

University Research Ethics Committee

Terms of Reference

Functions and Responsibilities

- 1.1 University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) is a university committee under the accountability of the Vice-President Research and Enterprise. It reports to the Research Integrity and Governance Committee (RIGC) via the Chair (currently the Vice-President Research and Enterprise), and via the Vice-President to the University Executive Board (UEB).
- 1.2 Its core responsibility is research ethics including promoting, developing, and fostering a culture of responsible and ethical conduct of research amongst the University academic community.
- 1.3 University Research Ethics Committee responsibilities:
 - 1.3.1 Development, oversight and keeping under review the implementation of the University Research Ethics Policy, ethics sub-policies and guidance, and overseeing the University's ethics review process.
 - 1.3.2 Development of policy and guidance with and for the University Faculties in relation to ethical and related issues.
 - 1.3.3 Advising Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs) on ethical issues and relevant procedures, including concerns related to a particular study or other matter(s) and, where appropriate and necessary, adjudicating upon such matters.
 - 1.3.4 With the agreement of the relevant Faculty Dean and UREC Chair to designate a particular Faculty Research Ethics Committee to lead in the development of specific areas of institutional best practice, and to act as the lead committee for certain areas of research.
 - 1.3.5 To receive and review reports from each Faculty Research Ethics Committee as appropriate, including an Annual FREC Report which is to be provided by FREC Chairs at the beginning of each academic year.
 - 1.3.6 To ensure that members of UREC and of Faculty Research Ethics Committees have received, or will receive, appropriate training in ethics related matters.
 - 1.3.7 To report to the appropriate bodies within the University.

Membership

The membership of UREC shall include:

- Vice-President Research and Enterprise (or delegate), (Chair)
- Academic Registrar
- Interim Heads of Research Integrity and Governance:

- Chair of each Faculty Research Ethics Committee:
- Chair of the sub-committee
- Chair of the Animal Committee
- Senior academic with experience in ethics, or a member of an NHS Research Ethics Committee (REC) appointed by the UREC Chair
- Lay/Independent Member x 2
- President of the Students' Union or a representative of the Students' Union

In attendance:

- Research Integrity Officer(s) – as appropriate and as required for specific matters.
- Head of Research Data and Intellectual Property (Library)
- Representatives from other University teams or departments - as appropriate and as required for specific matters.
- Secretariat provided by the Governance Team.

Lay/Independent Members:

1.3.8 A lay member is a volunteer who is independent of the University i.e., an individual who has not studied at, been employed by, or held offices with the University in the last 3 years.

1.3.9 UREC lay members should meet the following criteria:

- (a) Be able to understand key issues in research ethics, especially in relation to research involving human participants and personal data.
- (b) Be able to act independently and impartially and behave responsibly and ethically.
- (c) Be able to contribute to the work of University Research Ethics Committee.
- (d) Have access to a computer/other device with the Internet or be able to access the device provided by the University (e.g., via the University Library) in order access Committee papers and attend meetings (if held via the remote means).

1.3.10 Be able to attend meetings and training sessions during the working day, 3-5 times a year (either in person or via the remote means). Preferably should live within a reasonable geographical proximity to the University (up to 30 miles), however this is not a requirement.

1.3.11 Lay members may be selected and appointed through a nomination or responses to adverts. Appointment is made by the UREC Chair who may, if required, use appropriate selection process. Normally a term of a lay/independent member is 3 years, with the option of up to 2 renewals.

- 1.3.12 Lay members will be offered an annual honorarium of £250 (pro-rata for proportion of a year served), subject to review every 3 years, for their attendance and involvement with UREC. Lay members will be also reimbursed for reasonable expenses e.g., travel, childcare.

Meetings

- 1.4 UREC shall meet 3 times during an academic year. Each meeting should have minutes and agreed actions.
- 1.5 All members are expected to attend all Committee meetings either in person or via the remote means. Where this is not possible, a delegate of appropriate seniority should be appointed to attend the Committee in order to represent the respective Faculty Research Ethics Committee and other Teams/Departments as per Section 2 above.

Quorum

- 1.6 For decision making the quorum shall be at least 6 members. It shall include at least 2 members of academic staff (e.g., Faculty representatives (including FREC Chairs) or the senior academic with experience of ethics), and at least 1 member of Professional Services Staff
- 1.7 If the Committee is not quorate, any decisions made should be ratified by email communication by the required quorum or at a subsequent quorate meeting.

Conflict of Interest Declarations

- 1.8 In line with the University Conflicts of Interest Policy, UREC members must inform the Chair of any relevant conflicts of interests before, or at the beginning of the UREC meeting.
- 1.9 If the Chair has an interest in a matter under consideration by a Committee, a Deputy Chair who does not have a conflict of interest should be appointed to review the conflict and decide about any further steps required.

Reporting

- 1.10 UREC shall report directly via the Vice President (Research and Enterprise) to the RIGC, and indirectly to the Research and Enterprise Executive Group (REEG), UEB, and the University Council and Senate (as necessary or required).