

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE
RESEARCH GOVERNANCE & POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT TO COURT

1. Introduction

Established by the University's Research Committee in 2010, the Research Governance & Policy Sub-Committee operates with the primary objective of ensuring that the governance and policy context for the undertaking of research within the University is optimal. More specifically the Sub-Committee is responsible for:

- reviewing governance processes and associated research and related policy extant at both University and the local level, and identifying need for improvement and development including the involvement of external stakeholders;
- establishing systems which accommodate the needs of good institutional governance, that are externally accountable and which take into account the diversity of the institution's research activities;
- ensuring that institutional research governance processes are transparent and are well communicated throughout the University;
- promoting "buy-in" by facilitating dialogue and dissemination of good and consistent practice across the colleges;
- attempting to minimize the burden of governance and policy demands on research staff commensurate with achieving high levels of internal and external confidence in the University's processes.

The Sub-Committee is chaired by Professor Alan Fairlamb, College of Life Sciences and membership includes staff from across the colleges and the primary areas of research governance activity within the institution, including Safety Services. The Sub-Committee reports to the University Research Committee (URC) with the minutes of its meetings included with URC papers.

The first meeting of the Sub-Committee was on 27 September 2010 and there were three further meetings during 2010/11. At the end of the year members reflected on the usefulness of Sub-Committee proceedings and agreed that a great deal had been achieved in improving the research policy and governance activities of the University. It was also felt that the Sub-Committee provides an important forum to which *ad hoc* research governance matters can be referred to for debate and resolution. The URC welcomed the contribution of the Sub-Committee and it will continue to operate as a standing committee of URC with 3 meetings during the academic year.

It is planned to provide Court with an annual report of Sub-Committee business shortly after the last meeting of each academic year, typically in May, should Court wish to receive this.

2. Summary of Sub-Committee Business

(i) Policy Development and Review

One of the first developments within the Sub-Committee was the drafting of a policy to prevent the acceptance of research or related funding by the University from awarding bodies whose activities are judged to be counter to the common interest and public good (*"Policy to Govern the Acceptance of External Research Funding"*, Policy No. AERF/V1/12.10). The policy does not permit staff and students to accept research funding where the award is associated with unreasonable restrictions on normal academic freedom, including the publication of research results, or from a source which can be considered unethical, immoral or associated with serious ill health. The acceptance of funding from the Tobacco Industry is not permitted (which articulates the University's long-standing position on this matter).

A further policy drafted by the Sub-Committee, with input from Research & Innovation Services, states the University's wish to maximize the societal benefits and impact on global human welfare arising from its basic and translational research endeavour, including within the developing world. The policy states that the University will, as far as is practicable, seek to increase and promote global access at no, or at an affordable, cost to medicines that have been developed by the University and that have the potential to benefit those people most in need, including those in low and middle income (LMI) countries. To give effect to this the University will as far as practicable include appropriate contractual provisions in third party commercial licences and collaboration agreements, and as far as practicable participate in "open access" or "IP pooling" initiatives, which facilitate and encourage low or no cost access by third parties to University intellectual property ("IP"), which may be useful in the development of medicines for those most in need.

The Ethics and Research Governance Policy, last updated in 2005, was produced before the establishment of the Tayside Medical Science Centre (TASC) and was judged to be out of date with current processes and procedures, including policy documents now extant within the TASC domain, and was removed. The standards expected of those carrying out research involving human participants and the obligations and responsibilities regarding ethics and research governance contained within the deleted policy are captured in other policy documents which have been subject to a process of review and update by the Sub-Committee, including the 'Code of Practice for Non-Clinical Research Ethics on Human Participants'

The University's "Code of Good Practice in Research" was previously only available as an appendage to the University's "Code of Policy and Procedures for Investigating and Resolving Allegations of Misconduct in Research". The Sub-Committee decided that the Code of Good Practice in Research should have a more "up-front" and positive presentation within the University's research policy context and should become a stand-alone document. This decision was implemented along with an update to the Code of Practice.

The Sub-Committee reviewed the University's "Policy Statement on Women in Research" which was last updated in 2005. The Sub-Committee agreed that there are now more up to date and sophisticated statements and mechanisms for ensuring that both sexes have equal opportunities to fully develop their careers and balance their work and home life, and it was decided that the policy be removed. The Sub-Committee was in dialogue with Human Resources regarding this matter.

(ii) Confidentiality in Employment Contracts

Working in conjunction with Human Resources the Sub-Committee added wording to the University's standard contract of employment to place an obligation on employees to ensure that the outputs of research and related activity which are confidential to the University are maintained on a confidential basis.

(iii) Use of Cadavers and Cadaveric Materials for Research

Cadavers donated to the University are located within the Centre for Anatomy and Human Identification (CAHID) and are also released to be held on the Ninewells site for limited periods. Cadavers are held under the authority of Professor Roger Soames, the University's licence holder. The cadavers are used for anatomy teaching and for research, including in collaboration with commercial parties. The Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006 amended the Anatomy Act 1984 to cover training or research on a cadaver including transplantation and insertion of prosthetic devices. This, combined with new embalming methods, has extended the research uses of the resource, including within the domain of medical devices. The Sub-Committee discussed the ethical, moral and social context of carrying out research on cadaveric material. It was noted that a new group, led by Professor Roger Soames, had been established to review proposed research uses of cadavers before they are released from the CAHID. In addition PIs using cadaveric material in projects within the College of Medicine, Dentistry & Nursing have applied for an over-arching 5 year NHS Ethics approval certificate and a member of TASC's Clinical Governance Team will sit on the aforementioned new group. The Sub-Committee welcomed the increased level of review of the use of cadaveric material in research and suggested that the University's Project Registration Form (PRF) be amended to specifically record proposed use of such material so as to further promote compliance with the new procedures; the PRF has now been amended.

(iv) Research Governance & Policy Handbook

The Sub-Committee agreed that the likelihood of compliance with research and related policy would be increased if a mechanism existed to help staff and students identify and locate the correct policy to govern their proposed research. It was decided that this would be best served by establishing a web based "Research Governance & Policy Handbook" and which includes a simple "roadmap" system to identify policies relevant to particular research. The web-site is now live and is available at: <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/rqp/>

(v) Reporting to the Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee established a framework for reporting to it from various areas of research governance activity across the institution. The remit of the Sub-Committee is that it is not required to capture detailed information on activities at the local level but rather higher level evidence that sufficient rigour exists in the policies and processes operated by the institution. During 2010/11 reports were received from: the TASC Research Governance Committee (College of Medicine, Dentistry and Nursing/NHS Tayside); Biological Services/Ethical Review Committee (Animals); University Research Ethics Committee; and Safety Services. Overall governance mechanisms were judged to be working well, and policy and process is being kept up to date within a developmental context.

**Professor Alan Fairlamb
Convener
4 November, 2011**