

UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE
UNIVERSITY ETHICS COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2011

INTRODUCTION

The University Ethics Committee (UEC), together with its associated Departmental Ethics Committees (DECs) and School Ethics Committees (SECs) in the HASS Faculty, was established to consider general ethical issues relating to the University's teaching and research when such activity involves investigations on human beings. It aims to provide impartial advice to participants and investigators and to protect the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of all actual and potential participants. The UEC is the body responsible for giving ethical approval for investigations. Ethical approval, together with insurance cover and sponsorship approval, must be in place before any such investigation can start.

This paper represents the annual report from the University Ethics Committee for 2011. Information on policy developments, approval of applications, monitoring of projects, training, internal and external challenges and risk management is provided in the paper. Research and Knowledge Exchange Services (RKES) took over management of the UEC from Corporate Services in February 2010. During the period covered by this Report, the Secretariat was managed by Louise McKean (with Helen Baigrie in the second half of 2011), with support from Carol Badger. Currently, the Secretariat role is managed by Helen Baigrie with support from Murray Dickson, both of RKES.

The UEC was supported with respect to insurance by Aileen Stevenson from the Finance Office. Gillian Dobbin took over that role in Autumn 2011.

Convener of UEC is Mrs Elizabeth Condie, who has been on UEC for nine years, six of them as Convener.

This paper will be considered by Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee at its meeting on 08 May 2012.

1. PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS

The UEC does not have specific targets, but there are a number of areas of activity which are essential to the effective and efficient operation of the UEC and which are monitored. These include:

ONGOING ACTIVITIES:

2. Code of Practice

The 'Code of Practice on Investigations Involving Human Beings' was significantly revised in 2009. A sub-group of UEC was formed in late 2011 to undertake another major revision to the Code of Practice to incorporate changes to legislation, University processes and any other pertinent issues. It is envisaged that this will be finalised in the latter half of 2012.

3. Website

The UEC website continues to be regularly updated and improved by the UEC Secretariat with useful advice, submission deadlines and key documents such as the Code of Practice and Application Form clearly highlighted. The UEC website is the principle source of information for applicants and is promoted as the key source of information on ethics to staff and students. The UEC has a presence on the R&KE Portal; the UEC information on the Portal has been refreshed in the last few months.

4. Training

Louise McKean and Helen Baigrie attended an NHS-run workshop 'Submitting a Successful NHS Research Ethics Application' in October 2011.

An Ethics Workshop 'A Researcher's Guide' was run by UEC Secretariat and some UEC members in November 2011. The workshop was aimed at early career researchers and was well attended.

Another workshop for HASS part-time postgraduate students was run by the UEC Secretariat as part of the HASS 'Transferable Skills' Programme. (Nov 11) It also was well-attended.

5. AREC

The University has continued its membership subscription to AREC - the Association for Research Ethics Committees. UEC Management has arranged electronic access for all UEC members to all AREC documents.

6. Application process

In early 2012, Murray Dickson of the UEC Secretariat made improvements to the Application Form, which could sometimes crash causing applicants to lose unsaved information. The UEC and UEC Secretariat continue to discuss the development of an on-line ethics application process with Information Services (IS). It is anticipated that IS might present progress on the online version of the form to the UEC on 31 May 2012.

7. HASS ethics procedure

The HASS Faculty was established in August 2010 and its Schools structure led to the introduction of SECs, rather than DECAs, which are operated in the other three Faculties. The Convener and UEC Secretariat invested considerable time consulting with HASS staff on refinements to procedures for the new Faculty. The new processes for HASS became more embedded during 2011; ongoing improvements will continue to be developed. The new procedures for HASS applicants are highlighted clearly on the UEC website. These new processes will be incorporated into the revised Code of Practice due in 2012.

8. Approval of Applications

The UEC considered a total of 53 applications in 2011, of which 50 were approved. Of the remainder, two were withdrawn and one was devolved to the pertinent SEC. This total compares with 38 applications received during the previous period (2010). Additionally, 12 NHS applications were approved by the Convener on behalf of UEC during 2011, following approval from NHS itself. To date during 2012, a total of 15 applications have been considered at UEC, two of which have decisions outstanding, pending amendments.

9. Monitoring of Projects

The UEC monitors the progress of each of the applications which is approved by it, both annually and at the end of each protocol.

10. Monitoring of Departmental Ethics Committees

The UEC also monitors the activities of all the DECs and SECs on an annual basis. The DECs/SECs are required to provide an annual report to the UEC each year summarising the progress with individual applications and providing a formal opportunity to raise relevant issues with the UEC. This allows the UEC to keep abreast of any concerns that DECs/SECs may have.

The annual monitoring forms for 2011 have been issued. Following the restructuring of the HASS Faculty, the Research and Knowledge Exchange Team (RaKET) within HASS has taken on the reporting responsibility for HASS SECs.

