

RKEC 21-22/Sept



**PAPERS TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE COMMITTEE (RKEC)**

University Ethics Committee Convener's Annual Report	
Date of meeting:	20 September 2022
Purpose of paper:	Report of Activity August 2021 to July 2022
Intended outcome:	For RKEC's general approval
Key points:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">. Review and approval of applications. Risk Management. Next Steps
Paper submitted by:	University Ethics Committee
Resource implications:	No
Equality & Diversity	An EIA has not been undertaken, however, a key purpose of the University Ethics Committee is to provide impartial advice to participants and investigators and to protect the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of all actual and potential research participants.
Key contact(s):	Professor Philip Winn, SIPBS, philip.winn@strath.ac.uk , Ms Angelique Laverty, RKES, a.laverty@strath.ac.uk
Date of production:	09 September 2022



UNIVERSITY ETHICS COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2021-22

INTRODUCTION

The University Ethics Committee (UEC) is the body responsible for giving ethical approval for investigations. UEC and associated Departmental and School Ethics Committees (DECs & SECs) consider ethical issues relating to University activity involving investigations in which people are participants. UEC provides impartial advice in order to protect the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of all participants and investigators. Ethical approval, 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 2021-22. Information on policy developments, approval of applications, monitoring of projects, training, and risk management is provided in the report. Research & Knowledge Exchange Services (RKES) is responsible for providing the UEC Secretariat. During academic year 2020-21 Angelique Laverty, UEC Manager, undertook the UEC Secretariat role and minutes were taken by Grace Murkett. Lynsey Hamilton in the Finance Office undertook confirmations of insurance cover for the studies seen by UEC and by Departmental and School Ethics Committees.

The Convener of UEC (since September 2018) is Philip Winn, Emeritus Professor in SIPBS. Currently, (August 2022) Vice-Conveners are:

- Ms Karyn Ross Biomedical Engineering
- Dr Laura Steckley Social Work & Social Policy
- Dr Barbara West Lay Member

This report will be considered by the Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee at its meeting on 20 September 2022.

1. Progress against targets

UEC does not have specific targets. Activities essential to the effective and efficient operation of the UEC are monitored including for example training uptake and the progress of approved projects.

2. Code of Practice

The *Code of Practice on Investigations Involving Human Beings* is available online, accessed through the Ethics website (<https://www.strath.ac.uk/ethics/>). The current edition is the eighth.

Work on the latest edition of the CoP is almost complete and is being done in conjunction with revised Research CoP and will align with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity

3. Website

The Ethics website – updated regularly – is the principal source of information for applicants and is promoted as the key source of information on ethics to staff and students. It has a presence on the RKES Portal. Application forms and guidelines are on the website.

This year much progress has been made on the development of an online ethics application system. Preparation work for the online forms is complete. Development work is done by IS and is expected to take several months.

New guidance is being prepared to complement the updated CoP and online guidance. This will be available on the ethics website.

A flow chart detailing the online system is included as Annex 2.

4. Training

The Researchers' Guide to Ethics training course was delivered online several times by UEC Manager Angelique Lavery together with the "Creating Data Management Plans" course run by Research Data Support Officer Marie Henderson, of the Research Policy and Information team within RKES.

UEC members delivered ethics training to Research Interns@Strathclyde students

The Researchers' Guide to Ethics training Course will resume this term with Prof Winn delivering several sessions.

The Convener, UEC Manager and several members contributed to a review of research ethics governance at Scottish universities. It was run from the University of Edinburgh and funded by the Carnegie Trust. A report of this work will be published. It is hoped that further cross-Scotland meetings will be held, to help share good practice across the sector.

5. Review and Approval of Applications

During 2021-22 UEC did not meet face-to-face but did meet online every month using Zoom. UEC offered notes of guidance for the University. (Available at <https://www.strath.ac.uk/ethics/> and <https://www.strath.ac.uk/coronavirus/staff/universityethicscommittee/>).

In all cases, the papers for each meeting, and a SharePoint link, are distributed to members. For normal meetings, members receive the papers/link at least a week before the meeting.

