

**UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE**  
**UNIVERSITY ETHICS COMMITTEE**

**ANNUAL REPORT FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2017-18**

**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 UEC for 2017-18. Information on policy developments, approval of applications, monitoring of projects, training, and risk management is provided in the report. Research and Knowledge Exchange Services (RKES) is responsible for providing the UEC Secretariat. During academic year 2017-18 Angelique Laverty, RKES Administrator, undertook the UEC Secretariat role and minutes were taken by Andrew MacLellan. Liam McMunnigall in the Finance Office undertook confirmations of insurance cover for the studies seen by UEC and by Departmental and School Ethics Committees.

The UEC Convener during 2017-18 was Dr Steve Kelly, School of Psychological Sciences and Health. Dr Kelly's second term of office ended in July 2018. The Convener is Professor Philip Winn, SIPBS

Currently, (July 2018) Vice-Conveners are:

- Dr Helen Marwick      School of Education
- Ms Karyn Ross        Biomedical Engineering
- Dr Laura Steckley    School of Social Work & Social Policy
- Dr Barbara West       Lay Member

This report will be considered by Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee at its meeting on 4 September 2018.

## **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.

## **2. Code of Practice**

The 'Code of Practice on Investigations Involving Human Beings' is periodically revised to incorporate changes to legislation, University processes and other relevant issues. Rather than have a major review of the Code of Practice every few years, revisions are made on a continuing basis. For that reason, it was decided not to do a print run of the Code, but instead to make it available only online, via the Ethics website. Clearly, it is necessary to number each iteration of the Code and to alert staff when substantive revisions have occurred. The current edition is the eighth.

During 2017-18, the UEC formed a working group to update the Code in line with GDPR. Working closely with Information Governance Unit, the group is drafting new Participant information Sheets, Privacy Notices and guidance notes for applicants.

## **3. Website**

The Ethics website [www.strath.ac.uk/ethics](http://www.strath.ac.uk/ethics) is regularly updated by the UEC Secretariat with useful advice, submission deadlines and key documents. The Ethics website is the principal source of information for applicants and is promoted as the key source of information on ethics to staff and students. The website also has a presence on the R&KE Portal.

The current application form and guidelines on how to complete the form feature on the website.

## **4. Training**

The following training activities were undertaken:

Training supplied by UEC:

Two half-day training sessions were run by UEC, in November 2017 and in January 2018, under the Researcher Development Programme, for all researchers. Other attendees were new UEC members, members of Departmental/School Ethics Committees and some Professional Services staff with an interest in or some responsibility for ethics matters. The sessions were presented by Dr Steve Kelly, UEC Convener and by Ms Shirley Andrews, External Member of UEC. The training sessions included valuable contributions on Data Management from Mr Andrew MacLellan and Ms Marie Henderson, Research Data Support Officers in RKES.

The Department of Biomedical Engineering requested a presentation on ethics as part of its Clinical Awareness Training Day for EngD students in November 2017. The ethics training session was presented by Mrs Shirley Andrews, an External Member of UEC.

Further training events are planned for 2018/19..

Conveners of Departmental Ethical Committees (DECs) and School Ethics Committee (SECs) have an open invitation to attend UEC as observers. Some have taken up this opportunity.

UEC also ran training sessions specifically for members of Department and School Ethics Committees. Following emails sent to all HoDs, the sessions were run following RKEC's approval of UEC's request that new members of DECs/SECs should be required to attend such a training course, and to attend at least one UEC meeting

## **5. Strathclyde's Membership of AfRE (Association for Research Ethics)**

The University has continued its membership subscription to AfRE. The UEC Secretariat has arranged electronic access to AfRE documents, including the Research Ethics Review Journal, for all UEC members.

AfRE has amalgamated with ARMA (Association for Research Managers and Administrators) and, due to the re-organisation, there was no Annual Conference /AGM in 2017. The Convener of UEC usually attends this.

## **6. Review and Approval of Applications**

UEC meets once per month, on the first Thursday of the month. The papers for each meeting, and a Sharepoint link, are distributed to members so that the members receive the papers/link at least a week before the meeting.

At the meeting, one member leads on an application and then UEC discusses the application and agrees on a response to be sent by email to the applicant, once the Minutes for that meeting have been approved by the Convener.

The options open to UEC in its response to applicants, following review, are:

- Approval
- Rejection
- Request for re-submission
- Approval by Convener's Action subject to revisions to be made by the applicant.

In almost all cases the feedback from UEC to applicants was the last of those options: approval by Convener's Action with requests for further information and revisions to the application form or supporting documentation. One application was approved at first review and one was rejected after having been submitted 3 times. In this case, the Committee advised that a new application for a similar research project may be feasible if there were a complete redesign of the research and significant input from a suitably experienced and qualified researcher to create an application with better clarity.

46 applications were reviewed by UEC in 20-17-18. The majority of these were approved following revisions by the applicants. A very small number have been delayed due to issues with the applicants.

On average, applicants received feedback on their initial application within ten working days of the UEC meeting at which they were reviewed.

On average, excluding outliers (applicants who took several months to respond to the UEC feedback), applications were approved within 25 working days of the UEC meeting. Please note that this figure includes the time taken for applicants to resubmit their amended documentation, or the subsequent requests from the Convener for further clarification in response to amendments (at least half of the resubmissions required further work). The

majority of final amendments, once received, were approved by Convener's Action within two working days.

