



Academic Ethics and Compliance Committee

[Unconfirmed] Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 January 2026 at 2pm via Zoom

Meeting Attendance

Members present:

Professor Bryony Beresford	Chair
Dr Anna Einarsdottir	School for Business and Society
Professor Mariana Lopez	Humanities Research Centre
Dr Anna Bramwell-Dicks	School of Arts and Creative Technology
Dr Siamak Shahandashti	Computer Science
Dr Duncan Jackson	Head of Academic Quality and Development
Ms Pauline Painter	Lay member
Dr Angela de Bruin	Psychology

Apologies:

Mr Richard Fuller	Assistant Director of IT
Dr Justine Daniels	Director of Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange
Professor Dawn Coverley	Biology

In attendance:

Florence Robinson (Secretary)	Policy Officer (Policy, Integrity and Performance (PIP)) for Ethics and Compliance
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Section 1: Standing Items

Declarations of Interest

25-26/16 Members were invited to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the business of the meeting. None were identified.

Minutes of the previous meeting(s) [AEC.24-25/09]

25-26/17 The Committee members present **approved** the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2025, with the no amendments.

Action tracking and matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda [AEC.24-25/10]

- 25-26/18 The Committee **noted** updates to the following actions arising from the minutes as follows:
1. The Committee **agreed** the changes to the Action Log suggested by the Chair and Secretary to consolidate actions of similar topics and duplicated information.
 2. M. 25-26/06: The Assistant Director of IT, Richard Fuller has allocated the development of guidance on the use of transcription software for research to his team. The Committee members raised concerns that depending on who they ask different advice is given. The Committee members were advised to contact Mr Fuller directly with any queries.
 - a. There is no specific guidance on what should be used for research data vs other data types, and it is not clear who to speak to for consistent advice.
 - b. Due to differing advice and links to various webpages it's not clear to LRECs what is and isn't approved AI technology, which is making ethics approvals difficult.
 - c. Addition confusion over how some AI technology is deemed safe and approved for use, but others are not.

- d. The Chair offer to hold a meeting with researchers to discuss requirements and issues
ACTION: Secretary to liaise with Chair to look into how best to do this.
- e. Secretary is awaiting a response from IT regarding the use of Otter.ai business plan and the use of Copilot.
- f. ACTION: Secretary to liaise with Mr Fuller for an update on the guidance.
- g. ACTION: Chair and Secretary to share an updated when available.

Issues Brought to the AECC Since the Last Meeting [AEC.25-26/11]

- 25-26/07 The Committee **noted** the queries and issues that had been raised with the AECC Chair for advice:
- Use of teaching/exam related data from students in another module. The dataset only needed to cover a single module and include student responses to individual examination items.
 - An external examiner identified that a PhD candidate had deputised another person to collect a portion of data on their behalf without naming them on the ethics application or having them complete a confidentiality agreement.

Examples of AI Queries Brought to Local Research Ethics Committees [AEC.25-26/12]

- 25-26/09 The Committee **noted** the AI related brought to LRECs:
- Does the use of Lumivervo AI Assistant in Nvivo 15, designed to speed up the initial stages of qualitative data analysis, including summarising documents and autocoding, breach the Responsible AI Use In Research policy?
 - Does the policy on Responsible AI use in Research explicitly prohibit the use of Gemini to assist in coding interview transcripts?
 - Can Gemini be used for transcribing interviews?
- These were covered in the conversation relating to

Verbal Updates on Matters Relevant to the Committee

- 25-26/11 There were no updates from Open Research Strategy Group as the last meeting was in October 2025. The Committee **agreed** to remove this as a standing item going forward and updates will be provided when they become available.

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

Ethics requirements and procedures for OUC students using human subject data collected in China for use in the Department of Language & Linguistic Science (LLS) [AEC.25-26/13]

- 25-26/12 Ben Gibb-Reid and Paul Drew joined the meeting at 14:20.
- 25-26/13 The UoY has an existing agreement with Ocean University of China permitting Masters student at Ocean University to complete a year of their study programme at UoY. Students remain Ocean University students and subject to their requirements. Students wish to collect data in China, in their first language and analyse this data as part of their study at UoY. Data will be anonymised and only shared with the student's supervisor and research team, and subject to the UoY data storage requirements whilst they are here. In order to achieve this LLS would like to support Ocean University develop the appropriate ethics framework, commensurate to that of the UoY. No data will be collected in the UK for this research.
- 25-26/14 Currently in at Ocean University, only post-approval is sought when study results are to be published. Retrospective ethical approval is not allowed under the UoY ethical framework, and approval must be sought before any research activity can commence. LLS have been working with ocean University to help them understand that for international publishing a more robust framework is needed – this is an opportunity for UoY to influence change.
- 25-26/15 Students intend to analyse recordings of interactions between patients and doctors. As this is personal data, it would need be confirmed is GDPR applies. Students will not be publishing research outcomes as UoY students but retain their Ocean University status.
- 25-26/16 Any questions would remain the responsibility of ocean University, how UoY needs to ensure an appropriate level of due diligence has been carried out.

