

Academic Ethics and Compliance Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on June 11 2024 at 2pm via video-conference

Meeting Attendance

Members present:

- Prof Keith Allen, Philosophy, (Chair)
- Dr Angela de Bruin, Psychology
- Prof Dawn Coverley, Biology
- Richard Fuller, IT infrastructure
- Dr Duncan Jackson, Academic Quality and Development
- Prof Jonathan Finch, Archaeology
- Dr Siamak Shahandashti, Computer Science
- Samir Belgacem, Student Representative
- Dr Anna Bramwell-Dicks, School of Arts and Creative Technologies
- Prof Tony Royle, School for Business and Society
- Dr Justine Daniels, Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange

In attendance: Jen Mayne, Policy, Integrity & Performance (Secretary)

Apologies:

- Prof Bryony Beresford, Social Policy Research Unit
- Dr Nino Grillo, Language and Linguistic Science
- Dr Anna Einarsdottir, School for Business and Society
- Pauline Painter, Lay Member

Section 1: Standing Items

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

23-24/21 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 12 March 2024

23-24/22 The Committee **confirmed** the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on March 12, 2024 (AEC 23-24/19) as an accurate record.

*Secretary's note- the Committee were provided with incorrect minutes- those from the December 2023 meeting. The correct paper was circulated 13th June 2024 and **confirmed** as an accurate record by email response by members.*

Action tracking and matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda

23-24/23 The Chair provided a verbal update on the action log (AEC 23-24/20). No comments or questions were received.

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

To consider proposed changes to the processing of research ethics applications submitted to York NeuroImaging Centre Research Ethics Committee (AEC 23-24/21)

23-24/24 The Committee **received** the paper, noting the points raised by YNiC. The Chair noted that the committee were not able to approve or endorse at this stage, due to the ongoing work around ethics restructure, advising that these would be passed on to the Task and Finish group when it is set up and there would be further opportunities for consultation with local Research Ethics Committees.

There was a further full discussion about committee restructure, and the following key points were **noted**:

- There may be opportunities to make efficiencies via IT solutions,
- More consistent guidance allowing for shared ways of working would provide both consistency, and make processes more efficient,
- Specialist knowledge and experience is required to deliver a fast, effective ethical consideration process,
- It is important that any realignment does not add complexity, create confusion or opportunities for error,
- The majority of local level ethics committees triage, offering a simple/complex route for assessment. The criteria for simple/complex vary, and we should consider whether greater consistency is possible.

The committee agreed that they would like to be involved going forward, providing proactive and positive challenge to create something that will work.

ACTION: JM to provide feedback to the York NeuroImaging Centre ethics committee Chair.
JM to provide full notes of the discussion to the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research.

To receive the Draft Research Reputation and Social Responsibility Framework (AEC 23-24/22)

23-24/25 The Committee **received** the Draft Research Reputation and Social Responsibility Framework for information only, noting that the current version was currently with the University Research Committee awaiting approval.

The relationship between RECs and Management Teams, and how this is covered in the Code of practice and principles for good ethical governance (AEC 23-24/23)

23-24/26 The Committee **considered** the language used in Section 4 of the Code of practice and principles for good ethical governance, relating to funding.

There followed a full discussion and the following key comments were **noted**:

- Broad agreement that ethics committees need to operate independently of departmental management, noting that this is becoming unclear, by, for example organograms showing ethics committees reporting into Research Committees.
- Committees that operate over a broad scope (covering multiple departments/schools) may find it easier not to be influenced by departmental management, and retain independence.
- The Code of Practice should be updated to reflect the new Research Reputation and Social Responsibility Framework as soon as it is approved.

ACTION: JM to provide full notes of the discussion to the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research.

- 23-24/27 The Committee **considered** and **approved** the internal reflective review completed by the Language and Linguistic Science ethics committee.
The committee noted that:
- Consideration had been given to payment of vulnerable participants
 - The University Policy on the Payment of Individuals for Involvement with and Contribution to Research does not prohibit payment to “vulnerable” participants, and decisions can be made on a case by case basis by the PI with support from the ethics committee if required.
 - Payment is not appropriate in all cases, e.g. where it may unduly influence participants' choice to take part in the research.
 - It is important to pay attention to context, noting that all “vulnerable” groups are the same. There are also discipline specific considerations.
 - The application form stated that no personal data was involved.
 - The committee noted that voice recordings would usually be considered as personal data.

ACTION: JM to provide feedback to the Chair of the Language and Linguistic Science ethics committee requesting clarification of the consideration of Personal Data (i.e. were the Data Protection Office consulted and how were participants told their data would be used.)

JM to liaise with colleagues responsible for the University Policy on the Payment of Individuals for Involvement with and Contribution to Research to confirm that there is no blanket policy on payment of “vulnerable” participants and circulate the outcome to all University ethics committees.

Section 3: Sub-committee Summaries and Meeting-related information

Committee reports

- 23-24/28 The Committee received the following minutes:
- Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body, (AEC 23-24/25, confidential)
 - Clinical Trials Sponsorship Committee, (AEC 23-24/26)
- 23-24/29 A.O.B.
The committee thanked Professor Keith Allen as his tenure draws to a close, noting the time and effort required as the inaugural AECC Chair to establish the committee and associated processes; providing consistent, expert support and leadership to the ethics community across the institution.
The committee noted that Professor Bryony Beresford will take on the role of AECC Chair from September 1st 2024

Jen Mayne, Secretary
June 20, 2024