

Academic Ethics and Compliance Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 June 2025 at 2pm via Zoom

NOTE: This meeting was reorganised to be conducted online only due to the availability of the Committee members.

Meeting Attendance

Members present:

Professor Bryony Beresford	Chair
Mr Richard Fuller	Assistant Director of IT
Dr Angela de Bruin	Psychology
Dr Anna Bramwell-Dicks	School of Arts and Creative Technology
Dr Cylcia Bolibaugh	Education
Professor Dawn Coverley	Biology
Professor Mariana Lopez	Humanities Research Centre
Dr Siamak Shahandashti	Computer Science
Ms Pauline Painter	Lay member

Apologies:

Dr Justine Daniels	Director of Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange
Dr Duncan Jackson	Head of Academic Quality and Development
Dr Anna Einarsdottir	School for Business and Society

In attendance:

Florence Robinson (Secretary)	Policy Officer (Policy, Integrity and Performance (PIP)) for Ethics and Compliance
Zoe Deacy-Clarke	Policy, Integrity and Performance (PIP) Officer for Integrity

Section 1: Standing Items

Declarations of Interest

24-25/37 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.24-25/18]

24-25/38 The Committee **approved** the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2025, with the following changes:

- Dr Anna Bramwell-Dicks title to be amended from Professor.
- The wording on the use of WeChat (24-25/35) should be amended to clarify that while the University has recently joined WeChat to enable conversation with international students, it is not an approved application and there are concerns relating to the level of access the Chinese Government has to information and conversations. The University advises that users of WeChat should refrain from discussing confidential information or sensitive topics and make use of another approved application.

Action tracking and matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda [AEC.24-25/15]

24-25/39 The Committee **noted** progress in relation to actions arising from the minutes as follows:
1. M.20-21/29: Ethics form and process is on hold and will be picked up as part of the Changing the Work initiative, which will be picked up by the new Policy Officer (Ethics and Compliance)

2. M.22-23/4b: A meeting was representatives from Involvement@York and PIP to discuss the ethics processes applicable in this space. The Policy Officer (ethics and compliance) to draft guidance. No action for AECC currently.
3. M.24-25/05: A preliminary meeting was held between the Head of Policy, Integrity and Performance (Dr Andrew Taylor) and the Policy Officer (ethics and compliance) (Flo Robinson). Further discussion with required with Dr Justine Daniels to understand how this can be tracked effectively. The Committee **noted** that PIP serves as a service function to the AECC and guidance and assistance is available regarding the governance of ethics. There is no intention to embed a requirement for formal approval by PIP.

ACTION: Secretary to provide update for next meeting.
4. M.24-25/6a: The summer Chairs Meeting is to be scheduled for July.

ACTION: Secretary to arrange the summer Chairs Meeting.

ACTION: Secretary to add responsible use of AI in research to the agenda.

ACTION: Secretary to add bogus participants and bots to the agenda.
5. M.24-25/16b: This is currently on hold. The AECC will review the process ahead of reinstating it. The Committee **noted** that the ESRC review is a separate process and is currently underway for this academic year.
6. M.24-25/16c: A document is available on the subject of bogus participants and bots. The Committee **noted** that this will most likely get worse as the use of AI increases, and it may be difficult to ensure zero bogus responses are received. This could cause problems where payment/incentives are offered to participants.

The Committee **noted** that ethical issues around AI are often related to integrity, and this should be embedded in the ethics process to ensure some kind of check is done.

ACTION: Secretary to locate and share the exiting document with AECC members.

ACTION: Chair and Secretary to look at how a document can be developed and shared with researchers, to provide ideas and solutions.

Issues Brought to the AECC Since the Last Meeting

24-25/40 No issues were brought to the attention of the AECC since the last meeting in March. Any issues raised will be routinely shared going forward in AECC meetings.

Examples of AI Queries Brought to Local Research Ethics Committees [AEC.24-25/20]

24-25/41 The Committee **noted** and **discussed** the AI queries shared by LRECS.

1. Researchers are unsure of what approved AI transcription software is available. There is no consistent location this information can be found.

The Committee **noted** that there is some information available on individual department intranet pages, but it would be more effective to have a centralised location for this so that there is only one location to keep up to date. It would be helpful to have this link available on ethics application forms.

The Committee **noted** that some researchers and AECC members have been advised to use the functionality in MS Word.

ACTION: Chair and Secretary to establish what information is already available.

ACTION: Assistant Director of IT to investigate how this resource and information can be centralised.

