

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE
RESEARCH GOVERNANCE & POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT TO COURT
Academic Year 2011/12

1. Introduction

The primary objective of the Research Governance & Policy Sub-Committee is to ensure 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 and the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). The Sub-Committee meets three times during each academic year and reports to the University Research Committee (URC) with the minutes of its meetings included with URC papers.

2. Summary of Sub-Committee Business

(i) Policy Development and Review

The Sub-Committee has instigated and overseen policy developments and reviews in the following areas during the reporting period:

Code of Practice for Non-Clinical Research Ethics on Human Participants: A review of the Code of Practice and associated processes, instigated by the Sub-Committee in the previous academic year, was completed and the updated Code uploaded to a dedicated website¹ created for the University Research Ethics Sub-Committee (UREC). The process for supporting and reviewing applications to UREC for ethical approval of non-clinical research projects involving human participants was also updated and added to the website.

Policy on Guest Authorship and Ghostwriting: Guest authorship is the practice of including an individual in a research publication who has not made a substantive contribution to the underlying research. Ghostwriting is the intentional failure to identify an individual in a

¹ <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/main/research/ethics/>

publication who has made a substantive contribution to either the writing of the publication or the underlying research. A new policy on Guest Authorship and Ghostwriting was created to make it clear that the University does not allow: 1) its staff or students to assume guest authorship on publications; 2) publications including its staff and students as authors to be ghostwritten by any party (subject to the understanding that professional writers may be employed in certain circumstances with appropriate acknowledgement).

Policy to Govern the Management of Electronic Research Data: This policy has been developed in response to the increased requirement from funders, in particular the research councils, to manage and provide open access to research data. The benefits of this include increasing the visibility of research, allowing published results to be independently verified and allowing re-use of data for research not foreseen by the initial investigators. The policy establishes a set of principles to govern the management of data arising from the research activities of the University, covering areas such as data management plans and deposition in appropriate external or internal repositories; it does not cover legacy data held in a non-electronic format, data from research that is commercially funded where restrictions on data use apply or NHS patient data and clinical data already governed by separate policies. The policy represents the first step on the University's Research Data Management Roadmap², which outlines the activities and planning underway at the University to fully meet the expectations of funders regarding access to and management of research data by 2015.

Open Access Publications: In view of the rapidly evolving movement towards making research outputs freely available to anyone who wishes to read or use them, without payment of a subscription to an academic journal or a charge for downloading an article, the Sub-Committee recognised the need to develop an Open Access Policy for the University. The requirement for this policy was highlighted by the subsequent publication of the report of the Working Group on Expanding Access to Published Research Findings (the Finch report³) in June 2012, which recommended moving towards the 'author pays' model of publishing research papers in journals, and parallel developments by a number of research funders which require grant recipients to publish their outputs in compliance with their open access policies. The Sub-Committee therefore recommended that, subject to approval by University Research Committee, an Open Access policy be developed and this has been progressed as one of the first items of business of the 2012/13 academic year.

Code of Practice for the Use of Animals in Teaching and Research: The Sub-Committee provided feedback on a revised version of this Code, developed by the Director of Biological Services, and agreed that, in the interests of transparency and to ensure that the policy is promoted to staff, the final version of the Code should be added to the Research Governance and Policy Handbook, subject to agreement by the Ethical Review Committee. The Code will be subject to further revision in January 2013 to take account of upcoming changes to the legislation covering this area.

(ii) Consultation on Concordat to Support Research Integrity

In May 2012, the Sub-Committee developed the University's response to a sector wide invitation from Universities UK to provide feedback on a draft of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, which seeks to provide a national framework for good research conduct and its governance. The final version of the Concordat was launched in July 2012, and will be helpful in informing internal reviews of policies and procedures, and identifying the need for future developments to promote research integrity in the University.

² <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/library/research/datamanagement/>

³ <http://www.researchinfonet.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Finch-Group-report-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>

(iii) Research Governance & Policy Handbook

The new and updated policies and processes developed during the reporting period have been uploaded to the web based Research Governance and Policy Handbook⁴, which includes a simple roadmap system to help staff identify policies relevant to their particular research. Links to and from the new University Research Ethics Sub-Committee website have also been incorporated. It is intended to actively promote the Handbook to the University's research community.

(v) Reporting to the Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee's remit does not require it to capture detailed information on activities at the local level but rather to satisfy itself, by reviewing higher level evidence, that sufficient rigour exists in the policies and processes operated by the institution. The Sub-Committee therefore receives and considers annual reports from the various areas of research governance operating across the University to ensure that the appropriate policies and processes are in place. During 2011/12 reports were received from: the Ethical Review Committee (Animals); Tayside Medical Science Centre (TASC) Research Governance Committee; University Health and Safety Committee; and the University Research Ethics Committee. Based on the information submitted, the Sub-Committee agreed that overall governance mechanisms appeared to be working well, with appropriate policies and processes in place.

3. Research Councils Funding Assurance Programme Visit

The achievements of the Sub-Committee over the past two years should help to provide reassurance during the research support audit by Research Councils UK in February 2013 that research governance in the University is up-to-date with current legislation, ethically appropriate and fit-for-purpose.

Professor Alan Fairlamb
Convener
28 November, 2012

⁴ <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/rgp/>