- 25-26/17 The UoY will expect to have a declaration from the Ocean University REC Chair which confirms the research was approved prior to any data collection taking place.
- 25-26/18 Participants will be consented by their doctor, with signed consent forms in place akin to the medical consent forms used in the UK. The clinician will obtain verbal consent from the patient; this is considered to be sufficient evidence of consent. The clinician will provide consent to the use of data for research and they will confirm the patient has given consent - this method is used in UK in some situations.
- 25-26/19 Participants will be given Participant Information Sheets consistent with those used by LLS. For information relating to data use and storage LLS are advising on the information these should include, however have not had visibility of what is currently within Ocean Universities PIS.
- 25-26/20 Previously used public access data, however this approach will allow Ocean University to own the data and they want to ensure pre-approval is sought to bring them in line with international standards
- 25-26/21 AECC members raised the following queries and concerns:
- UoY Ethics Code of Practice clarifies the requirements for this type of situation for post graduate ethics, however, does not specifically cover this scenario – query whether the CoP needs to be updated to cover this specifically.
 - Video/audio recording cannot be truly anonymous – PIS should make this clear to participants.
 - Queries were raised around how data would be transferred from China to the UK - Data collected by students will be transferred to the UK on the student's laptops in encrypted files. ACTION: Chair and Secretary to liaise with Data Protection on whether this is suitable
 - Concerns were raised about the current ethics process at Ocean University, as it seems that only retrospective approval is required – Ocean University understand that in order to be taken seriously within the international research community a more robust ethics framework is required, that is in line with frameworks in Europe and the US.
 - Concerns were raised relating to how UoY can ensure that Ocean University is meeting the expected standards – LLS open to advice on this, but Ocean University would have to agree to the changes, and this would be part of a signed agreement.
 - There was some confusion relating to which institution the students would belong to during their time at UoY, as whilst here they are the UoY's responsibility.
 - Concerns were raised relating to clinician consenting, what scenarios this is acceptable in the UK and how the UoY can have assurance that participants consent is voluntary and informed.
 - Concerns were raised relating to access to information before participants consent and how the UoY can have assurance of commensurate processes. This is a big shift in culture of Ocean University and may require significant training and development.
- ACTION: Chair and Secretary to collate queries and feed back to LLS.

Introduction to the Toolkit to Support Researcher Wellbeing (RES-WELL) [AEC25-26/14]

- 25-26/22 UCL published a guidance document last year on researcher wellbeing, particularly relation to sensitive and emotional research topics. The guidance covers wellbeing from different perspectives (e.g. researchers, funding, institutions).
- 25-26/23 The Committee agreed embedding guidance on researcher wellbeing would be welcome, noting the following:
- One department has faced issues with unwanted communication from members of the public, harassing and threatening to involve the police, relating to research conducted on sensitive topics. There is a need to consider researcher safety as well as wellbeing.
 - Not clear if all ethics application reviewers understand the need to consider researcher wellbeing during application review e.g. where a researcher may be meeting participants in their homes to collect data, where neither party knows each other.
 - Not all the tools presented will be helpful to everyone, therefore there is a need to consider how the information is presented.
 - One department encountered a recent case where concerns were raised in relation to online

bullying, however, is little that could be done unless there is criminal activity. It would be helpful to include information on how research can be conducted in order to mitigate the risks of this happening.

- It is important to get the right balance between risk vs not conducting the research at all. Sometimes the impact of research isn't felt until the research has been completed.
- Arts and Humanities recently reviewed an application which has come good solutions in this area – with researcher permission the REC Chair would be happy to share these.
- There is a need to consider how this information is rolled out, it could cause more anxiety if this is just rolled out to departments without assessing how it fits with the Universities ethos and policies.

ACTION: Secretary to add this to the agenda for the next meeting to discuss an action plan.

Training / resources for staff and students on research ethics: Specifying areas of focus

- 25-26/24 The Committee noted that the inconsistent availability of training is identified as a challenge area in the LREC Annual Returns.
- 25-26/25 The Committee discussed that there isn't necessarily a lack of training available, but that the management of the available information to make it accessible is a problem.
- The information available is inconsistent, new REC members are required to visit numerous webpages to find the information they need.
 - A map of current training available may be a good place to start – it would be useful to include weblinks and ensure information is not contradicting other information.
 - Some general guidance for new REC members to allowing for shadowing and a period of learning time e.g. Chairs must spend a year as deputy chair prior to appointment to Chair.
 - Currently when you Google "University of York Ethics" the results show a staff page, there is little information readily available to students
- ACTION: Chair and Secretary to look at potential review of webpages and find out what may be possible.
- 25-26/26 The Committee noted that workload can be an issue, co-review of applications is a sensible option, but in practice this may not be viable as it can take up more time

Section 3: Policy and Regulatory Matters

Reconfirmation of AECC Terms of Reference and membership [AEC.25-26/15]

- 25-26/27 The Committee members discussed the following:
- Factual changes have been highlighted on the on the document sent to Committee members.
 - A query was raised about the AECC remit in regard to whether the Committee is only responsible for research ethics, or if a wider ethics remit should be considered.

Section 4: Reports for information and Meeting-related information

Committee reports (unreserved) / Reports for information

- 25-26/28 The Committee **noted** the Annual AECC Report was discussed and approved by the University Research Committee and Senate.
- Any Other Business**
- 25-26/29 The Committee agreed to look at the potential to develop some guidance around impact related work and when ethical approval is required for this.
ACTION: Secretary to add an agenda item for this to be discussed at the next meeting
- 25-26/30 Arts and Creative Technologies recently had an issue where an undergraduate student conducted research as part of a module that may have cause harm. It was clear that if they had followed departmental process this would have been identified and the research would not have been allowed to go ahead.

Flo Robinson
March 2026