For all reviews, normal or fast-track, one member led on the application with other members adding further contributions. After discussion a response is agreed, to be sent by email to the applicant after the Minutes for the meeting have been approved by the Convener.

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

- Approval as it stands
- Outright Rejection
- Request for re-submission to UEC for re-review
- Approval by Convener’s Action subject to minor revisions.

The table below shows the numbers of applications in each category. In most cases the outcome of the discussion at UEC was approval by Convener’s Action with requests for further information and revisions to the application form or supporting documentation.

One application was passed to the senior officer with responsibility for UEC, Professor Bedford, for sponsorship and management risk approval because it was considered to be of medium/high risk and so out-with the delegated responsibility of the UEC Manager to approve. This study is still being assessed.

Initial Decision by UEC	Number	Pending	Approved
New applications			
Approval	0		
Rejection	0		
Resubmit to UEC	4	0	4
Convener’s action	60	5	55

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

20 NHS applications were submitted to or logged with the Ethics Team and 14 endorsed by the Convener on behalf of UEC during 2021-22, following favourable opinion from the NHS.

The UEC Manager in RKES approved sponsorship for 15 externally funded applications that had obtained ethical approval through their DEC/SECs.

7. Monitoring of Projects

UEC monitors the progress of each of the applications which it approves, both annually and at the end of each protocol. Monitoring is currently underway for 2021-22. Applicants are required to detail anything unexpected and confirm that they are adhering to protocols This process will be enhanced by the introduction of online monitoring when the online system is in place.

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

The UEC monitors the activities of all DECs and SECs annually. 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. Monitoring is currently underway for 2021-22.

The Centre for Lifelong Learning asked UEC for permission to establish a Departmental Ethics Committee. After discussions with the Head of Centre and the Dean, Professor Winn decided that this would be appropriate and UEC secretariat provided support and guidance with particular guidance being given on ethical issues around research in the workplace.

9. University Ethics Committee Membership

Professor Philip Winn (SIPBS) is Convener (since September 2018) and there are three Vice-Conveners: Ms Karyn Ross (Biomedical Engineering), Dr Laura Steckley (Social Work and Social Policy) and Dr Barbara West, Lay Member. The full 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 2017 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.

10. Risk Management

Risk assessment is integral to the work of UEC with members evaluating potential risks to human participants and the potential benefit of the research. Individual risk assessments for each ethics application are carried out by the UEC Manager in RKES, which confirms if the University will sponsor each project. The insurance questionnaire and eRisk assessments created last year are being used successfully.

11. Budget

At time of writing (September 2022) the budget for fiscal year 2022-23 has not been notified. Budget is necessary for:

- 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
- UEC is considering whether it would be appropriate to provide lay members with University laptops to facilitate the use of online papers only and increase security of UEC papers.

