

**UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION****ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR STUDIES INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS**

Minutes of the meeting of the Ethics Committee for Studies Involving Human Participants held on 2 February 2023.

**PRESENT:** Dr Susan Grey (Chair)

Dr Simon Trainis  
Rev Dr Allan Smith  
Dr Colin Blankfield

Dr Ian Willcock  
Dr Rosemary Godbold  
Dr Nick Troop

Dr Sam Coleman  
Dr Rebecca Knight

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Catherine Rendell

Claire Kruger

**APOLOGIES:**

Dr Brendan Larvor  
Abi Tomlinson

Professor Frank Haddleton  
Adam Gimson

Alex Hall  
Irene Boham

**16 NEW DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY**

The Committee **noted** that there were no new declarations of interest.

**17 CHAIR'S REPORT**

17.1 The Committee **received** an oral report from the Chair.

17.2 Concerns were raised regarding the lack of progress in purchasing an online ethics management system, with Helen Davidson, Head of Corporate Services/Deputy Secretary/Registrar highlighting. Reliance on the current 'manual' system, together with a potential increase in ethics applications, particularly from Post-Graduate Taught (PGT) students were of particular concern, leading to increased risk. The following options were discussed:

- a) Receive a demonstration/quote from another provider;
- b) Request a sole supplier statement from Infonetica representative, Russel Pridmore;
- c) Establish whether the request for an online system would be put through as a CAPEX bid or through planning.

**CHAIR**

17.3 The Committee noted that a scoping process for a new online ethics management system may make the process of reviewing the ethics application forms irrelevant.

17.4 Ethics Communications were in the process of being rebranded. An Internal Communication from the Ethics Team would be sent out shortly highlighting themes and updates on recent guidance for staff (supervisors/applicants). Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) would be replaced by Guidance. This draft version would be sent to Chairs/Vice-Chairs for review before it was sent out.

**CHAIR**

17.5 A shorter version of this communication would be sent out with the Dean of Students' communication to all students.

**18 MEMBERSHIP**

18.1 The Committee **received** an updated membership list.

18.2 **Category 3: A Lawyer**

The Committee discussed the vacancy under Category 3 for a Lawyer and noted that Dr Parinaz Raisi (School of Law) had recently joined the Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities ECDA as a member. The Committee agreed to contact Dr Raisi at a later date to discuss the possibility of joining the Ethics Committee as a member.

18.3 **Category 3: Member with a pharmaceutical background**

The Committee discussed whether a member with a pharmaceutical background was required, noting that experts in the field were consulted as necessary.

18.4 **Category 6: The Vice-Chairs of Ethics Committees with Delegated Authority (ECDAs)**

The Committee noted that a vacancy existed for the Vice-Chair of the Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities ECDA.

18.5 **Category 8: Director of the Doctoral College (or Deputy)**

The Committee noted that a vacancy existed, following the departure of Dr Saskia Kersten.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 3, refers.)

19 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING - 2 NOVEMBER 2022**

19.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 2 November 2023 were **confirmed** and **signed**.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 4, refers.)

20 **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY/MISCONDUCT IN RELATION TO BREACHES OF ETHICS, MINUTE 8, 3 NOVEMBER 2021, REFERS**

20.1 The Committee **received** and **discussed** amendments to UPR RE01(Section 9.5, 9.6).

20.2 The original wording in UPR RE01, section 9.5 and 6 assumed that there would be one assessment per module. This case of a HBS dissertation module highlighted that this was not necessarily the case: This module was taught as both a dissertation module and as a module in which different sections of the dissertation were submitted as separate assignments. This implied that a much harsher penalty would be applied if academic misconduct occurred in the dissertation module than in one of the minor assignments, creating the potential to lose the decision on appeal.

20.3 The Committee agreed that the amended wording which was changed to 'assessment or module' reverted to the original intention of the regulations.

**CLERK**

20.4 The Committee further agreed that section 9 covered all types of ethics protocols i.e. individual, class or practical protocol where the terms of the protocol had not been complied with. An action was taken to check whether this applied to an EC1D NHS protocol.

**CLERK**

20.5 The Committee agreed a change to the wording under Section 13 which would be taken to the next Standing Working Party on UPRs on the 7 February 2023.

**CLERK**

*The Committee recognises that, in certain discipline areas, ordinary professional practice may merge into reflection and research. Those engaged in reflective practitioner work will have due regard for the 'Protocol for Reflective Practitioner Work by Academic Staff' which is published as Appendix I of this document and are required to obtain any necessary ethics approvals in accordance with the provisions of these regulations (UPR RE01).*

(Agenda Paper 5, refers.)