Verbal update from the Director of Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange on the ethics element of Changing the Work

24-25/42 Dr Justine Daniels was unable to attend and sent apologies; an update was provided via email ahead of the AECC meeting. The Committee **noted** there are no specific updates at this time. Changing the Work is on hold due to staffing changes. A meeting is scheduled in July with Flo Robinson, Dr Andrew Taylor and Dr Daniels to discuss restarting this.

Verbal Updates on Matters Relevant to the Committee

24-25/43 The Committee **considered** updates on the following topics:

1. The AI in Research Task & Finish Group.
2. Reviewing the AECC Annual Reports and the 'Review and Reflection Process'.

The AI in Research Task & Finish Group

24-25/44 Richard Fuller (Assistant Director of IT) confirmed this group has now been disbanded with the approval of the Responsible AI Use in Research: Policy and Best Practice for Researchers.

ACTION: Secretary to remove standing item for this agenda point.

Open Research Strategy Group

24-25/45 The Committee **received** an oral report on the activities of the Open Research Strategy Group from Dr Angela de Bruin. The Committee **noted** that a number of proposed actions have been approved within the group.

- The need for an institutional level lead in research data and governance is being considered.
- The creation of additional faculty level data steward roles needed to support the lead is being reviewed.
- The group are looking to develop better signposting to existing relevant training and new training modules where needed.
- Clarification on responsibilities and the implementation of research data management as part of the ethics review process is needed. This will be actioned in collaboration with the PIP team to incorporate this into the review of ethics policies and procedures. It is likely that this will form part of the Changing the Work initiative.

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

Receipt and Review of Annual Returns Form and an initial re-draft [AEC.24-25/21 & AEC.24-25/22]

24-25/46 The Committee **noted** a review of the annual returns form had not been carried out for some time. The Committee initially received these documents on 03 June 2025; some comments were received prior to the AECC meeting. The Committee **discussed** the following:

- Overall, the re-draft would be much less time consuming to complete.
- It would be helpful to collect information about processes and programmes use e.g. Google Docs and what admin support is provided for this.
- Option for using Google Forms to share and gather information, as well as streamlining the process for analysing the information that is provided by LRECS.

ACTION: Secretary to reshare the links to the current and initial re-draft allowing an additional 2 weeks for comments.

ACTION: Secretary to add review of the Annual Returns Form to the summer Chairs Meeting agenda.

Section 3: Policy and Regulatory Matters

Receipt and Review of Approved Responsible AI Use in Research Policy & Best Practice Document for Researchers [AEC.24-25/23]

24-25/47 The Committee **noted** the Policy and Best Practice Guidance was approved by URC 12 March 2025. The committee initially received the approved document late March 2025. No concerns were noted to be fed back to Dr Jennifer Chubb, however clarity around the inclusion of AI in the ethics process (guidance Pg 11, Pt 6) was requested.

A link to the University webpage on [Responsible AI Use in Research](#) was shared in the meeting chat box. The committee noted that the Teaching Committee on AI has been working to develop a portal to include relevant information and links to relevant webpages.

ACTION: Chair and Secretary to liaise with Dr Jennifer Chubb to clarify guidance information on the inclusion of AI in the ethics process.

Receipt and approval of the Human Tissue Act Quality Manual (v10.1) [AEC.24-25/224]

24-25/48 The Committee **received and approved** version 10.1 of the Human Tissue Act Quality Manual, noting that the only significant change is the Designated Individual.

ACTION: Secretary to confirm approval with author.

Section 4: Reports for information and Meeting-related information

Committee reports (unreserved) / Reports for information

24-25/49 The Committee **noted** the following for information:

1. Minutes of the meeting of Clinical Trials Sponsorship Committee held on 05 November 2024.

Any Other Business

24-25/50 Clarity was **requested** regarding research involving the use of social media data, which in some cases is taking place without ethics approval.

- Arts and Humanities are working to produce a document with the Local Ethics Committee to raise awareness and provide guidance one when ethics is needed.
- Computer Science have created an advisory group with representatives from different research groups to share awareness of this.
- Psychology have produced some guidance on this, but it would be helpful for new staff to have some clear guidance on the University's stance, as some universities state you don't need ethics for social media whereas some do.
- The Committee **noted** that the guidance sought from the Data Protection team is not always clear on when a DPA is required, and it is not always clear which projects going through ethics approval require them.

ACTION: Dr Angela de Bruin to share the guidance developed for Psychology on this topic.

Flo Robinson

June 2025