



ACADEMIC BOARD

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE COMMITTEE

CONFIRMED

Wednesday 18 November 2016

13.30 – 15.00

The Dartington Suite, Frenchay

Present: Professor Martin Boddy (Chair), Professor Jenny Ames, Richard Bond, Professor Myra Conway, Professor Julie Kent, Mandy Rose, Professor Neil Willey.

Apologies: Liz Broadbent, Amanda Conway, Rachel Cowie, Professor Olena Doran, Hazel Edwards, Professor Tony Ghaye, Keith Hicks, Tracey John, Professor Glenn Lyons, Paul Manners, Jane Newton, Professor Nicholas O'Regan, Professor Mel Smith, Dr Heidi Williamson.

In attendance: Alison Vaughton (Officer)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RKEC16.11.01 The Chair thanked members present for attending this reconvened meeting of the Committee to receive and discuss the annual reports from UREC, the Human Tissue Sub-Committee and the Graduate School, and he apologised for not having taken them at the meeting on 19th October. He noted apologies from Liz Broadbent, Amanda Conway, Rachel Cowie, Professor Olena Doran, Hazel Edwards, Professor Tony Ghaye, Keith Hicks, Tracey John, Professor Glenn Lyons, Paul Manners, Jane Newton, Professor Nicholas O'Regan, Professor Mel Smith, Dr Heidi Williamson.

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

RKEC16.11.02 Professor Kent presented the UREC Annual Report for 2015-16 (RKEC16/10/16). She expanded on the headline activities of the Committee.

RKEC16.11.03 *Training module on research with children* – this had now gone live and provided a resource for staff and students to get the necessary training. Professor Kent explained the process for monitoring compliance with the requirement for all staff and students conducting research with children. It was too early to measure compliance at this stage, but may be the subject of audit in the future.

RKEC16.11.04 *UREC annual training event* – the event, on data management, storage, protection and sharing had been very well attended and useful, with positive feedback. Professor Kent was disappointed that no one in the University had been able to contribute to the session, but understood that this was now being addressed.

Professor Kent confirmed that data management was not within the remit of UREC, but that it was important for members of ethics committees to understand the issues.

- RKEC16.11.05 *Annual audit, Research Council funded projects* – Professor Kent explained the approach that had been adopted and directed members to the audit team’s recommendations, including one to this Committee expressing the hope that the proposed Project and Information Management System (PIMS) would assist in linking project funding data to research governance and ethics approval. Professor Boddy welcomed the report and its recommendations. Professor Willey noted the recommendations for the Graduate School and reported that training on research governance and ethics for doctoral students was variable and currently not mandatory for all. Professor Willey agreed to take the issue back to Graduate School Committee for further consideration, and noted that whatever provision is decided upon should be available to ProfDoc students as well as PhD students.
Action: NW
- RKEC16.11.06 Professor Boddy thanked Professor Kent for a very thorough and useful piece of work. The Committee was invited to suggest subjects for audit by UREC in the coming year and research with children and vulnerable adults, international research and multi-university projects were all put forward for consideration.
- RKEC16.11.07 *New guidance on security sensitive research* was still to be finalised and published
- RKEC16.11.08 *Applications for ethical approval* - The 2-week closure of the Research Ethics office during the summer had helped to ensure that over 80% of ethics applications were processed within 6 weeks of receipt.
- RKEC16.11.09 *Complaint made about UREC to the Chair of URKEC* – Professor Kent explained that a researcher had made a complaint about the decision taken by UREC in relation to their ethics application. In UREC’s view the handling of the complaint raised issues, and the Committee continues to have concerns about the project. Professor Kent asked the Committee to consider whether the Chair of URKEC has the authority to give ethics approval, ie to overrule the decision of UREC Chair/UREC Committee. The complaints and appeals procedures were unclear and needed further consideration. At present the University’s Policy and Procedures state that there is no appeal against the decision of a research ethics committee, and that complaints on procedural grounds should be sent to the chair of the URKEC in the case of UREC.
- RKEC16.11.10 Professor Boddy stated that he had consulted the University Complaints Officer following receipt of the complaint in April. He had talked to the researcher and to the acting UREC Chair. Following this an agreed way forward had been determined. There had been some minor issues to be confirmed by Chair’s Action, and following their resolution the complaint had been withdrawn. It was felt that a way forward had been found to do the research within the planned timescale. There had been some shift of the research following this for which amendments were submitted, and the acting Chair indicated how these should be addressed.

