

RESEACH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Purpose

To ensure the University has an appropriate research ethics policy commensurate with good practice in the sector and a review system which ensures compliance.

Proposed membership

DVC(A) (Chair)
PVC (Research)
University Secretary
A Faculty Dean (Faculty Deans will each serve for two years in rotation)
A member of the University Professoriate (nominated by the VC and excluding Directors of a Research Institute)
Dean of Quality and Students
Three independent (lay) members (appointed by the VC for a period of three years, renewable for one or two further years) representative of the local community
Head of Research Graduate School (Secretary)

Terms of Reference

The Committee will report to Academic Board. It will:

- Approve and keep under review the University's research ethics policy to ensure that it accords with best practice in the sector.
- Consider and advise on all ethical issues relating to staff and student research.
- Review and, if appropriate, approve protocols for the management of research ethics by Faculties in relation to undergraduate and postgraduate taught course students and Research Institutes in relation to staff and postgraduate research students.
- Receive proposals for research which lie outside of the framework of delegated approval or which present areas of particular difficulty and have been referred by Institutes and Faculties, and to grant/withhold ethical approval.
- Receive and approve annual reports on the management of research ethics from Faculties and Institutes.
- Commission and receive audits of research ethics management within Faculties and Institutes.
- Ensure that appropriate advice and guidance is available to all staff and students of the University through, for example, the drafting of guidelines, advice on external ethical documentation, and dissemination of information on best practice.

Mode of working

The Committee will meet three times a year and may additionally deal with straightforward applicants by correspondence. It will:

- review the arrangements for ethical review and approval in relation to national and international good practice annually;
- receive individual applications for approval at each meeting;

- require Faculties and Institutes to establish appropriate mechanisms for ensuring that staff and student research maintains appropriate ethical standards. It will approve and monitor these arrangements.
- receive annual reports from the Faculties and Institutes and, where appropriate, audit reports;
- seek the advice of specialist referees to cover any aspect of a research proposal which lies beyond the expertise of existing members.

It is not envisaged that the University will create its own detailed ethical code of practice for research. The normal practice will be for subject areas (via Institutes and Faculties) to align themselves with established Codes of Practice relevant to their area (e.g. Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association, May 2004). This will be stated in their protocol. The protocol will also detail the mechanisms for ensuring compliance with these Codes of Practice, bearing in mind the need to balance independent scrutiny with practicality.

Where relevant, the UREC will normally waive the right to review any proposal that has been submitted to the formal NHS research ethics system, and will accept the judgement of the NHS research ethics committee (LREC, MREC).

The Committee will itself seek to work in an ethical fashion, reviewing and documenting statements of interest.

Appeals

Appeals from staff against decisions by the Institutes can be made to the UREC. Appeals against decisions of UREC should be made to the University Secretary.

There is no specific Appeals procedure for u/g or p/g taught students appealing against decisions made within the Faculties. They may, however, involve the University complaints procedure. Postgraduate Research Students may appeal to the Head of the Graduate Research School.

KS Robinson
Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)
1 June 2006