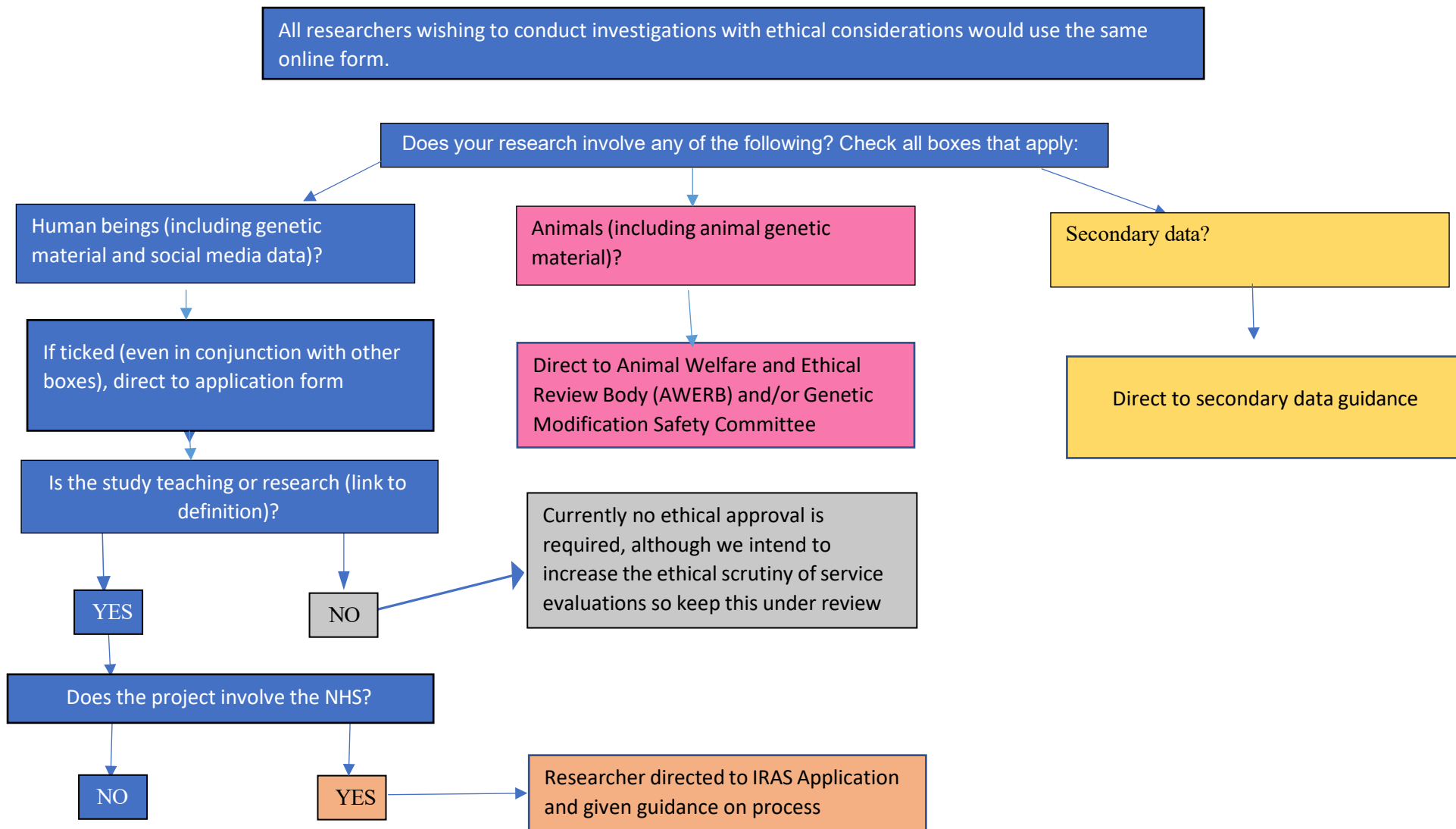
12. Next Steps

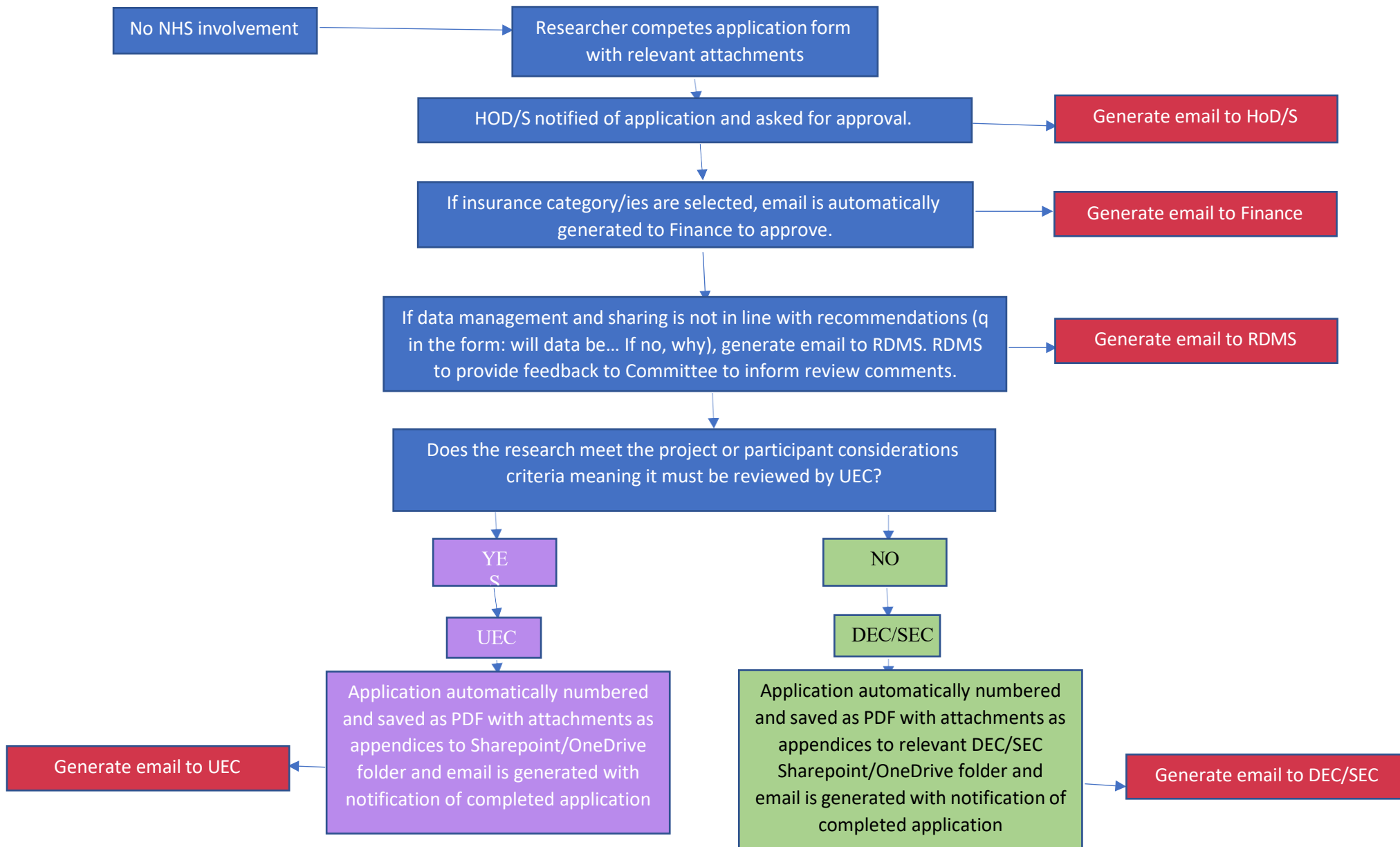
- Finalizing revisions to the CoP
- Moving the ethics application and monitoring process online – the design of the online system is complete; UEC awaits development by ISD
- Reviewing ethics policies and procedures to establish a comprehensive and aligned institutional research ethics framework including AWERB and the Genetic Modification Safety Committee.
- Updating training and guidance for all staff, including refresher courses for more senior staff.
- Providing HoDs with clear guidance on their responsibilities regarding approving sponsorship of studies which are reviewed by DEC's
- Following recommendations made by the NHS West of Scotland Research Ethics Service, UEC will continue to review how the progress of work approved by the NHS, UEC and its delegated bodies is monitored.

