

SENATE (with Board representation)

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (UREC)

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2011

Present: Dr R Chapman (Chair)
Prof J Fletcher; Dr M Hind; Dr D Lilleker; Dr P Lugosi; Dr G Roushan; Dr R Stillman;

In Attendance: Dr C Dickson (Secretary); G Rayment (Committee Clerk).

Apologies: Dr J Cobb; Mr J Francis; Mr D Gobbett; Mr G Sturdy.

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (9 December 2010)

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.

1.1 Matters Arising

1.1.1 Revised Terms of Reference. The Clerk informed the Committee that the Revised Terms of Reference agreed at the previous meeting had been approved by the Vice-Chancellor (as Chair of Senate) and would be ratified at the forthcoming Senate meeting in March.

1.1.2 CRB Checks. Dr Dickson had circulated a statement from the University's Human Resources team setting out the current policy regarding CRB checks. In summary, these were conducted for new members of staff and may be updated every 2 years in line with best practice. The checks were not, however, carried out on a case by case basis. Members noted that these arrangements applied to staff, but that the requirements for CRB checks in respect of students engaging in research would be considered on a case by case basis. The Committee noted that, according to the CRB website, a central review was being undertaken of CRB requirements. It was agreed therefore, that this topic would be reviewed again by the Committee in 12 months.

ACTION: Committee to review the requirements for CRB checks in the light of any changes to central Government policy at its meeting in Spring 2012.

ACTION BY: Clerk/Secretary

All other matters arising had been actioned or were dealt with under other agenda items (below)

2. COMMITTEE WORKPLAN FOR 2011

2.1 A draft workplan for the coming year was presented to the Committee for approval. This comprised three main areas of work for the year as set out below:

2.2 **Revision of the Code of Practice and Ethics Checklist (February-April 2011).** When the Code of Practice and Ethics Checklist were published a commitment was made to review them after 12 months of operation. It was intended that this be a 'light-touch' review and that no major changes would be required at this time. In recognition

of the fact that each School had its own particular requirements and processes in respect of research ethics, it was agreed that the review should be led by the School Research Ethics Representatives rather than the Secretary. Dr Stillman volunteered to co-ordinate this activity and representatives were asked to liaise directly with him on any proposals for revisions to the code or issues for further discussion. Dr Dickson would also highlight any revisions which she had been made aware of during the year and provide advice and support to Dr Stillman as necessary. Discussions would then be progressed through sub-committee meetings as appropriate. A revised draft would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee for consideration and approval.

ACTION 1: School Representatives to consider any issues/revisions regarding the Code of Practice and liaise with Dr Stillman as appropriate.

ACTION BY: School Research Ethics Representatives.

ACTION 2: To present a revised draft Code of Practice and Ethics Checklist to the next meeting of the Committee.

ACTION BY: Dr Stillman

2.3 **Training for School Ethics Representatives (April – July 2011).** It was agreed that further work would be undertaken to explore the training options available. The Committee noted that central funding for ethics training was no longer available through the Registry following the Professional Services Review. The Secretary was continuing to investigate alternative sources of funding and it was suggested that this might be available through Schools' own training and development budgets. In terms of training providers, Keele University appeared to be the only organisation currently offering the type of training events required. The Chair also noted the usefulness of the *Research Ethics Review* journal and the Secretary confirmed that this subscription would continue.

2.4 **Training for Schools and Partner Colleges (August – November 2011).** It was proposed that School Research Ethics Representatives review their current training material during August and late September and deliver this training in October and November. Members discussed how training might be provided to Partner Institutions (PIs) and it was agreed that this should be a mandatory requirement if students from PIs were expected to sign the University's ethics checklist for their own research proposals. It was suggested that there might be scope for Schools to work together in delivering this training, for example the School of Tourism and the Business School.

2.5 Members noted that Research Ethics was not currently an integral part of the induction process for new staff and considered how this might be addressed. The Secretary agreed to explore this further with the Staff Training & Development Team with a view to including a brief element in the staff induction sessions, signposting the Code of Practice and the School Research Ethics Representatives as sources of further advice.

ACTION: To explore with the Staff Training & Development Team how research ethics might be integrated into the staff induction process.

ACTION BY: Dr Dickson

2.6 The Workplan for 2011, as set out above, was agreed by the Committee.

3. **MATTERS RAISED BY SCHOOL ETHICS REPRESENTATIVES**

3.1 **Data gathering tools for monitoring purposes – What is the Committee's role in monitoring these?**

3.1.1 Dr Lilleker explained that a query had arisen regarding the completion of Transparent Approach to Costings (TRAC) returns by academic staff. Some staff had been surprised to find that the information provided in these returns regarding their balanced workloads was being viewed and commented upon by their line managers. This was potentially an ethical issue and staff had queried, therefore, what the appropriate ethical approval process would be in these circumstances.

3.1.2 Members considered this point and agreed that it fell outside of the scope of the Committee, which was specifically limited to research ethics (and the TRAC return did not fall within the definition of research provided in the Code of Practice). (but see also para 3.2.2 below)

3.2 Professional Services: When might ethical approvals be required and what is the process for obtaining these approvals?

3.2.1 Members considered the circumstances in which ethical approvals might be required by staff working in Professional Services and again noted the limitation of such approvals to research, as defined by the Code of Practice. This would not include, for example, service evaluations. Ideally, any work falling with the 'research' definition should be undertaken in collaboration with a School and would, therefore, be dealt with through that School's ethical processes. Members also noted that useful definitions were provided by the NHS on what constituted 'research' (circulated to the previous meeting on 9 December 2010, paper UREC-1011-005). It was agreed to reflect these points in the revised Code of Practice.

3.2.2 Nevertheless, the committee recognised the risk that work falling outside of the research definition might still be unethical and that this was an important governance issue. Given the apparent lack of another committee or individual authorised to advise on non-research ethical issues, the Committee asked that advice be sought on the process for remitting ethical issues referred to them which fall outside of the Committee's scope.

ACTION: To include a reference to best practice in respect of surveys/questionnaires in the revised Code of Practice.

ACTION BY: Dr Stillman

ACTION: To seek advice on the process for referring non-research ethical issues which are drawn to the attention of the Committee.

ACTION BY: Committee Clerk

4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING ISSUES: AREC WORKSHOP TO BE HELD IN BOURNEMOUTH OCTOBER 2011.

4.1 The Secretary thanked members for submitting suggestions for the theme for the forthcoming AREC workshop. Further details would be circulated in due course.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Prof Fletcher updated the members on the ongoing review of the Graduate School. Proposals for a new structure would be presented to the next meeting of Senate on 16th March for discussion.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place at 12.30pm on Wednesday 22 June 2011 in the Committee Room, Poole House.

Committee Clerk
UREC-1011-1Minutes