

## Departmental Research & Teaching Ethics Committee (DREC)

January 2022

### Terms of Reference

1. To establish, implement and review Departmental<sup>1</sup> ethics policies, procedures and guidance for research and teaching proposals involving human participants or human data or material, beyond those in force at University level, and to disseminate these as appropriate within the Department(s) concerned
2. To provide guidance to staff and students in the relevant Department(s) on the ethics of conducting research and teaching involving human participants or human data or materials.
3. To submit for approval to the University Research & Teaching Ethics Committee (UREC) Departmental procedures for the ethics review of projects involving human participants or human data or material which are undertaken by undergraduate students and taught postgraduate students and to monitor the effectiveness of these procedures.
4. To review and approve research undertaken by Departmental staff, visiting researchers, postgraduate research students, undergraduate students, or external researchers which involves human participants or human data or material and, if required, within the Research Ethics Framework and Procedures, to submit such research proposals to the University Research & Teaching Ethics Committee (UREC) for approval.
5. To review and approve teaching arrangements undertaken within Departments by academic, support or technical staff including visiting staff, which involve human participants or human data or material and, if required, within the Research & Teaching Ethics Framework and Procedures, to submit such teaching proposals to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) for approval.
6. To consider any issues concerning the ethics of research or teaching referred to the Committee.
7. To report as required to the Department and University on ethics review activities.

### Powers of the Committee

The Committee may (whether for a first or amended submission and whether for Departmental (RE2(D)) or University (RE2(U)) applications):

- Authorise the research or teaching proposal to proceed or to pass to the University Research & Teaching Ethics Committee without requiring any amendment. Any such

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<sup>1</sup> Department is used throughout to signify any academic organisational unit that supports research activity. Depending on the structure in force it could be inter alia a School or Faculty.

authorisation is granted on the basis of the project as stated on the research submission form. Any changes to personnel or to the protocol must be notified to the Committee giving final approval.

- **Require clarification** or modification of parts of the submission. The Chair will normally be granted authority to approve the amendments without requiring further consideration by the full Committee.
- **Defer** consideration of a submission to a subsequent meeting if substantial modification is required or where significant additional information is required.
- **Reject** the submission in whole or in part with the option of directing the applicant to make their submission to the University Research & Teaching Ethics Committee.
- **Revoke** the approval if dissatisfied with the conduct of the research or teaching activity or of the staff involved.

The Committee will normally give reasons for requiring modification to proposals, rejecting them or revoking approval.

The Chair of the Committee is granted limited powers (see Chair's Action below) to act on the Committee's behalf in making any of the above decisions, following consultation with at least one other member of the Committee and with the proviso that such decisions are provisional and must be confirmed by the Committee at its next meeting if the majority of members have not been consulted and confirmed their agreement.

The Committee will maintain a record of all submissions made to it and may call for reports in the course of any approved research project or on its completion to help the Committee in formulating its guidance and so that the Committee can be assured that projects continue to conform to approved ethical standards.

### **Chair's Action**

Proposers may request that an application be considered by Chair's action. Such action may be used as appropriate by the Committee to facilitate its role in making its decision in relation to ethical approval. A request for Chair's action will be deemed to be appropriate if the research involves minimum risk as defined below:

- Applications where there are NO contentious issues such as genetics, human tissue or illegal substances.
- Applications where NO invasive or traumatic procedures are involved, including the administration of pharmacological agents.
- Applications where participants are NOT children or other vulnerable subjects (eg subjects suffering from mental disorders, prisoners).
- Applications that DO NOT potentially put the investigator or participants at risk.

### **Declaration of Interest**

Committee members must inform the Chair if they have a financial or personal interest in a project or with a project sponsor. The Chair will decide whether the interest disqualifies the

member from the discussion. Where the Chair believes they have a conflict of interest, or the potential appearance of such, the issue should be referred to the Dean of the relevant Faculty.

## **Membership**

***(to be approved by the relevant School Board(s) and by University Research & Teaching Ethics Committee (UREC))***

Membership will vary depending upon the Department(s) encompassed by the Committee (notably whether research and teaching with human participants, data or material forms a significant part of their work) and whether the Committee is distinct from or part of the Departmental Research Committee. Membership will however normally include the following:

- Chair (normally the Departmental Research Ethics Officer)
- At least three additional members representative of the academic work(teaching and research) undertaken in the Department(s) concerned
- At least one and no more than three students, representative of the academicwork (teaching and research) undertaken in the Department(s) concerned.
- Head of Department (*ex officio*)
- A member of the Professional staff from the Academic Support Unit or from Central University Services.