Professor Boddy felt that the amendments could be dealt with by Chair's action. Professor Kent subsequently identified issues that were still outstanding and asked for them to be discussed by the full UREC committee at its following meeting in October. This meant that the researcher's timetable could not be met and the researcher approached Professor Boddy again. Professor Boddy reviewed the documentation and asked the researcher to respond to the concerns raised by Professor Kent. Professor Boddy had then considered the responses and felt that the amendment could be signed off by him in his capacity as Chair of URKEC, on the grounds of urgency (as identified in UWE's complaints procedures). He stressed that this was a highly unusual case, and exceptionally had taken this decision in the context of the earlier complaint.

- RKEC16.11.11 Professor Boddy stressed that the decision related only to the research taking place at that specific date, and that he would clarify to the researcher that this decision referred only this immediate element of the work. Any further activity would need to go to UREC for review. Professor Boddy explained that as UREC acts on delegated authority from this Committee, the decision he had taken in this regard was acceptable for the University. He recognised that this was not an ideal situation, and that he and Professor Kent did not agree on this.
- RKEC16.11.12 Professor Kent stated that she disputed some of Professor Boddy's account. She had made no attempt to overturn the decision taken over the summer, but following the receipt of new information believed that she should take this back to the Committee. Professor Boddy had overruled and taken the decision on the application before UREC was able to discuss. Professor Kent asked the Committee whether (constitutionally) the Chair of URKEC is permitted to overrule the view of the UREC Chair.
- RKEC16.11.13 Professor Kent said that UREC's concerns remained – the research had gone ahead while UREC continued to have concerns about the ethics of the research's conduct. Other URKEC members considered the possibility that this may pose a potential risk to UWE's reputation.
- RKEC16.11.14 It was agreed that it was important to give further thought to how complaints should be dealt with. Professor Kent stated that UREC would be happy to look at the complaints procedure, and felt that a decision taken alone by the URKEC Chair on an ethics issue was deeply problematic. More consideration needed to be given to governance processes around this.
- RKEC16.11.15 Professor Conway asked whether the researcher had been given the opportunity to discuss the application with the Committee, as an open dialogue would provide the opportunity fully to explore the issues and possible resolutions. Professor Kent confirmed that the researcher had been invited to attend UREC but had not done so. Professor Boddy stated that he had drafted an email, on which he had consulted with Professor Kent and Professor Harrington, and he would now send this to the researcher following this meeting.
- Action:** MB
- RKEC16.11.16 Professor Boddy acknowledged that his (URKEC's) use of Chair's Action in a research ethics issue may be viewed as contentious. If members were of the view

that Chair's Action should be restricted (or prohibited) in research ethics cases then this recommendation could be taken to Academic Board (which would need to approve any changes, or additions, to current procedures). Members felt that it would be better if decisions were taken by a Committee rather than by individuals. Professor Kent noted that the circumstances under which Research Ethics Committee chairs take chair's action is already limited, with all decisions requiring ratification by the Committee.

RKEC16.11.17 Professor Boddy agreed that adequate complaints and appeals procedures were needed. On behalf of URKEC, he invited UREC, together with the Research Governance Manager, Ros Rouse and Richard Bond, to review procedures and devise a complaints and appeals procedure, including the possibility of curtailing the powers of the URKE Committee chair for ethics decisions only.

Action: JK, RB and RR

HUMAN TISSUE SUB-COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

RKEC16.11.18 Professor Conway presented the annual report for 2015-16 for the Human Tissue Sub-Committee (RKEC16.10.17). She confirmed that the Committee had agreed, at its meeting on 19th October, to the proposed amendments to the Sub-Committee's terms of reference.

RKEC16.11.19 On membership of the Sub-Committee, Professor Conway reported that efforts were being made to find an external member: this followed Dr Rachel Davies' stepping down, although she was still happy to be consulted.

RKEC16.11.20 Professor Conway reported that a first annual audit had been conducted, with generally good results having found that most samples and documentation were in place. It was noted that a case of non-compliance was referred to in the annual report (page 5), Professor Conway confirmed that she would report to the Committee on this. Professor Conway confirmed that the audit findings would be presented in the annual report for 2016-17 as they had not yet been completed. She stated that the 13 projects on the Human Tissue Register represented the work of seven researchers.