21 **RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE/ADULT VULNERABLE GROUPS: EXEMPLAR CONSENT FORMS/INFO SHEETS, MINUTE 7.7, 2 NOV 2022, REFERS**

21.1 The Committee approved the membership of the sub-group: Dr Luke Wood, Dr Elspeth Mathie, Dr Silvana Mengoni, Dr Louca-Mai Brady, Dr Rosemary Godbold and Dr Karen Irvine.

21.2 The Committee discussed the inclusion of a lay member (patient and public involvement) and the possibility of re-imbursing this person for their time. Dr Godbold would ask members of the working group for their opinion on how much this payment should be. The Chair of the Ethics Committee would then raise this with the Head of Governance Services.

RG/  
CHAIR

22 **STUDYNET CLOSURE AND PROPOSED MIGRATION OF ETHICS PAGES TO HERTSHUB/ASK HERTS**

22.1 The Committee **received** an oral update from the Clerk.

22.2 Paul Hudson (LCS) had advised the Committee that Studynet was due to close in March 2023. Information found on the Ethics Studynet pages was in the process of being migrated to a HertsHub site for Ethics. This site could be accessed by Staff/Doctoral students. Guidance had been sought from Anna Hammerin who had worked on the Doctoral College HertsHub site and Klara Foster (MarComms).

22.3 Options for undergraduate and post-graduate taught students included Ask Herts (Ethics already had a page on Ask Herts) and a short course site on Canvas (Go Herts). The latter option was only available after registration in September 2023. Information posted on this site would have to be pared down/simplified and could not contain too many links as this would affect the searchability of the site.

22.4 Dr Willcock noted that Canvas sites could be made available publicly. He added that whilst Ask Herts was suitable for small snippets of information, it was not suitable for research ethics which required detailed guidance, forms, etc.

22.5 Dr Trainis echoed Dr Willcock's concerns noting that posting snippets of information on AskHerts would undermine the seriousness with which research ethics should be taken, emphasising that years of effort had gone into the Ethics Studynet site.

22.6 The Committee noted that these observations would be fed back to LCS and that the Committee was not satisfied with the solution offered to undergraduate and post-graduate taught students when it came to the provision of ethics guidance.

CLERK

22.7 The Committee noted further it may be worth consulting an expert in information architecture. Ask Herts could act as a signposting mechanism if a new ethics online management system had the capability of embedding guidance for compliance purposes.

(Agenda Paper 7, refers.)

23 **STUDENTS' ETHICS CHECKLIST FOR CLASS PROTOCOLS**

23.1 The Committee **noted** the amendments to the Students' Ethics Checklist for Class Protocols.

(Agenda Paper 8, refers.)

24 **FAQ: I PLAN TO USE HUMAN TISSUE IN MY RESEARCH, DO I NEED ETHICS APPROVAL?**

24.1 The Committee **reviewed** guidance available on the Ethics website on Studynet on using human tissue in research from an ethical perspective.

24.2 The Committee noted that there had been an increase in queries related to the use of human tissue. Various scenarios were presented to the Committee, based on queries received in the HSET inbox. Some scenarios involved students working in laboratories in NHS settings. In other cases, human tissue material would be bought onto campus, such as a potential study which proposed importing infected blood samples from Kenya to UH. The samples would be processed upon arrival and inactivated immediately. Sarah Wilson noted that this had bio-safety implications which required a more thorough examination.

24.3 The Committee agreed to arrange a meeting with a new member of staff who was a specialist in this area, hence the increase in these types of queries.

**RG/  
CLERK**

24.4 The Committee noted that applicants who did not require HRA (NHS REC) approval still required UH ethics approval, particularly if the research was used in a thesis or publication. The HSET Chair noted that EC1D applications were thoroughly scrutinised to check that they complied with ethical requirements.

(Agenda Paper 9, refers.)

## 25 **UPDATE ON ECDA MEMBERSHIP**

25.1 The Committee **received** updates on ECDA membership

25.2 Dr Willcock noted that he was working with a member of staff from HBS who would initially join the Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (SSAH) ECDA before potentially agreeing to an appointment as a Vice-Chair.

25.3 Dr Trainis noted that a vacancy for an external member to the Health, Science, Engineering and Technology (HSET) ECDA had not been filled. Dr Willcock would follow up with members of the SSAH ECDA.

## 26 **INTERIM UPDATE FROM THE HSET ECDA CHAIR**

26.1 The Committee **received** an oral update from the HSET ECDA Chair.

26.2 Dr Simon Trainis had provided training to large groups of students within SPECS.

26.3 Dr Trainis reiterated his concerns regarding implementing Ask Herts as an interim measure, noting the amount of effort taken with training students, reviewers and staff/supervisors and the detailed guidance provided to support this.

## 27 **INTERIM UPDATE FROM THE SSAH ECDA CHAIR**

27.1 The Committee **received** an oral update from the SSAH ECDA Chair.

27.2 The SSAH ECDA had been relatively busy in terms of applications received. Approvals were provided within the specified time-frames.