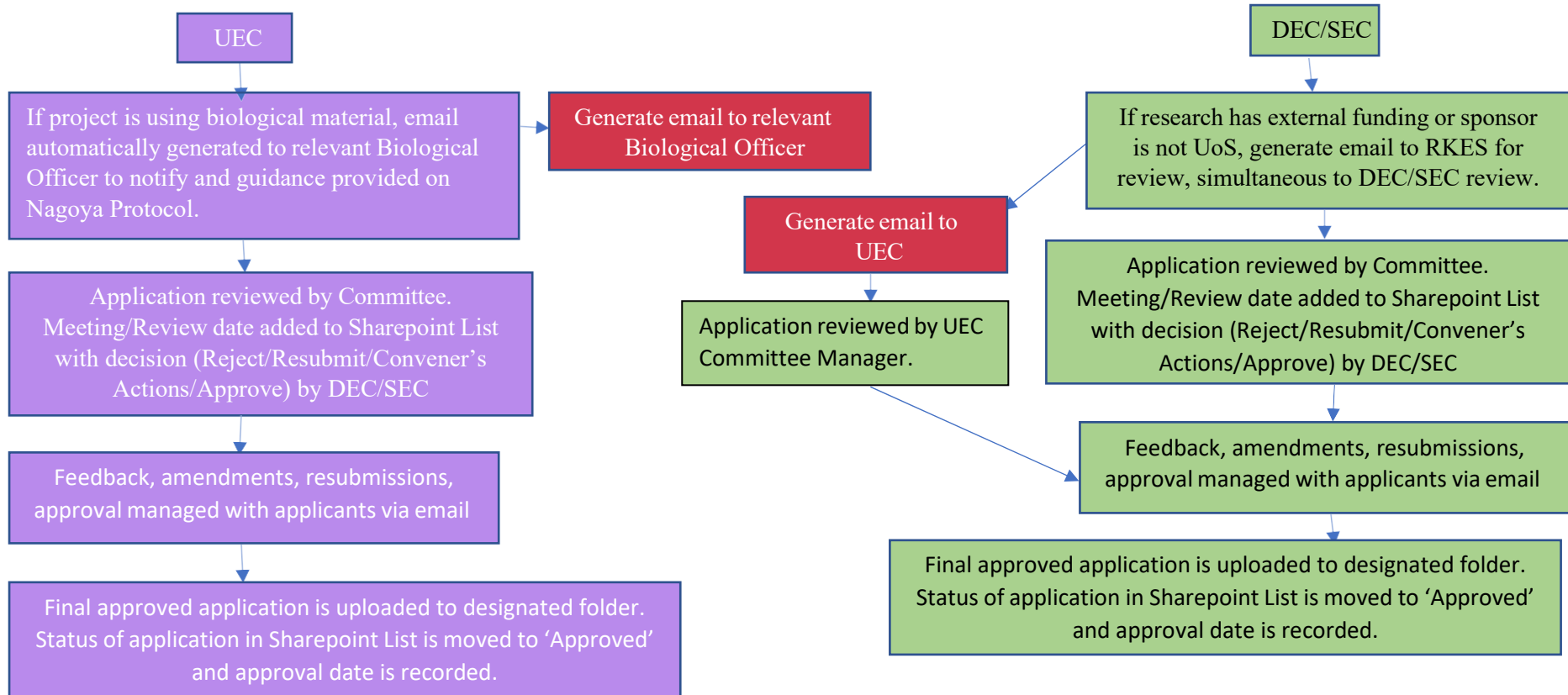
ANNEX 1**UNIVERSITY ETHICS COMMITTEE****MEMBERSHIP AUGUST 2022**

<u>Name</u>	<u>School/Department/Category</u>	<u>Date Appointed</u>
Convener		
Professor Philip Winn	SIPBS	01.08.18
Internal Members		
Dr Joanne Cleland	Speech & Language Therapy	01.03.18
Dr Penny Haddrill	P & A Chemistry	01.11.15
Dr Eleni Karagiannidou	School of Education	05.12.19
Dr Patrick McColgan	Accounting & Finance	01.08.18
Professor Kenneth Norrie	Law School	01.01.15
Dr Chris Prior	SIPBS	01.09.17
Dr Susan Rasmussen	Psychological Sciences & Health	01.08.12
Ms Karyn Ross (VC)	Biomedical Engineering	01.08.12
Dr Laura Steckley (VC)	Social Work & Social Policy and CELCIS	01.09.09
Professor James Windmill	Electrical & Electronic Engineering	01.06.10
External Members		
Ms Shirley Andrews	Retired Head of Training, Police Scotland	01.05.14
Mr James Wallace	Retired Pharmacist	01.08.13
Dr Barbara West (VC)	Retired GP	02.08.12
Lay Members		
Mr Nicholas Shearer	IT Consultant	01.03.14

ANNEX 2: UEC Online Process Flowchart







POST APPROVAL:

- Any amendments submitted to the relevant Committee are managed via email. Approved amended applications are uploaded to designated folder with amendments highlighted and date in file name.
- Email automatically generated to applicants one year after approval requesting update on project (potentially using a new form so that only updates that are worrying need to be looked at by Committee Management).