RKEC16.11.21 The Human Tissue Quality Management System (HT QMS) was now in place and Professor Conway thanked Emma Youde, Ros Rouse and UREC for bringing this about.

RKEC16.11.22 During the current year the focus of the Sub-Committee would be on teaching. A number of tissue samples had been identified on site that people had not been aware of, and these were all now documented and had been removed where necessary, thanks to support from the laboratory technicians. A further training event was planned to coincide with the publication of the HTA revised Codes of Practice.

GRADUATE SCHOOL – ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

- RKEC16.11.23 Professor Willey presented the Graduate School annual report for 2015-16 (RKEC16.10.18). At July 2016 UWE had 555 PGR students, including 181 Professional Doctorate students. Almost 50% of all PGR students are in HAS. Some progress was being made with achieving shorter registration times, and relatively small improvements would be likely to improve the overall statistics significantly.
- RKEC16.11.24 Following the QAA HE Review in November 2015 Professor Willey was confident that administrative processes were robust. It was not clear what arrangements would be put in place with the advent of the TEF (in which PGR did not really feature at this stage) and members speculated as to whether PGR data may feature more strongly in the REF. Professor Ames suggested that it may be appropriate to flag this in the forthcoming REF consultation.
- RKEC16.11.25 Professor Willey noted from the FRDC chairs' reports that there remained ongoing challenges with accommodation for PGR students in some faculties.
- RKEC16.11.26 Looking forward, and recognising that the Graduate School has now been in existence for five years, Professor Willey stated that he planned to bring to the February URKE Committee meeting a report on the Graduate School to date, including priorities for the future, strategic thinking and the GS' contribution to other UWE strategies.
Action: NW
- RKEC16.11.27 Asked about the current number of PGR students (which was broadly the same level as that at the Graduate School's inception) Professor Willey explained that the majority of fee waiver students had now completed their studies and that the numbers now represented a more sustainable level, including a higher proportion of ProfDoc students and students externally funded, eg through 3D3, DTA. The previous completion bursary scheme had been discontinued with bursaries now administered through faculties and better controls in place. The current increases in student numbers were in line with the University's research strategy.
- RKEC16.11.28 Professor Ames drew the attention of the Committee an issue on the PASS system, whereby studentships that are 50% funded from external sources generate an apparently very high subsidy. There was a need for greater clarity on this, eg in terms of IP rights. Professor Willey stated that he would look into this.
Action: NW
- RKEC16.11.29 Professor Boddy reported that the Research Strategy Implementation Group (RSIG) had proposed a half day meeting early in the New Year focusing on PG Research, to include members of RSIG, Professor Willey and the four Faculty PGR leads and the Graduate School Manager, Vicky Nash.
Action: RB
- RKEC16.11.30 Professor Willey noted that as HAS had a significantly higher proportion of PGR students than other faculties, consideration was to be given to splitting the role which is currently undertaken by one person, Dr Tim Moss.
Action: NW

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

RKEC16.11.31 There was no other business.

MEETING DATES FOR 2016-17

Wednesday 8th February 2017, 14:00-16:30

Wednesday 5th April 2017, 14:00-16:30

Wednesday 14th June 2017, 14:00-16:30

Actions:

RKEC16.11.05	Professor Willey to refer the issue of governance training to Graduate School Committee for further consideration.	NW
RKEC16.11.15	Professor Boddy to contact the researcher who had made the complaint about UREC confirming his decision on the ethics application.	MB
RKEC16.11.17	Professor Boddy proposed that UREC should work with the Research Governance Manager to devise a complaints and appeals procedure, including the possibility of curtailing the powers of the URKE Committee chair for ethics decisions only.	JK, RB and RR
RKEC16.11.26	Professor Willey to bring a report on the Graduate School to date, including priorities for the future, strategic thinking and the GS' contribution to other UWE strategies to the next URKE Committee meeting	NW
RKEC16.11.28	Professor Willey to look into reporting on PASS of high subsidies relating to 50:50 funded studentships.	NW
RKEC16.11.29	RB to arrange a half day meeting early in the New Year focusing on PG Research, to include members of RSIG, Professor Willey and the four Faculty PGR leads and the Graduate School Manager, Vicky Nash.	RB
RKEC16.11.30	Professor Willey to review the role of PGR Lead in HAS, given the significantly higher proportion of PGR students in the faculty than other faculties.	NW