These turnaround times are well within the guidelines stated on page 23 of the Code of Practice, "From the time of receipt of an application, it would normally be hoped that the Committee will make its decision within 60 days. However, if the Committee seeks further information from the investigators then the timescale is suspended until the Committee is satisfied that all its points of concern have been answered."

22 NHS applications were submitted to or logged with the Ethics Team and 11 endorsed by the Convener on behalf of UEC during 2016-17/17-18, following favourable opinion from NHS itself.

Four applications that had been approved by external organisations other than NHS were endorsed by the Convener on behalf of UEC.

The Manager of UEC Secretariat in RKES approved sponsorship for nineteen externally-funded applications that had obtained ethical approval through their DECs/SECs.

## **7. 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. Monitoring is currently underway for 2016-17/17/18.

## **8. Departmental/School Ethics Committees (DECs/SECs)**

The UEC 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.

Monitoring is currently underway for 17/18

## **9. UNIVERSITY ETHICS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

UEC continues to have a wide range of expertise and knowledge across its membership.

Dr Steve Kelly (Psychology) had been Convener of UEC since August 2012 and stood down in July 2018. He has been replaced by Prof Philip Winn (SIPBS).

There are currently (at August 18) four Vice-Convenors supporting the work of the UEC

Dr Helen Marwick (Education)  
Ms Karyn Ross (Biomedical Engineering)  
Dr Laura Steckley (School of Applied Social Science)  
Dr Barbara West, Lay Member

The current membership of the UEC is included as Annex 1.

The Code of Practice states that 'Members of the UEC will normally be appointed for three years at a time, and may be reappointed for subsequent years.' UEC proposed in last year's Annual Report that, to avoid the simultaneous departure of several members who had joined at around the same time, and the resulting loss of expertise that would follow, members should not be restricted to three-year appointments, but should resign from UEC when they wish, subsequent to the initial three-year appointment. The staggered departures help to retain expertise in particular areas, with experience suggesting that the majority of members are willing to serve a second three-year term or more.

## **10. 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 UEC Secretariat in RKES, which confirms if the University will sponsor each project.

Aileen Stevenson (Finance Office) created an insurance questionnaire that now forms part of the application form. Only research studies that feature certain criteria require to be reviewed for insurance confirmation by Finance. DEC's and SEC's are also required to review the insurance questionnaire and report to Finance on relevant studies. Examples of the criteria requiring referral to Finance Office are: work overseas, work involving children under 5, pharmaceutical product design and research involving aircraft or aerial devices. Use of this questionnaire has streamlined the process.

The University's Finance Office then liaises with the University's insurers to establish whether sufficient cover is in place for applications which feature the criteria.

Researchers must not commence their work until all aspects of this process are confirmed. This is confirmed in 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. Safety Services provided useful advice in relation to current recommendations on risk assessment as well as Health & Safety. The Code of Practice and Application Form have been updated to include, amongst other points, advice for applicants that the University's Risk Management Framework document should be consulted and use of the risk-rating tool within it applied.

This has led to many questions from applicants on the requirement to complete an 'S20' form for every research study. Whilst responsibility for ensuring that staff complete the S20 forms lies with Heads of Departments/Schools, it has become apparent to UEC that awareness of the S20 requirement is patchy across the University, even amongst Heads of Departments/Schools. Safety Services has been informed and now looks at the S20 forms that accompany ethics applications, with a view to monitoring the quality of the risk assessments. Safety Services has acknowledged that this has helped raise awareness of the need for a risk assessment to be undertaken for every research study.

## **11. BUDGET**

At time of writing (August 2018) the budget for fiscal year 2018/19 has not yet been notified.

The usual uses of the budget are:

- Association for Research Ethics (AfRE) membership
- Travel and attendance by Convener and members of UEC at Ethics training events
- Travel of Lay and External members to attend UEC meetings
- Administration costs – printing, copying, stationery
- Catering (tea/coffee) for UEC meetings and training events
- One annual lunch for members

## **12. NEXT STEPS**

A copy of this report will be provided to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee for approval at its 4 September meeting.

**ANNEX 1**

**UNIVERSITY ETHICS COMMITTEE**

**MEMBERSHIP AUGUST 2018**

<u>Name</u>	<u>School/Department/Category</u>	<u>Date Appointed</u>
<b>Convener</b>		
Prof Philip Winn	SIPBS	01.08.18
<b>Internal Members</b>		
Dr Joanne Cleland	Speech and Language Therapy	01.03.18
Dr Sylvie Coupaud	Biomedical Engineering	01.03.15
Prof Lilian Edwards	Law	01.08.18
Dr Penny Haddrill	P & A Chemistry	01.11.15
Dr Genevieve Lennon (on mat leave)	Law	01.03.17
Dr Helen Marwick (VC)	Education	01.01.12
Professor Kenneth Norrie (on sabbatical)	Law	01.01.15
Dr Chris Prior	SIPBS	01.09.17
Dr Susan Rasmussen	School of Psychological Sciences & Health	01.08.12
Ms Karyn Ross (VC)	Biomedical Engineering	01.08.12
Dr Laura Steckley (VC)	School of Applied Social Science	01.09.09
Prof James Windmill	Electrical & Electronic Engineering	01.06.10
<b>External Members</b>		
Ms Shirley Andrews	Head of Training, Police Scotland (Retired)	01.05.14
Mr James Wallace	Pharmacist (Retired)	01.08.13
Dr Barbara West (VC)	(Retired GP)	02.08.12
<b>Lay Members</b>		
Mr Nicholas Shearer	(IT Consultant)	01.03.14
Vacancy		