

Academic Ethics and Compliance Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on December 10 2024 at 2pm, Hybrid in-person and via video conference.

Meeting Attendance

Members present:	Prof Bryony Beresford, (Chair) Prof Dawn Coverley, Biology Mr Richard Fuller, IT infrastructure Dr Duncan Jackson, Academic Quality and Development Mr Leon Corneille- Cowell, Student Representative, Archaeology Dr Anna Bramwell-Dicks, School of Arts and Creative Technologies Dr Cylcia Bolibaugh, Education Prof Mariana Lopez, School of Arts and Creative Technologies Dr Angela de Bruin, Psychology Ms Pauline Painter, Lay Member
In attendance:	Ms Jen Mayne, Policy, Integrity & Performance (Secretary) Dr Andrew Jackson (Head of Policy, Integrity and Performance) Mrs Zoe Deacy-Clarke (Policy Officer, Research Integrity)
Apologies:	Dr Justine Daniels Dr Siamak Shahandashti, Computer Science Dr Anna Einarsdottir, School for Business and Society Dr Nino Grillo, Language and Linguistic Science Prof Tony Royle, School for Business and Society

Section 1: Standing Items

Declarations of interest in items on the agenda (oral report)

- 24-25/10 Members were invited to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the business of the meeting. None were declared.

Unreserved minutes of the last meeting held on October 08 2024 [AEC.24-25/07]

- 24-25/11 The Committee **confirmed** the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on October 08 2024 as an accurate record.

Action tracking and matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda [AEC.24-25/08]

- 24-25/12 The Committee **noted** progress in relation to actions arising from the minutes as follows:
1. M24-25/05 To liaise with the head of Policy, Integrity and Performance (PIP) to consider how best to monitor and report on sector good practice. The head of PIP is aware and aims to progress this matter, noting that staffing changes in PIP will impact timescales.
- ACTION:** Secretary to liaise with Dr Andrew Taylor to bring a paper with proposed approaches to either the March or June meeting of this committee.

Update from the Director of Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange (RIKE) on the ethics element of Changing the Work (oral report)

- 24-25/13 The Director of RIKE sent apologies. Dr Andrew Taylor (Head of Policy, Integrity and Performance) **reported** that conversations were ongoing and were wide ranging encompassing the scope and purpose of ethics committees, as well as the structure. Consideration must be given to the budget for any changes, and the most efficient order of changes. Dr Taylor noted that local Research Ethics Committees rely on the goodwill of those staff who serve, and their role is increasingly difficult with, for example, the removal of administrative support. It was **noted** that the Faculty of Social Sciences are exploring the creation of a single ethics committee for the faculty for staff and PhD research, **noting** that it is possible that having explored this option, the decision is not to proceed. Dr Taylor advised that he was in contact with those leading that project to ensure any learnings could be reflected in the wider changes ahead. The Chair closed the conversation by thanking Dr Taylor for his update and reiterated that the committee are keen to be involved and provide support.
- 24-25/14 The Committee **received** an oral report on the AI in Research task and finish group from Richard Fuller. The committee **noted** that a document will be brought to the next meeting for consideration. It was **noted** that:
- The working group and materials generated cover the use of AI, not the development of AI
 - Care is being taken not to overlap or duplicate existing guidance
 - The output is intended to be a useful resource, not a barrier
 - The document is broken down to cover use of AI at different stages of the research process, including the ethics assessment stage.
- It was **agreed** that this was a useful update and should stay on the agenda as a standing item until completion.
- 24-25/15 The Committee **received** an oral report on the activities of the Open Research Strategy group from Dr Angela de Bruin. The committee **noted** that:
- Research Data Management (RDM) is an ongoing consideration
 - The role of local Ethics Committees in relation to RDM is a consideration that will need to be discussed further under the Changing the Work plans
- A discussion followed, **noting** the difference between signposting/guiding versus scrutinising data management plans. It was **agreed** that this was a useful update and should stay on the agenda as a standing item until completion.

Section 2: Strategic Development, Planning and Performance Monitoring – items for consideration and/or decision

Receipt and approval of Annual Returns from all Local Research Ethics Committees [AEC.24-25/09]

- 24-25/16 The Committee **received** and **approved** annual returns for all local Research Ethics Committees. A full discussion followed, **noting** the following themes:
- Many committees have made changes to improve efficiency
 - Processes have been introduced to streamline taught student applications
 - The need for improved central training and guidance that can be easily found and accessed on demand.
 - Academic workload is increasing
 - Loss of administrative support is causing concern
 - Some local systems underpinning process management are reaching end of life
- It was also **noted** that both the Annual Returns process and the Reflective Review process, which is currently paused due to the Changing the Work project, could be arduous and should be refreshed to reduce burden, while still providing robust assurance. The discussion **noted** that alternative approaches, such as the option to have a recorded discussion rather than the long reflective review form which required a lot of back and forth should be investigated.
- ACTION:** Secretary to provide specific feedback to local ethics Committee Chairs
Secretary to note defined actions on the AECC action schedule

Secretary/PIP ethics policy officer to include discussion regarding training needs on the agenda for the summer meeting of Chairs

Secretary/PIP ethics policy officer to review annual ethics return process

Secretary/PIP ethics policy officer to review reflective review process

Student Submissions in the Department of Biology [AEC.24-25/10]

- 24-25/17 The Committee **received** a proposal from the Department of Biology to streamline the process for considering Student Applications.
The committee **discussed** the proposal whereby the Biology Ethics Committee will review/approve 'groups of projects', with those applications submitted by group leads. Group leads are staff supervising ~6-8 students all working on projects which sit under this 'group approval'.
The Committee were pleased to **note** that the Data Protection Office had also been consulted. There was a wide ranging discussion, noting that some other local Ethics Committees have similar processes in place. It was **noted** that that to comply with the Code of Practice and Principles for Good Ethical Governance that the member of staff signing off each student's data collection instrument(s) must not be the student's supervisor. In order to address this, the proposed process should stipulate that approval/sign-off data collection instruments (e.g. surveys) being used by students must not be carried out by supervisors, but another 'group of projects' lead.
ACTION: Secretary to provide feedback to the Chair of the Biology Ethics Committee.

Section 3: Policy and Regulatory Matters

Receipt and approval of the Human Tissue Act Quality Manual (v10) [AEC.24-25/11]

- 24-25/18 The Committee **received** and **approved** version 10 of the Human Tissue Act Quality Manual, **noting** that the only significant change is the Person Designated.
ACTION: Secretary to confirm approval with author.

Section 4: Sub-committee Summaries and Meeting-related information

Committee reports

- 24-25/19 The Committee **received** the following minutes:
- Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body, [AEC.24-25/12, confidential]
 - Clinical Trials Sponsorship Committee, [AEC.24-25/13, confidential]

Any Other Business

The Committee thanks Professor Jonathan Finch for his service, and welcomes his replacement, Professor Mariana Lopez.

The Committee welcomes Leon Corneille-Cowell as Student Member.

The outgoing Secretary thanks colleagues for their efforts to build a positive and productive Committee. The Committee notes there will be a temporary Secretary for the next planned meeting, March 11 2025. On behalf of the committee, the Chair expresses sincere thanks for the Secretary's commitment, work and support, and passes on all good wishes for the new post with the Department for Health & Social Care.

Jen Mayne, Secretary
December 12 2024