Research Ethics Committee (CONFIRMED minutes)

Wed 30 June 2021, 14:00 - 15:30

Online

Attendees

Board members

John Stevens (Independent Chair), Donald Gobbett (Independent Deputy Chair), Jonathan Parker (Chair, SSH REP), Sam Porter (Chair, STH REP), Chris Chapleo (Academic Staff Member), Malika Felton (PGR Representative), Tanya Le Roux (Academic Staff Member), Andy Mercer (Academic Staff Member), Liam Wignall (Academic Staff Member), Suzy Wignall (STH REP Secretary), Sarah Bell (Secretary)

Absent: Shamal Faily (Academic Staff Member), Jamie Matthews (Academic Staff Member), Angela Turner-Wilson (Academic Staff Member), Natalie Stewart (Doctoral College Representative)

Meeting minutes

1. Welcome & Apologies

Information
John Stevens

Members were welcomed and apologies from absent members noted

2. Conflicts of Interest

John Stevens

No conflicts of interest were reported

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting (31 March 2021)

Information
John Stevens

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

4. Social Sciences & Humanities REP Report

Discussion
Jonathan Parker

The Chair thanked Sarah Bell and Suzy Wignall for their commitment towards the smooth administration of Panel.

Members were also thanked for their commitment during a difficult year and for helping academic colleagues develop robust ethical research projects in a year that had seen increased workloads on all sides.

Of the ethics submissions reviewed by Panel, the Chair commented that those submitted from both academics and postgraduate research students in the main continued to be of good quality, showing a good degree of ethical reflection.

Throughout the year, the Panel had continued to have a lead and second reviewer allocated per ethics submission, with additional input from other panel members as appropriate. This approach had worked well and would be continued next academic year.

5. Science, Technology & Health REP Report

Discussion
Sam Porter

The Chair thanked Suzy Wignall, Sarah Bell and members for the continued support and hard work. The Panel continued to run smoothly despite the challenges raised by the pandemic.

The online panel format had worked very well.

A couple of important discussions emerged during the panel's deliberations over the year. One related to the ethics of researching sexual violence, and in particular the preparation of researchers in this area. As an outcome of these discussions, members of the Department of Psychology are preparing a handbook for researchers in the field.

The other discussion related to how sex/gender descriptors were approached by researchers. In particular, there was a tension between legal definitions and evolving cultural ascriptions.

Following discussions it was agreed demographics should only be collected with a clear justification for doing so. It would be up to the Researcher how they phrased these type of questions but it was also important that Researchers should understand these terms particularly when asking participants for this type of data.

6. Panel Recruitment

Information
Sarah Bell

A number of members from both Panels had now completed their tenure and would step down at the end of the academic year. Recruitment would take place over the summer to ensure new members were in situ for the start of the next academic year.

Action: Sarah Bell

7. Terms of Reference (REC and REP)

Decision
Sarah Bell

As required, the Terms of Reference for both REC and the Ethics Panels were reviewed. There was discussion about the length of tenure and the loss of expertise. Members felt that the current tenure should be extended for academic colleagues to reduce the loss of expertise and to implement a phased rotation with new members.

The recommendation was a revised tenure of 3 + 2 years (currently 1+ 3 years).

Action: Sarah Bell

Revised Terms of Reference to be considered by Senate (e-meeting) in September 2021.

8. Clinical Governance Monitoring Report (Verbal)

Information
Suzy Wignall

Suzy Wignall (SW) reported that BU had agreed to sponsor its first medical device trial, run by Professor Ian Swain. The trial will use a Functional Electrical Stimulation device on patients with spinal cord injuries, at Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust.

The Health Research Authority (HRA) had released an update with regard to Master's student projects. From September 2021 Master's students will be able to submit applications to the HRA and NHS Research Ethics Committee, however there will still be an embargo on undergraduate projects.

SW had attended the first meeting of a newly formed committee called Research IP Strategy Evaluation Committee (RIPSEC) and will advise and be involved in discussions relating to medical devices and medical apps.

The application and plans for the Clinical Trials Unit are now being managed by the newly merged University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust. Following discussions with the Head of BU's Clinical Research Unit, it is expected that BU will be involved with some of the work that the CTU will conduct.

9. Research Ethics Code of Practice (RECP)

Decision
Sarah Bell

As required, the Committee undertook its annual review of the RECP. Sarah Bell (SB) had made minor revisions to the language for consistency and clarity.

The changes were reviewed and subject to minor revisions were approved for the next academic year.

Action: Sarah Bell

10. Ethics Training (online provision)

Decision
Sarah Bell

SB advised the Committee that there was a possibility that the subscription for online ethics training modules might not be renewed for budget reasons.

The Committee was dismayed at the lack of notice and time given to consider an alternative approach to BU's online training provision. Creating an in-house solution would take considerable time and investment by the University. Following discussions, it was agreed that this topic would be discussed again at the next meeting.

Action: Sarah Bell to speak to IT Services (Licensing Team).

11. Any other Business

Discussion
John Stevens

SB advised that both Shamal Faily and Angela Turner-Wilson would be stepping down at the end of the academic year. The Chair thanked both for their contributions.

Recruitment would take place over the summer
Action: Sarah Bell

12. Date of Next Meeting

Information
John Stevens

SB advised that planned meetings for the next academic year would be held 10 November, 2 March and 6 July.

Committee agreed and details would be circulated

Action: Sarah Bell