**Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday 21 May 2014, 12:30, PG142**

Present: Mr J Stevens (Chair); Mr D Gobbett; Mr J Oram; Mr S Beer; Mr J Wale; Dr S Thompson; Dr S Schwandner-Sievers; Dr K Appleton; Dr I Jones; Dr R Edwards; Mrs J Hastings Taylor (Secretary); Ms J Schofield (Clerk)

Apologies: Mrs Sheila Collins; Dr Vicki Culpin; Prof Holger Schutkowski; Dr N Speith; Ms S Sharma

In Attendance: Ms Rachel Clarke

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| **1** | **Welcome and Introductions** |
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|  | The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. |
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| **2** | **Minutes from previous meeting (12 February 2014)** |
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| 2.1 | The minutes were approved as an accurate record. |
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|  | **Action and Progress Log** |
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| 2.2 | The Secretary confirmed that there were no outstanding issues. AECC is responsible for the ethical approval for its staff and research students and their ethical review processes are equal to the processes at BU. She confirmed that at partner institutions, the institution making the final award would be responsible the staff and student research; for example, Yeovil College now award their own degrees and as such are responsible for their own ethics approval. A discussion arose as to whether an audit of the ethical process at such institutions should be conducted. |
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| **3** | **Research Ethics Panel Reports** |
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| 3.1 | **Science, Technology & Health REP:** The Secretary confirmed the Panel had reviewed 19 projects to date. Dr K Appleton spoke for the Panel, confirming that three meetings had taken place to date and that all projects had either been approved outright or had gone back with comments. There had been no complaints or appeals. However, the Panel found discrepancies between projects and how they had been presented. |
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| 3.2 | **Social Sciences & Humanities REP:** The Secretary confirmed the Panel had reviewed 22 projects to date It was suggested that there might have been a rush to approve projects under the previous ethics system as it was perhaps seen as being less stringent. Mr S Beer spoke for the Panel. He noted operational issues in projects had arisen, rather than ethical issues per se and raised the question as to what Panels should and shouldn’t be looking at. He proposed that this should be discussed at the Away Day. He also raised the subject of the participant’s consent form and the separate information sheet, again noting that these were not really be within the remit of the Panels, yet many of the projects requiring approval did not have suitable forms attached. He said he expected colleagues to be able to devise suitable forms and was surprised at the standard seen. He suggested that if the number of projects continued to be presented that necessitated a review of associated forms, then it might not be sustainable to continue to do so. The Panel had come across projects where colleagues had needed substantial advice as their work did not follow best practice guidelines and there had also been disparities over how colleagues viewed qualitative and quantitative issues. It was suggested that colleagues needed some degree of training as to the standard required when presenting projects to the Ethics Panels and that advice should be encouraging and facilitating rather than overbearing. |
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| 3.3 | A discussion was held as to if the issues were not to be addressed by the Panels, then where else at the University would they be addressed? It was noted that 90% of research at the University is unfunded and therefore is difficult to monitor compliance; however, the Secretary noted that all externally-funded research has to have ethical approval before being issued an activity code, so these projects are compliant. It was discussed by the members whether the University might consider convening a committee looking at both the quality of all research undertaken as well as whether projects followed best practice. It was pointed out that it isn’t ethical to do research that’s a waste of time. After a discussion it was agreed that each School or Faculty would monitor the research projects for quality and report back at the next meeting. It was also suggested this might be a good topic to discuss at the Away Day. |
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|  | **ACTION:** Each School/Faculty to monitor quality of research and to report back at the next UREC meeting in October. Also for discussion at the Away Day.  **ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY:** School/Faculty representatives. |
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| **4** | **Research Ethics and KTPs** |
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| 4.1 | Mr S Beer outlined a project that had come to the Panel under the Knowledge Transfer Partnership programme. There was a question about who ‘owned’ the research, the University or the company and whether there a need for the research to be approved by the Ethics Panels. In some cases funds are not released without the approval, yet there was a case that colleagues still needed to be encouraged to both seek ethics approval and consider what might actually need ethical approval. In cases where the work was to be published, then ethical approval would be needed. |
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| **5** | **Research Ethics Away Day** |
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| 5.1 | The Secretary confirmed the Research Ethics Away Day will be held on 23rd June 09:00 – 16:00 at the Green House Hotel. She suggest there be two external speakers just for the first hour on the topic of how they conduct reviews, with the possibility that one might be from the NHS as they also specifically conduct ethics reviews and approvals. The other could be from a humanities background. One member made the suggestion that she is currently married to the Chair of the ethics committee at Roehampton University that was very pro-facilitation and he might be free to attend if there was a desire for it. |
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| **6** | **Matters raised by School/Faculty Representatives** |
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| 6.1 | A member spoke of an issue with particular projects involving nursery or school-based children. Consent forms were going astray and it had been mooted that ‘opt out’ rather than ‘opt in’ forms might be better as sample sizes were being reduced by this issue. The members decided this would not be appropriate, but suggested alternative means such as electronic as well as paper-based consent. |
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| 6.2 | Another member spoke about the issue of proprietary data and how the University can protect marketing or advertising information. It was discussed whether or not this is more a legal matter or would be covered under the Data Protection Act. It was decided that the Ethics Checklist could be amended to cover this area and it would be a trigger under the ‘above minimal risk’ criteria. |
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|  | **ACTION:** An extra question regarding proprietary data to be added to the Ethics Checklist.  **ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY:** Mrs J Hastings Taylor. |
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| **7** | **Any other business** |
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| 7.1 | There was no other business. |
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|  | **Date of next meeting:** |
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|  | Wednesday 8 October 2014, 12.30 |