Committee of the need to be aware of statutory requirements in respect of data and Dr Dickson confirmed that the University's legal team had been consulted on the proposals. A paper setting out the proposals would be circulated to members for discussion at the next meeting. Until the policy was agreed, any queries would have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Dr Roushan

- 3.2 It was agreed that someone should be co-opted onto the Committee to provide expert opinion as required in respect of Data Protection. It was also agreed to clarify who within the University senior management was responsible for policy in respect of Data Protection and Freedom of Information.

Clerk

4. DATA PROTECTION (Feedback on Data Protection Q&A sessions)

Members reported that they had found these sessions useful in providing legal information on practical issues.

5. AMENDMENTS TO THE INITIAL CHECKLIST

The Checklist was agreed subject to amendments to Section 5 (Researcher's declaration) which would be amended to show that, where necessary, any insurance issues had been discussed, and that any substantial changes to the research project would be notified and a new checklist submitted if necessary.

6. ETHICS CHECKLIST (pre or post proposal submission)

The question had been raised as to whether the Ethics Checklist should be prepared before or after an application was made for funding. The Committee considered the relative merits of each and agreed that it was not mandatory that the checklist be completed prior to the funding application, although this should be the normal practice. Researchers should address any ethical issues before the bid is made and be encouraged to undergo a full ethical review if in any doubt.

7. TRAINING FOR ETHICS REPRESENTATIVES

- 7.1 The Committee discussed research ethics training requirements and it was agreed that trainers would be invited from Keele University (as per the previous session) to provide tailored training for Ethics Reps. This would cost around £3000 and the Committee Clerk will make enquiries as to which budget might be used to fund the training and any future requirements. The Committee agreed that Dr Dickson would liaise direct with Keele on the content of the training programme, taking into account comments received from members.

Clerk/Secretary

- 7.2 Following the initial training session for Ethics Reps it was agreed that a further session would be arranged which would be open to all to all researchers and include presentations from speakers active in the research ethics field. The Chair suggested that Stephanie Wheeler, Chair of the Dorset Ethics Committee, should

be invited to speak at this event. It was also suggested that the presentations might be made available on-line for the benefit of those unable to attend in person.

Secretary

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 New ESRC Framework for Research Ethics

The Secretary reported that the Economic & Social Research Centre (ESRC) had published its Framework for Research Ethics and that this largely matched the provisions of the University's own Code of Practice. It did, however, raise some additional areas for consideration which could be picked up as part of the next review of the Code of Practice, for example provisions relating to international partnerships. The ESRC Framework also included a recommendation that processes for approvals should include indicative timings. It was agreed that the flow-charts showing approval processes should be amended to include a timetable for action.

8.2 UREC discussions between meetings

The Chair raised the issue of how the Committee should take forward business between its once-per-term regular meetings. It was necessary to have a process in place so that ethical approvals requiring committee consideration were not delayed unnecessarily. It was agreed that each case would be handled according to its merits, and that document sharing software, e-mail and telephone conferencing might all be used to take forward discussions between meetings. Ad-hoc meetings of the Committee can be arranged when necessary.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place at 12.30pm on Wednesday 23 June 2010.

Committee Clerk
UREC_Minutes_04_10 confirmed

Approved as a true and accurate record:

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Dr R Chapman (Chair)

Date:.....