27.3 Processes related to academic misconduct cases remained a concern, particularly during busy upcoming PGT Semester C modules.

27.4 The Committee noted that Ethics was a sub-set of academic misconduct. It had been established that Ethics Chairs/Vice-Chairs would receive support from the central Academic Misconduct Team (ACO) who would write letters and arrange meetings on behalf of the Chairs.

27.5 The Committee discussed whether formal letter writing was required at Stage 1. Catherine Rendell noted that the central academic misconduct team was not involved with processes at Stage 1 as this stage was not related to disciplinary procedures but rather, provided transparency and a learning opportunity for students. Variable practice existed amongst Schools who, in some cases, had created their own structures around Stage 1.

27.6 The Committee debated whether ethics breaches should be removed from Stage 1, allowing ECDA Chairs to conduct an investigation into ethics breaches, on behalf of a School, at Stage 2 instead.

27.7 The Committee noted that an amendment to Stage 1 would be taken to the Standing Working Party on UPRs in May 2023 so that the process could be repositioned to obtain consistent practice across Schools.

27.8 The Committee agreed to hold a further meeting between the Chairs/Vice-Chairs, Catherine Rendall and Lisa Uttley to discuss ethics breaches in relation to the various academic misconduct stages.

CLERK

## 28 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD 2021/22

28.1 The Committee **received** and **approved** the Annual Report 2021/22.

(Agenda Paper 13, refers.)

## 29 RISK

*(Minute 29.1-4 is RESTRICTED and only available to members, the Secretary and Registrar and the Clerk.)*

## 30 PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

30.1 There were no new people development needs to be referred to Mrs J Lees, Manager, Learning and Organisational Development Facilitation and Support Team Manager.

## 31 CLERK'S REPORT

31.1 The Committee **received** the Clerk's report. The Clerk's report ensured the completeness of the Committee's record of business

## 31.2 RESEARCH COMMITTEE

The Committee noted the minutes of the Research Committee meeting of 18 October 2022 – Part 2 of this report refers.

## 31.3 HSET ECDA MINUTES

The Committee noted the minutes of the Health, Science, Engineering and Technology Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority (HSET ECDA) of 5 October 2022 – Part 3 of this report refers.

## 31.4 SSAH ECDA MINUTES

The Committee noted the minutes of the Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority (SSAH ECDA) of 11 October 2022 – Part 4 of this report, refers.

## 31.5 GUIDANCE/FAQ - ONLINE SURVEY SOFTWARE - WHICH ONE SHOULD I USE TO COLLECT DATA FROM MY PARTICIPANTS?

The Committee noted the revised FAQ Online Survey Software - Which one should I use to collect data from my participants? to note – Part 5 of this report, refers.

See also:

<https://www.studynet2.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/ethics.nsf/Frequently+Asked+Questions/B8C3196F1E5BF9BB8025837F003E58C3>

### 31.6 **GUIDANCE/FAQ – RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Committee noted the revised guidance on research with children and young people to note – Part 6 of this report, refers.

See also:

<https://www.studynet2.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/ethics.nsf/Frequently+Asked+Questions/8DDFFD92B129B19380258845003FBC61>

### 31.7 **GUIDANCE/FAQ – RESEARCH WITH ADULT VULNERABLE GROUPS**

The Committee noted the revised guidance on research with adult vulnerable groups to note – Part 7 of this report, refers.

See also:

<https://www.studynet2.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/ethics.nsf/Frequently+Asked+Questions/935D97CDBC546E69802583A9005213A6>

### 31.8 **GUIDANCE/FAQ - MY STUDY IS ONLINE, HOW DO I OBTAIN CONSENT FROM PARTICIPANTS?**

The Committee noted the revised FAQ - My study is online, how do I obtain consent from participants? – Part 8 of this report, refers.

See also:

<https://www.studynet2.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/ethics.nsf/Frequently+Asked+Questions/272197697FEF31218025816300360B40>

### 31.9 **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2022-23**

#### 39.9.1 **Ethics Committee**

14:00 hours, Thursday 4 May 2023, Central Committee Room, MacLaurin/MS Teams

#### 39.9.2 **ECDAs**

##### 39.9.2.1 **Health, Science, Engineering and Technology**

14:00 hours, Wednesday 22 February 2023, Governors' Suite/MS Teams Meeting  
14:00 hours, Wednesday 3 May 2023, Governors' Suite, MS Teams Meeting

##### 39.9.2.2 **Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities**

14:00 hours, Wednesday 10 May 2023, Central Committee Room, MacLaurin/MS Teams

(Agenda Paper 16, parts 1-8, refers.)

### 32 **EMERGENCY BUSINESS**

*(Minute 32.1 - 2 is RESTRICTED and only available to members, the Secretary and Registrar and the Clerk.)*