Research Ethics Committee - UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

Wed 31 March 2021, 14:00 - 16:00

Online

Attendees

Board members

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

Absent: Shamal Faily (Academic Staff Member), Zulfiqar Khan (Academic Staff Member), Paul Lynch (RDS Representative)

Meeting minutes

1. Welcome & Apologies

Information
John Stevens

Members were welcomed and apologies from absent members noted

2. Conflicts of Interest

Information
John Stevens

No conflicts of interest were reported

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting (31 March 2021)

Decision
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 noted a steady flow of ethics checklists for consideration by panel. This demonstrated: 1) creativity and adaptability through the continuation of research activity in difficult times, and 2) the widening recognition of the centrality of the ethics review process.

The panel has been impressed by the quality of the research proposals and ethics checklists coming for scrutiny and the attention paid to ethico-moral matters in that social science and humanities research, which, of course, is the central element for which Panel look for.

The primary and secondary reviewer system has been introduced during this period and appears to be working very well. It provides in-depth prior analysis of the checklists and allows all other panel members to feed in comments which they do on many occasions. The Chair will consider in more details what panel members think about the review process by the end of the academic year.

The Chair thanked all SSH panel members for their hard work. This makes the work of the panel run smoothly and efficiently.

5. Science, Technology & Health REP Report

Discussion
Sam Porter

The Chair reported that despite pandemic challenges, the steady flow of ethics checklists for consideration by panel indicates that BU researchers remain active.

The panel has been impressed by the quality of the research proposals and ethics checklists coming for scrutiny and the attention paid to ethical issues. From the Chair's perspective, remote panel meetings and interviews have worked well.

The panel did experience some difficulties in dealing with a number of proposals of research into sex and attitudes to rape and are still working through the best way to ensure the transparent ethical robustness of this type of research while avoiding burdening researchers prohibitively. A team within Psychology are working on a general protocol which researchers will need to engage with when working in this field of research. The protocol would be implemented for the next academic year. The Chair thanked the department for their engagement with Panel.

The Chair thanked STH panel members for their excellent work and collegiate approach during what have been very challenging times.

6. Clinical Governance Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Decision
Suzy Wignall

As required under Good Clinical Practice, BU's SOPs had been reviewed and updated where appropriate. Following a brief discussion, the Committee agreed to ratify the remaining SOPs as presented. All SOPs will be made available via the Research Governance & Integrity Website.

7. Clinical Governance Monitoring report (verbal)

Information
Suzy Wignall

BU has just agreed to sponsor its first medical device trial which is being 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) have released an update with regard to Master's student projects. From September of this year 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.

Suzy Wignall (SW) attended the first meeting of a newly formed committee called Research IP Strategy Evaluation Committee (RIPSEC). SW 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.

Discussions surrounding the human tissue licence are up and running again – an update will follow at the next REC meeting.

8. Conducting research overseas/Online Ethics Checklist

Discussion
Sarah Bell

The current way the online ethics checklist is structured was for the system to identify conducting research outside the UK as high risk. This impacts on departments who have a large cohort of international students conducting low risk research in their home country, which is automatically flagged high risk. REC had been approached to revisit the risk identifiers for overseas research. S Bell presented a revised risk matrix to the Committee for consideration.

Following discussions, it was agreed that the risk matrix should be revised but making sure that guidance provided by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office was incorporated. This would mean that under certain circumstances low risk research conducted by an indigenous researcher, would remain low risk, if no other 'risk identifiers' applied.

S Bell would work on a revised risk matrix for the Committee to agree to. After which, work would begin with the Digital Solutions Team for implementation by the new academic year.

9. Any other Business

Discussion
John Stevens

S Bell acknowledged a delay revising the review process for UG/PGT student checklists and the working group would be convened ready for the new academic year.

S Bell updated the Committee in relation to previous discussions about the Gambling Commission RET list and accepting funding from Operators under licence by the GC. BU leadership team had agreed to move forward on this, so next steps would be for BU to apply to the GC, putting BU in a position to accept funding from this particular source.

10. Date of next meeting

Information
John Stevens

30 June 2021