Any comments from DECs/SECs will be noted and acted upon where appropriate. Any outstanding reports will be followed up.

11. CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

The UEC has had to acquaint itself with re-structuring of the jobs framework – this has proved particularly important in relation to the abolition of the Ordinance 16 term, as previously, Chief Investigators had to be Ordinance 16 staff. Student applications are becoming more numerous, particularly in HASS. As Supervisors are required to be Chief Investigator on students' ethics applications, it was necessary for UEC to investigate what the equivalent of Ordinance 16 is now, and what is acceptable to the insurers regarding risk. This was investigated, in consultation with HR and the insurance brokers, and resolved.

On a related issue, a small minority of Supervisors is reluctant to take on the Chief Investigator role on students' ethics applications. Acting on advice from the University's insurers, UEC is confident that it can, and must, continue to insist that the Supervisor takes on the Chief Investigator role.

All such changes will be incorporated into the revised Code of Practice and Application Form

12. UNIVERSITY ETHICS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Mrs Elizabeth Condie, who has served the UEC for nine years, six of them as Convener, has confirmed that she will demit office this year (2012) and will chair the UEC for the last time in July 2012. There are currently four Vice-Convenors supporting the work of the UEC: Dr Steve Kelly, Professor Niamh Nic Daeid, Dr Phil Riches and Mr Douglas Blyth. Mr Blyth is a solicitor and a Lay Member. Dr Kelly will take on the Convener role from August 2012.

Professor Donald Christie resigned from the UEC in 2011, due to pressure of other work commitments. Dr Helen Marwick joined the UEC as his replacement in January 2012.

It is expected that at least one Lay Member and possibly two External Members will demit office this year (2012). An advertisement was placed in the Herald newspaper seeking applicants for Lay/External Membership. A very good response was received and Mrs

Condie and Dr Kelly will conduct interviews in May 2012. The membership of the UEC in 2011 is included as Annex 1.

13. RISK MANAGEMENT

The UEC takes risk management very seriously and risk assessment is a constant part of its work, as members evaluate potential risks to human participants and the potential benefit of the research in their consideration of each application. Individual risk assessments for each ethics application are carried out by the Secretariat Manager who also confirms if the University will sponsor each project. A representative from Finance is in attendance at each UEC meeting and this representative liaises with the University's insurers to establish whether sufficient cover is in place for each application. Researchers must not commence their work until all aspects of this process are confirmed. This is confirmed in all email contact with researchers.

The UEC Secretariat consulted Safety Services on which, if any, changes to references to Health and Safety and Risk Management were required in the Code of Practice. Very useful advice was given by Safety Services staff, in relation to current recommendations on risk assessment as well as Health and Safety. The Code of Practice and Application Form will be updated to include, amongst other points, information for applicants that the University's Risk Management Framework document should be consulted and use of the risk-rating tool within it applied.

14. BUDGET

The UEC has a running costs account with the budget currently (in April 2012) standing at £6,975. The budget can be used by members to attend appropriate training events. The recent advertisement for Lay/External members in the Herald newspaper was funded through the UEC budget.

15. NEXT STEPS

A copy of this report will be provided to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee for approval at its 08 May meeting

**ANNEX 1
UEC MEMBERSHIP 2011**

Name	Category/Faculty	Date Appointed	Membership ends
Convener			
Ms E Condie (Retiring as Convener of UEC in July 12, to be replaced by Dr S Kelly)	National Centre	01.09.03	31.07.12
Internal Members			
Professor J Blackie	Law School	01.05.05	31.07.11
Dr C Burns	HRM	01.08.08	31.07.11
Prof D Christie (Left in 2011, replaced by Dr H Marwick)	Childhood & Primary Studies	01.09.05	31.07.11
Ms L Steckley	Social Work	01.09.09	31.07.12
Dr J Johnston	SIPBS	01.03.08	31.07.13
Dr S Kelly (Convener from August 12)	Psychology	01.08.06	31.07.12
Professor N NicDaeid	Forensic Science	01.09.03	31.07.12
Dr P Riches	Bioengineering	01.08.07	31.07.13
Dr James Windmill	Electrical & Electronic Engineering	01.06.10	31.05.13
External Members			
Dr J Bunney (Retiring from UEC in July 12)	Chief Pharmacist (Retired)	01.11.04	31.07.13
Dr H Gray (Retiring from UEC in July 12)	Student Health Service Consultant, GRI (retired)	01.10.00	31.07.13
Lay Members			
Mr D Blyth	Lay	01.11.06	31.07.13
Mr C W Turner (Retiring from UEC in July 12)	Lay	01.10.04	31.07.13
Mrs M Whitehead	Lay	01.04.07	31.07.13