UNIVERSITY of York

Academic Ethics and Compliance Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 March 2025 at 2pm in CL/A/103 and via Zoom

Meeting Attendance
Members present:

Professor Bryony Beresford	Chair
Mr Richard Fuller	Assistant Director of IT
Dr Duncan Jackson	Head of Academic Quality and Development
Dr Angela de Bruin	Psychology
Professor Dawn Coverley	Biology
Professor Mariana Lopez	Humanities Research Centre
Dr Anna Einarsdottir	School for Business and Society
Professor Tony Royle	School for Business and Society
Dr Siamak Shahandashti	Computer Science
Ms Pauline Painter	Lay member
Mr Leon Corneille-Cowell	Student representative

Apologies:

Dr Anna Bramwell-Dicks	School of Arts and Creative Technology
Dr Justine Daniels	Director of Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange

In attendance:

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

Section 1: Standing Items

Welcome

24-25/20   The Committee **welcomed** Florence Robinson, the new Policy, Integrity and Performance (PIP) Officer for Ethics and Compliance.

Declarations of Interest

24-25/21   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.24-25/14]

24-25/22   The Committee **approved** the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2024.

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

24-25/23   The Committee **noted** progress in relation to actions arising from the minutes as follows:
1. A number of actions had been paused pending the arrival of the new PIP Officer for Ethics and Compliance, and would now be picked up following the role-holder was in post.
2. M.22-23/4b: A meeting would be arranged with representatives from Involvement@York and PIP to discuss the ethics processes applicable in this space.
3. M.22-23/07: Training needs would be considered as part of the summer meeting of LREC Chairs. Confirmation was needed as to whether feedback from the AECC Annual Review had been shared with LREC Chairs.

ACTION: Secretary to confirm and share if necessary

4. M.24-25/05: An initial report on this was expected at the June meeting of the AECC.

ACTION: Secretary

5. M.24-25/17: This action had been completed; the Action Log would be updated as relevant prior to the next meeting of the Committee.

Chair's report (oral report)

24-25/24   Relevant items were discussed elsewhere in the agenda.

Verbal Updates on Matters Relevant to the Committee

24-25/25   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

24-25/26   Richard Fuller (Assistant Director of IT) gave a presentation on the work of the AI in Research Task & Finish Group.

24-25/27   The Assistant Director of IT **reported** the following:
1. The development of the draft document had been a constructive and productive process, particularly discussion as to the distinction between guidance and policy. The draft document would be presented to University Research Committee for approval on 12 March 2025.
2. The draft document would be a useful resource and would enable researchers to consider the use of generative AI in their research in a safe and appropriate manner, however deeper questions remained (particularly in terms of research on AI itself, for example the building of generative AI modules).
3. Work was needed as to the promotion of generative AI, encouraging researchers to use the technology well. Resources from other universities could be utilised to help develop this approach.
4. The role of ethics committees remained in need of definition, particularly in terms of ensuring LRECs had the knowledge and expertise available to make decisions regarding the use of generative AI in research proposals.

24-25/28   The Committee **noted** the following:
1. It was **suggested** that examples of queries sent to LRECs regarding the use of AI in research be shared with the AECC to enable this sharing of knowledge. It was **recognised** that the number of queries would continue to grow as more guidance was made available. Queries within ELMPS at this stage had largely concerned the use of transcription services, however it was reported that the use of AI to develop study resources and aid in the writing of theses at the doctoral level was a topic of discussion across the institution. Chairs would be contacted prior to meetings of the AECC and asked to share examples of queries regarding the use of AI. A standing item would be included for this discussion, and a shared document for the collation of good practice would be considered.

ACTION: Secretary to contact LREC Chairs prior to meetings
ACTION: Chair and Secretary to consider the establishment of a shared document for the collation of good practice

2. The connection to the work of the University Teaching Committee was **noted**. There had been a rise of academic misconduct cases concerning AI as well as an increase in FoI requests concerning the use of AI in marking; it was further **clarified** that AI was not used in marking at the University.
3. It was **noted** that Computer Science continued to receive more complex queries concerning the development of generative AI models. These were included under the work of the LREC due to the institutional Code of Practice and Principles for Good Ethical Governance specifying the need for ethical approval where human data is used in research.
4. It was **requested** that the Committee be given further sight of the draft Responsible AI Use in Research: Policy and Best Practice for Researchers document.

ACTION: Secretary to arrange circulation as relevant

24-25/29   The Committee **approved**:
1. The inclusion of a standing item on the agenda to discuss queries concerning the use of AI
2. Further clarity regarding the next steps for the draft Responsible AI Use in Research: Policy and Best Practice for Researchers document, and sight of this where possible

Reviewing: AECC Annual Reports and the 'Review and Reflection Process'

24-25/30   The Chair spoke to this item.

24-25/31   The Chair reported the following:
1. The current form used for the AECC Annual Reporting Process had now been in use for five years, and as such there was discussion to be had concerning the continued applicability of the form.

24-25/32   The Committee **noted** the following:
1. There was a need to understand the purpose of the form and how the information collected was used; the reflective side was helpful in encouraging LRECs to consider their activity, however the requirement to count applications received (including by type) could be time-consuming. There was particular merit to the process in the case of cross-departmental committees, and the oversight provided was appreciated in these cases.
2. The quantitative data captured was useful in giving an indication of trends over time. Identifying the number of applications submitted by taught students (which were captured separately in the form) was the most resource-intensive aspect of the process; greater clarity was needed as to what types of application were reported on and in what manner. There was also discussion of the distinction between group teaching and individual projects in the case of the Biology REC.
ACTION: Secretary to circulated a Word Document version of the form to members of the AECC and LREC Chairs for comment

24-25/33   The Committee **approved**:
1. The circulation of the current version of the AECC Annual Review form to members of the AECC and LREC Chairs for comment

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

No items under this section on this occasion.

Section 3: Policy and Regulatory Matters

No items under this section on this occasion.

Section 4: Reports for information and Meeting-related information
Committee reports (unreserved) / Reports for information
24-25/34   The Committee **noted** the following for information:
1. Minutes of the meeting of AWERB held on 7 October 2024.

Any Other Business
24-25/35   Clarity was requested as to the use of WeChat in research. The Committee **noted** that, the University had recently joined the service to enable 'recruitment' conversations with potential international students. However, it is not on IT services' list of approved applications. Although, the University does recognise that staff and students may need to use it for research purposes (e.g. recruiting/contacting study participants, data collection). In these instances, the use of WeChat should be specified in ethics applications and researchers should actively seek to avoid using the application to collect sensitive or potentially compromising information.

24-25/36   **Dates of future Meetings**
The Committee noted the next meeting would take place in June 2025 (date TBC), and would be held via a hybrid format.

Zoe Deacy-Clarke
March 2025