

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE
RESEARCH GOVERNANCE & POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT TO COURT
Academic Year 2013/14

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, Tayside Medical Science Centre (TASC) Research Governance Committee, the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) and the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee. 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.

This report summarises the activities of the Sub-Committee during academic year 2013/14.

2. Summary of Sub-Committee Business

(i) Policy Development and Review

Open Access Policy: Given the rapidly evolving nature of developments in UK government and funder policies the Open Access Policy approved in session 2012-13 requires regular review. In the 2013-14 session HEFCE announced, in their Policy for Open Access in the Post-2014 REF (Research Excellence Framework), that all journal articles and conference proceedings with an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) accepted for publication after 1 April 2016 must be open access in order to be eligible to be submitted to a future REF. To meet this requirement the final author version of an output would need to be deposited within 3 months of the date of acceptance. In view of these changes, the Sub-Committee agreed that the Open Access Policy should be revised, with the revisions to be approved and implemented in the 2014-15 session to ensure the development of good practice for compliance with the requirements by the start date.

Code of Practice for the Use of Animals in Teaching and Research: The National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement & Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs)'s ARRIVE (Animal Research: Reporting of In Vivo Experiments) guidelines¹ were endorsed and this endorsement formally communicated to NC3Rs via the Principal's Office. The Code of Practice for the Use of Animals in Teaching and Research was updated to include a statement that authors and reviewers of manuscripts should abide by the ARRIVE guidelines, to ensure that experiments involving animals are published in sufficient detail for their validity to be assessed. This is consistent with the University's role as a signatory to the Concordat on Openness in Animal Research², launched in May 2014, which commits its signatories to supporting clear, transparent and open communication about the use of animals in scientific research.

Information on Clinical Trials: Information on Clinical Trials on the Research Governance & Policy website was reviewed to ensure it was up to date. Following discussions with the Senior Research Governance Manager in TASC a number of amendments to the text and annexes of the Research Governance & Policy Handbook (policy checks 9 and 10) were approved and implemented.

Potential for Dual-Use of Research: A letter from the charity Medact, regarding the University's position on Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE)-funded research, highlighted the potential for dual-use of research, whereby research intended to benefit society is misused for harmful purposes such as the development of nuclear weapons. The Sub-Committee recognised that the potential for dual-use of research was not limited to a single funder or area of research and agreed that the internal Project Registration Form (PRF) for grant applications and the Policy to Govern the Acceptance of External Research Funding should be strengthened in the coming academic year to ensure that researchers took personal responsibility for considering not only the potential benefits, but also any potentially harmful impacts, of their proposed research. The planned amendments to the University's policy and procedures were communicated to Medact.

(ii) Concordat to Support Research Integrity

The University's Sub-Committee has previously reported that the University's internal policy framework is already broadly consistent with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, whilst recognizing that there are always areas for improvement. One such area is researcher training where there is an opportunity to further promote researcher awareness and engagement with the University's research governance and ethics framework and to support and strengthen the understanding and application of research integrity issues by researchers. During the reporting period, the Sub-Committee invited the Researcher Development & Projects Officer from Organisational & Professional Development to detailed discussions of the options for additional researcher training. The preferred option was the provision of six 10-minute videos addressing various aspects of research ethics and integrity. An independent research-publication, research-integrity and peer-review specialist, who has had roles as a Council Member, Director and Trustee of the Committee on Publication Ethics, has been commissioned to produce the videos which are due for completion and launch in 2015.

(iii) Research Misconduct

The University was involved in one formal investigation of alleged research misconduct within the 2013/14 academic year, involving a former member of staff. This was a joint investigation led by another University which had not reached a conclusion by the end of the academic year.

¹ <https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/arrive-guidelines>

² <http://www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/policy/concordat-openness-animal-research/>

(iv) 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. Reports for calendar year 2013 were received from the TASC Research Governance Committee; University Health and Safety Sub-Committee; UREC; and the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee.

The Sub-Committee approved the reports from the TASC Research Governance Committee and the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee, noting that the policies and processes reported for these two areas were fit for purpose. The Sub-Committee accepted the report from the University Health and Safety Sub-Committee, noting that a key activity over the following 12 months would be the response to an external review carried out in February 2013, the plans for which were being discussed by the Senior Management Team. The on-going review of 'out of hours' arrangements and poor attendance by Principal Investigators at health and safety training events were also noted. The Sub-Committee also accepted the report from UREC, noting that a review of the Committee's structure (main committee and sub-committees) and operation was required to ensure effective and efficient review of ethics applications. Changes to the operation and structure of UREC were subsequently discussed and agreed by the Sub-Committee; once implemented, and following appropriate training, these changes will see ethics sub-committees in Schools which conduct non-clinical research using human participants taking greater responsibility in reviewing applications for ethical approval, with the main committee responsible for establishing, implementing and carrying out the overarching governance and audit function and reviewing any applications for ethics approval that individual sub-committees are unable to reach agreement on. The changes to the structure and operation of UREC will be finalised once the new School structure is known.

**Professor Alan Fairlamb
Convener
02 February, 2015**