

Faculty Research Ethics Committees: Terms of Reference

Purpose

Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs) are accountable via the relevant Faculty Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee to Faculty Board for the overall operation and management of research ethics within the Faculty and to the Research Ethics Sub-Committee (RESC) on matters and procedures concerning the ethical protection of human participants in research as applied to individual cases.

Membership

Chair appointed as such by the Faculty Associate Dean (Research and Knowledge Exchange) in discussion with the Chair of the Research Ethics Sub-Committee

Deputy Chair

At least one person who has been trained in safeguarding

Associate Dean (Research and Knowledge Exchange) (optional member)

Each Department will have at least two representatives to include the appropriate Associate Head of Department (RKE) or a Research Centre Director with a research remit

Two members from other Faculties or Services

At least one person not employed by UWE

In attendance

Committee Officer

The membership can also include members in attendance, these members do not have voting rights. The Chair has discretion to determine whether and how many post-holders or other individuals may attend a meeting in a non-voting capacity.

The membership can include up to two co-opted members with voting rights. Co-opted members are appointed by the Committee in consultation with the Chair.

Responsibility

Faculty Research Ethics Committees are responsible for:

- Disseminating guidelines produced by the Research Ethics Sub-Committee (RESC) on the proper conduct of research investigations in order to promote good ethical practice;
- Reviewing and approving, where appropriate, applications from members of the Faculty to carry out research involving human participants;
- Reviewing and approving applications from members of the Faculty (staff and students) to carry out research which may not directly involve human participants but which raises significant ethical issues relating to the impact on the environment or society. For multi-faculty research projects ethical approval is to be sought from the FREC of the lead investigator/project manager (or where the lead investigator does not sit within a UWE faculty from RESC);

- Monitoring and auditing research investigations carried out by undergraduate and postgraduate students and staff within the Faculty with respect to ethical practice;
- Encouraging a culture within the Faculty which recognises the central importance of ethical considerations in the design and performance of research;
- Identifying and advising RESC of appropriate training on ethical review for members of FREC;
- Advising on and, where necessary, complying with external regulations and/or guidance on the ethical conduct of research with particular reference to the research culture within the Faculty;
- Reporting to RESC annually or more frequently if required, and making the report available for discussion at Faculty Research and Knowledge Exchange Committees. Each FREC will appoint a named member of staff, normally the Chair of the Committee, to act as the designated officer with responsibility for reporting to the RESC. This designated officer will also be a member of RESC. The FREC designated officer will conduct an annual review of the FREC operations, and report to the RESC on the findings;
- Referring cases to RESC that require advice or opinion. Referral to RESC for a review will be in exceptional circumstances only;
- Ensuring active consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion in the conduct of its business;
- Evaluating annually its own performance to ensure academic governance arrangements enhance institutional performance and add value;
- Ensuring any task-and-finish groups or special interest groups it creates can discharge their functions, having Terms of Reference with clear responsibilities and delegated authorities.

Accountability

Faculty Research Ethics Committees are accountable to the relevant Faculty Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (FRKEC) and report to it on:

- The operation and management of research ethics in the Faculty and matters concerning the ethical protection of human participants in research;
- Proposals for new policies and frameworks within its area of competence;
- Proposals for changes to its terms of reference, membership or priorities or to those of any sub-groups established to support delivery of its terms of reference;
- Any matters or priority areas referred to it for action by the Chair of FRKEC.

Each FREC are also accountable to, take direction from and provide reports to the Research Ethics Sub-Committee (RESC) on the management of individual cases and on other issues and developments within its area of competence, including providing regular and ad hoc reports on matters which require University-level consideration and developing/monitoring action plans as appropriate.

Each FREC provides an annual assurance report to the relevant FRKEC, through which it demonstrates how it has fulfilled its Terms of Reference and assesses its own effectiveness and that of its Sub-Committees. The requirements for the report will be specified by Faculty Board, in consultation with RKEC.

Administration

Faculty Research Ethics Committees will meet a minimum of four times a year. The duration of meetings will be no longer than three hours. The Quorum for meetings is one-third of members eligible to attend.

Co-opted members will serve a maximum three-year term.

A committee officer will be identified to support the Chair in the effective and efficient conduct of the Committee's business.

Review

The Terms of Reference for Faculty Research Ethics Committees will be reviewed annually to ensure they are still relevant, decision-making structures are effective and FRECs can effectively discharge their duties. As part of the review consideration should be undertaken to how the Committee can improve and better integrate practices which support equality, diversity and inclusivity.