

Ethical Approval Appeal Process

The role of Ethics Committees (UREC and FRECs) is to make sure that all University of the West of England (UWE) research projects are conducted to the highest ethical standards. The Committees have regard for the need to protect human and animal participants and their data, to ensure ethical issues are well considered, and to ensure that the University and its projects align with *The Concordat to Support Research Integrity*. The Committees aim to provide a high standard of ethical expertise and professionalism, promoting an open and supportive research culture at UWE.

1. Grounds for making an appeal

Appeals against final decisions of any of the University's (UWE's) ethics committees (UREC and FRECs) will be permitted on the following procedural grounds:

- 1.1 That there were procedural irregularities within the review process that could have influenced the outcome of the application; or
- 1.2 That there is evidence of inadequate review, prejudice, bias or adverse review of methodology beyond that which relates to ethics within the review process which demonstrably influenced the decision.

If the University Research Ethics Committee are of the view that an Appeal does not fall within any of the grounds specified above, they shall dismiss the Appeal and shall inform the applicant accordingly.

2. Process for making an Appeal

- 2.1 In the first instance the matter should be raised informally with the Chair or Deputy Chair of the ethics committee which scrutinised the application by email to researchethics@uwe.ac.uk.
- 2.2 If the matter cannot be resolved informally by the relevant ethics committee, the matter should be raised formally with the Chair of UREC unless the scrutinising committee was UREC, in which case the matter should be raised formally with the Chair of the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (URKE).
- 2.3 All appeals must provide the name of the applicant on the original ethics approval application, the Director of Studies or the Supervisor's name where the original ethical approval application was made by a student, and the ethics committee application number. The relevant grounds and

supporting information should be sent to researchethics@uwe.ac.uk, noting 'Appeal' in the email subject line.

- 2.4 Appeals must be made within ten working days of the application for ethical approval being notified of the final ethical approval decision, or otherwise becoming aware of the alleged procedural irregularity.

3. Process for Investigating an Appeal

- 3.1 Most cases will be able to be resolved by the relevant committee Chair. In complex cases the Chair or Deputy Chair may convene a small panel (usually three UWE ethics committee members and/or members co-opted for their expertise from within or outside UWE) to assist them in reaching a decision. Members must not have a close association with the individual making the Appeal, or with the project that is the subject of the Appeal. The Officer for the Panel will normally be the Officer to UREC/URKE, unless there is reason for an alternate, who will be drawn from within RBI.
- 3.2 The Chair (with the assistance of the Panel where the Chair considers it necessary) will investigate the Appeal, and will normally complete its work within twenty working days of its receipt.
- 3.3 The deliberations of the Chair and the Panel will be confidential. However, the Chair/Panel is at liberty to consult, in confidence, anyone it deems appropriate to conduct its work. The Chair/Panel may also request any other evidence it deems necessary including a request to interview any UWE ethics committee member.
- 3.4 The Chair and/or the Panel will confine their investigation to the matter that is raised as the subject of the appeal or the complaint.
- 3.5 The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing, usually within thirty working days of receipt of the Appeal.
- 3.6 If the applicant remains unsatisfied with the Chair's decision, the Appeal will be referred to the Chair of the URKE who will make a decision. The URKE Chair's decision cannot be further appealed.
- 3.7 Appeals and their outcomes will be reported to UREC and the relevant FREC committees

Professor Lauren Devine, Chair – University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

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