

Research Ethics Committee

Wed 29 July 2020, 13:30 - Wed 29 July 2020, 15:00

Online

Attendees

Board members

John Stevens (Chair), Donald Gobbett (Deputy Chair), Sam Porter, Chris Chapleo, Liam Wignall, Andy Mercer, Jamie Matthews, Tanya Le Roux, Shamal Faily, Natalie Stewart, Malika Felton, Suzy Wignall, Sarah Bell

Absent: Zulfiqar Khan, Angela Turner-Wilson, Paul Lynch, Jonathan Parker

Meeting minutes

1. Welcome & Apologies

John Stevens

Members were welcomed and apologies from absent members noted.

2. Conflicts of Interest

John Stevens

No conflicts of interest were registered.

3. Minutes of Previous meeting

John Stevens

It was agreed that the minutes were an accurate account of the last meeting.

4. SSH REP Report

Jonathan Parker

In his written report, the Panel Chair thanked members for their contributions, particularly over the latter half of a challenging year. The Chair particularly thanked those leaving at the end of their successful tenure.

The Chair reported the following:

- That the number of submissions had decreased; likely to be because of the result of REF pressures to complete publications and impact case studies with new projects perhaps being held back until these were completed. The Chair also acknowledged that this may also be the result of increased project size, resulting in fewer bids proceeding but with a greater financial benefit to BU. This has meant that 'physical' face-to-face panels have taken place as the exception rather than the norm during 19/20.
- It had been good to see attention to ethico-moral issues in checklists submitted had, in general, been high and it seemed that researchers were thinking deeply about the ethical implications of their work throughout the project. There seemed to be a greater recognition that ethics approval was not simply a hurdle to jump through, but an integral part of the research process.
- This year had seen an increase in requests for training some of which, at a generic university level can be accommodated and some of which at programme level are out with the scope of the panel's brief. This suggested a need to consider training and development in the field of ethics.
- In terms of processes in the next academic year, and depending on numbers of submissions, the Panel intends to trial scrutiny by a lead reviewer and one second reviewer per checklist reviewed at Panel to sharpen focus and smooth the processes of review. The Chair shall report whether it has been possible to conduct this trial and any outcomes at subsequent committee meetings.

5. STH REP Report

Sam Porter

The Panel Chair reiterated his thanks to members for their contributions, particularly over the latter half of a challenging year.

The Chair reported the following:

- STH REP have a number of members stepping down during 20/21. In order to avoid a significant loss of membership at one go, the Chair proposed a phased replacement of these members over the coming academic year.
- There had been some contention about panel decisions in relation to applications made by members of the Department of Psychology. The Chair thanked colleagues from the Department for working through these issues

and in a positive and collegiate manner. These discussions and the addition of an additional representative from the Department of Psychology on the panel will ensure greater mutual understanding.

- The Covid-19 emergency reduced considerably the throughput of the panel, which did not meet as a full body, but relied on written reviews. The Chair thanked all the members for their flexibility in ensuring the work of the panel continued efficiently in such challenging times.
- Due to continued physical distancing requirements and FHSS members working remotely, the panel will be conducting its business online for at least the first semester of the new academic year. To facilitate this mode, the Panel will trial scrutiny by a lead reviewer and one second reviewer per checklist reviewed in meetings.

6. Amendment to SOP 002 (Amendment)

Decision
Suzy Wignall

SW reported that a modification to the process and documentation was required when making an amendment to a HRA/NHS Research Ethics Committee approved study. This revision had already been reviewed and agreed by the Clinical Governance Group.

Members endorsed the Amendment to SOP 002 (Amendments)

7. Research Ethics Code of practice (RECP) Review

Decision
Sarah Bell

SB reported that a number of minor amendments to standardise terminology and correct grammatical errors had been made but the main changes related to the research data management and data protection sections proposed for consideration.

The rationale behind the changes:

- The current version RECP (v5) had quite a detailed appendix about management of research data, including a fair amount of reference to data protection and to other aspects of data management, and also a further annex which summarises the data protection legislation and how it is relevant to research data.
- Working with the Library Team, Legal Services and James Stevens, Chief Data Officer, it was proposed that the appendix and annex be removed from the latest version of the RECP (v6), on the basis that (a) the content really belongs in one or more guidance documents rather than in the RECP; and (b) the content is related as much, or more so, to the Research Data Policy and the Data Protection Policy as it is to the RECP/ethics principles. By keeping this detail in the RECP would reinforce the (problematic and incorrect) perception that detailed data protection considerations are "dealt with" by the ethics review process or monitored through this framework.
- The contents of the appendix/annex should form the starting point for new practical guidance document(s) on research data management and data protection compliance to be hosted on the BU Data Protection sharepoint site, and be linked from both the Data Protection Policy and the Research Data Policy.
- RECP (v6) and the new Research Governance & Integrity website will contain all the necessary links to the revised guidance. This guidance will explain the practicalities of complying with the Research Data Policy and DP Policies.
- RECP (v6) would complement but not duplicate the contents of other guidance/policies.

To reflect these changes, **Section 7** had been updated and Appendix 1 (research data management) and Annex A (data protection and research data) removed.

After the review of changes and suggesting minor edits, members agreed to the changes. RECP (v6) would apply for the 20/21 academic year.

8. Clinical Monitoring Report- Verbal Update

Information
Suzy Wignall

SW updated members that no monitoring has taken place since the last committee meeting given the current covid-19 situation. A number of projects were paused in line with government guidance surrounding social distancing. These studies are now beginning to re-open and SW has been working with these researchers and their sites to ensure the smooth restart of research.

9. Terms of Reference

Decision
Sarah Bell

To review the current Terms of Reference for both Committee Ethics Panels for 20/21 academic year.

It was agreed in October 2019 that Committee meetings would be reduced from 3 to 4. The Terms have been amended to reflect this agreed change.

It was agreed in both versions (Committee and Panel) that under 'Usual number of meetings' to include '*in person or online*' to cover the use of online meetings to conduct Committee and Panel business.

Changes to the Terms of Reference were agreed by Members

10. Any other Business

Discussion

John Stevens

SB updated members that the new Research Governance & Integrity would be launched imminently with the aim to improve user navigation to the support available not only to the ethics review process and clinical governance but to highlight the research concordats and the data protection sharepoint site. This website would replace the research ethics and clinical governance blogs.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Information

Sarah Bell

Proposed: 25 November 2020, 31 March 2021 & 30 June 2021

