Research Ethics Committee

CONFIRMED

Wed 01 March 2023, 14:00 - 15:30

Microsoft Team

Attendees

Board members

John Stevens (Independent Chair), Donald Gobbett (Independent Deputy Chair), Sam Porter (STH REP Panel Chair), Richard Berger (SSH REP Deputy Chair), Samuel Hills (Academic Staff Member), Zulfiqar Khan (Academic Staff Member), Jamie Matthews (Academic Staff Member), Andy Mercer (Academic Staff Member), Natalie Stewart (Doctoral College Representative), Suzy Wignall (Clinical Governance Adviser), Sarah Bell (Secretary)

Absent: Chris Chapleo (Academic Staff Member), Lesley Hutchins (Research Commercialisation Manager), Tanya Le Roux (Academic Staff Member), Jonathan Parker (SSH REP Chair)

Meeting minutes

1. Welcome and Apologies

John Stevens

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and heard apologies from those absent.

2. Minutes of Last Minutes - 26 October 2022

John Stevens

The committee approved the minutes and confirmed that they were a true record of the meeting.

3. Conflict of Interest

John Stevens

None were raised

4. STH REP Report

Information

Sam Porter

Key points to note:

- Feedback received to date from researchers had been complimentary of the support and usefulness of feedback given following review. On the whole the quality of applications had improved.
- Panel had received a high number of projects where staff members had submitted, when in actual fact the data collection was for student dissertations, and the named researcher not the lead, rather acting a supervisory capacity. These applications had been returned and the researcher reminded of the proper process for undergraduate and postgraduate taught ethics reviews.
- Two new members (from the Professoriate) had recently joined the Panel, these had been a strategic appointments with the aim of recruiting to the position of Deputy Chair (currently vacant).
- Use of the MRI scanner. The Chair and Panel Secretary reported that they were working with the IMIV Team to work with them to make sure their incidental findings protocol was suitable when outsourcing the use of the MRI Scanner. The recommendation would be to make sure there was a suitably qualified medical practitioner named as part of the research team who could make a recommendation for referral to a participant's GP if necessary. Appropriate consents would need to be in place via the participant agreement form. An update from follow up meetings would be reported to the next Committee meeting.

5. SSH REP Report

Information

Richard Berger And Jonathan Parker

Key points to note:

- The Panel welcomed FMCs EdD students to the December Panel and a meeting with the EdD Team is planned to explore ways in which to better support this cohort through the ethics process.

- Panel had recently reminded Faculties, the Doctoral College and PGR Supervisors that all supervisors need to have oversight of the PGR's ethics submission; to check for errors and omissions. This needed to be done in a swift manner, so as not to impede the progress of a PGR's Research. A few Panel meetings had been impacted because of delayed action by Supervisors.
- Panel members continued to facilitate ethics process training workshops for the Doctoral College.
- The Chair/Deputy Chair thanked ongoing members for their hard work. Each ethics checklist and associated paperwork takes a considerable amount of time to read and respond to, and this was very much appreciated.

6. Clinical SOP Update

Decision

Suzy Wignall (SW) provided an update on amendments to the Clinical Governance Standard Operating Procedures.

Suzy Wignall

Re: BU RDS SOP 016. The Committee queried whether an MHRA Inspection was scheduled. SW confirmed that the SOP was now in place to support future work related to medical devices. As this is a new area for BU, the University would be inspected and the SOP was in place to deal with this eventuality.
RE: BU RDS SOP 021. With the change in named person for matters related to IP and commercialisation, the Committee queried the escalation process for IP issues should it be required. For example publishing against the recommendation of the Research Commercialisation Manager. Action: As LH was absent from the meeting, this matter would be deferred for discussions at the next Committee Meeting.

All Amendments were approved.

7. Monitoring Report

Discussion

Suzy Wignall (SW) and Sarah Bell (SB) reported that the monitoring of research projects had commenced starting with projects reviewed by the Science, Technology & Health Research Ethics Panel. This was in line with the Research Ethics Code of Practice 6.4.

Suzy Wignall And Sarah Bell

The Committee queried the following:
1) The frequency of monitoring visits
2) How Projects were selected
3) The content of monitoring visit
3) Escalation should the need arise

SW reported that a number of projects had been monitored within the Psychology Department. The Monitoring visit had highlighted an issue with undergraduate students working on projects taking home for safe keeping documents which identified research participants. After discussions, the Committee concluded that this was not acceptable practice and would inform the Deputy Deans for Research, Chief Data Office and for it to be noted by Senate. The University needed to provide physical secure storage or make recommendations for documents to be scanned where possible.

It was confirmed that projects reviewed by both Panels would be reviewed but the starting point was projects reviewed by the Science, Technology & Health Research Ethics Panel.

Following each Monitoring visit, the PI will receive a monitoring visit letter which would highlight areas of good research practice but also issues in which the PI would have a month to respond to highlighting how concerns raised had been addressed.

The Committee agreed that it would be useful to formalise the number of monitoring visits throughout the year (to be added to the Terms of Reference). It was agreed that SB would determine what would be feasible, taking into account current workloads and to report back to the Committee in July.

SW & SB confirmed that projects would be randomly selected but there would be cases whereby a Panel could make a recommendation for a specific project was monitored and where it was a requirement of the Funder e.g UKRI.

In relation to the content of the monitoring visit. SW explained that each project reviewed by Panel received a Favourable Opinion and included in this was a recommended study index (master study file) for use. This index would be used as a basis for the visit.

After discussions, it was agreed that should escalation be required, this would be reported to Senate by Committee member Prof Porter (SP) who was a member of Senate. Other pathways as necessary e.g. Deputy Dean for Research, Department Heads.

8. Succession Planning

Discussion

Sarah Bell

SB highlighted that a number of panel members (from both Ethics Panels) including the Chairs and Deputy Chair was due to stand down early next year.

SB reminded the Committee that for the position of Chairs, nominations had to be either a Professor or Associate Professor. The Committee discussed whether this was a good fit for the purposes of the Ethics Panel and whether the pool of candidates should either have this role or equivalent experience so that those who were active in practice might also be considered. It was agreed that Chairing was a specialist role and it was making use of the best people that was important.

It was agreed that this might be discussed with Senate. For now, recruitment would continue looking at the Professoriate to fulfil the role of Chair/Deputy Chair. Academic Panel members would be recruited via the Deputy Deans for Research as normal.

9. Matters Arising

Discussion

John Stevens

There were no matters arising.

10. Any other Business

Discussion

John Stevens

1. SB reported that Tanya Le Roux had asked to step down. The Committee thanked Dr Le Roux for her contributions over the last few years.
2. SB asked the Committee whether a PhD by Publication required a formal ethics review. The Committee discussed and agreed that it did not because the research underlying the publication would have had ethics and therefore an additional ethics review was not required.

11. Date of Next Meeting - 26 July 2023

Information

John Stevens