

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE
RESEARCH GOVERNANCE & POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT TO COURT
Academic Year 2015/16

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 was chaired by Professor Alan Fairlamb, School of Life Sciences, in the 2015/16 academic year and membership includes staff from across the Schools 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 & Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) with the minutes of its meetings included with RKEC papers.

This report summarises the activities of the Sub-Committee during academic year 2015/16.

2. Summary of Sub-Committee Business

(i) Policy Development and Review

Consistent with the commitment of the Sub-Committee to regularly review institutional research policies, the Committee considered whether the following policies required revision:

Policy on Guest Authorship and Ghostwriting: The Sub-Committee agreed that the policy remained fit for purpose subject to amending the initial contact details to reflect changes to staff.

Policy and Procedures for Investigating and Resolving Allegations of Misconduct in Research: Following the implementation of the new School structure references to the 'Head of Department' in the policy were updated to 'Dean of School'. This policy had been reviewed in the 2014-15 academic year and no further amendments were considered necessary.

Policy to Govern the Management of Research Data: Minor changes to the policy were approved to clarify the term “data stewardship” and that the policy was not applicable to NHS data as a whole (rather than just NHS patient data) already governed by separate policies.

The Sub-Committee also discussed and agreed the format and key areas that a new overarching Research Publications Policy, building on existing policies relating to publication such as those addressing Open Access and Guest Authorship and Ghostwriting, should cover. Development of this policy will continue into academic session 2016/17 taking account of progress in the development of a UK Scholarly Communications Licence on which the University had provided feedback.

(ii) Concordat to Support Research Integrity

Framework for Ethical Review and Approval of Non-Clinical Research: It is vital that the University has appropriate frameworks in place for ethical approval of research involving human participants (consistent with commitment 2 of the Concordat). In 2014/15 the Sub-Committee had agreed to devolve greater responsibility for review of applications for ethical approval of non-clinical research involving human participants to School-level sub-committees with the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) taking overarching responsibility for development, review and implementation of procedures as well as introducing audit procedures. In 2015/16, following consideration of the numbers of applications referred directly to the Convener of UREC and those considered by local committees, the Sub-Committee agreed that the new committee structure would comprise of three single School Research Ethics Committees (Art & Design; Education & Social Work; Science & Engineering) and three joint School Research Ethics Committees (Medicine and Life Sciences, Nursing & Health Sciences and Dentistry; Social Sciences and Humanities) with UREC acting as an oversight committee.

Researcher Training: The Sub-Committee continued to oversee the development of an online training resource for research integrity (consistent with commitment 3 of the Concordat), in conjunction with the University’s Organisational and Professional Development Unit and an external expert. The resource was largely completed in the reporting period and hosted on the University’s Virtual Learning Environment with support from the Library & Learning Centre. Sub-Committee members participated in testing including providing feedback on the videos and accompanying quizzes. Feedback from volunteers who had watched the videos was also provided by two other universities. Subsequent to finalization of all appropriate permissions the resource was scheduled to be piloted with a small number of PhD students in August 2016 and launched in conjunction with research integrity workshops in October 2016. The Sub-Committee recommended that the training should be made mandatory for new postgraduate research students with completion required prior to the upgrade process.¹

(iii) Research Misconduct

The University initiated one formal investigation of potential research misconduct within the 2015/16 academic year; this involved a member of staff. The investigation continued into the subsequent academic year and hence the outcome will be included in the report for 2016/17.

(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

¹ The Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee ratified this recommendation at its meeting on 5th May 2016.

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 2015 were received from the University Health, Safety and Welfare Committee; TASC Research Governance Committee; University Research Ethics Committee; and the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee:

Health, Safety and Welfare Committee: The Committee had changed its name to include 'welfare', thereby emphasising that issues relating to quality of life were within its remit, in addition to areas such as accidents. One policy (Incident Reporting and Investigation) had been updated during the reporting period. The area of governance was adopting a hub and spoke model and was in the process of appointing specialist Health and Safety Officers within each School who would report back into the Health, Safety & Welfare Committee. Safety Services as a team would act as Health & Safety Advisors for lower risk Directorates (higher risk Directorates such as Estates and Buildings already had their own) but hoped to identify local advisors in the future. At the time of reporting (January 2016), an internal audit had just been completed, the actions from which would be addressed during the coming year. The Sub-Committee approved the report.

TASC Research Governance Committee: Following the recent appointment of a new R&D Director for NHS Tayside, the Committee would be using the transition period to take stock and refresh the approach of this area of research governance activity. All policies were reviewed on a rolling basis by Governance Managers, with consultation and ratification of policies by the TASC Governance Board. Five of eight policies were reviewed in 2015 and no new policies were introduced. It was noted that recently approval of policies had been conducted mainly by e-mail as opposed to formal meetings. In this respect the Convener of the Sub-Committee emphasised that the TASC Research Governance Committee needs to be clear about how approval of policies is evidenced and was assured that this would be considered when refreshing the approach to the operation of the Committee. It was noted that one of the key roles of the Committee relates to MHRA² inspections and that the MHRA would perform a limited new inspection in 2016 as part of a programme to inspect all clinical trials units between 2014 and 2017. The Sub-Committee approved the report.

University Research Ethics Committee (UREC): UREC (as indicated above) would now act as an oversight committee with the review and approval of ethics applications being devolved to six School Research Ethics Committees (SRECs) which will report to the parent committee. This strategic development was supported by the Deans of Schools following a presentation by the Convener of UREC in December 2015. Deans and Associate Deans for Research would be asked to nominate members for the SRECs with the aim of fully implementing the new ethics structure by August 2016. UREC would continue to report to the University Research Governance & Policy Sub-Committee. No new policies were introduced and no policies were reviewed and updated in 2015. The Sub-Committee approved the report.

Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee: All (previously separate) policies had now been integrated into a single Code of Practice for the Use of Animals in Research and Teaching, which was non-negotiable. A formal annual review of the Committee, to monitor performance, had been agreed to determine compliance; monitoring compliance was within the remit of the new full-time University Veterinary Surgeon, a former Home Office Inspector who came from a scientific background. The Committee had two scientific members; if a scientific member did not possess the required expertise to review a particular project they would seek expert advice outwith the Committee. To promote openness, the Committee had also recruited a student member (a postgraduate holding a Home Office Licence). The Committee reports to Court after each of its quarterly meetings. There were three approaches to reviewing and

² Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency

approving projects: those applying to work with animals for the first time would be interviewed at a meeting of the Committee; applications to continue with an established programme of research would be approved by e-mail; and relatively small changes to projects would be fast-tracked by a small sub-group of the Committee using e-mail. The Sub-Committee approved the report.

**Professor Margaret Smith
Acting Convener
03 February, 2017**