Ethics roles and Committees at the University

Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committees (C-REC)

Key Role:

- to provide independent review of the ethical design of research, on behalf of the University in accordance with the principles and values of the *Code of Conduct for Research* and the standards of the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* and as indicated in the University's ethics review framework
- to review, facilitate and encourage consistently high-quality ethical research in accordance with the standards of good practice across the disciplines of the academic schools represented on the committee.
- to ensure, on behalf of the Research Ethics and Integrity Committee, that good practice is shared and that an understanding of high-quality ethical research practice is valued and recognised as a fundamental quality of a skilled researcher at the University of Sussex.

There will be **three** Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committees (C-RECs) as follows:

*Science and Medicine (*2 committees):

- Sciences and Technology C-REC (SCITEC) cluster (covering the School of Engineering and
  Informatics, the School of Life Sciences, the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences and the School of Psychology).

- Brighton and Sussex Medical School Research Governance and Ethics Committee (BSMS RGEC).

Social Sciences and Arts (1 committee):

- Social Sciences & Arts C-REC (SSARTS) cluster (covering the Business School, the School of Education and Social Work, the School of Global Studies, the School of Law, Politics and Sociology, and the School of Media, Arts and Humanities).

(1) *Terms of Reference:*

(a) to follow the requirements laid out in the University's codes and policies relating to research ethics, integrity and to support and facilitate effective research governance

within a culture of honesty and respect for participants, the environment and the full range of stakeholders of university research;

(b)   to make recommendations to the Research Ethics and Integrity Committee relating to the procedures and policies for supporting and facilitating ethical research under the auspices of the schools, appropriate to the academic disciplines within the Schools, and in accordance with recommendations made by relevant outside bodies;

(c)   through the relevant School Directors of Learning and Teaching , to conduct a periodic review of School procedures which consider low risk projects (including undergraduate) and to prepare periodic reports on the findings and to keep the effectiveness of its current practice under continuous review.

(d)   to review and approve on an annual basis, the basis on which academic schools organise the oversight of School Research Ethics Officers (SREOs) where more than one is appointed by the Head of School.

(e)   to report on a periodic basis to the Research Ethics and Integrity Committee in a form stipulated by the Research Ethics and Integrity Committee, providing a summary of all reviewed projects;

(f)   to implement review mechanisms for staff and student projects that ensure that research ethics policies are applied in a manner appropriate to such projects and that any associated research governance requirements are identified and dealt with in a manner consistent with the highest standards of research excellence.

(g)   to undertake auditing of a percentage of previously approved studies according to Research Ethics and Integrity Committee requirements

(h)   to participate and facilitate auditing of the ethics review process across C-REC and across SREOs within the C-REC

(i)   to review and approve any School or cross-School based processes for the review and approval of relevant research projects.

(j)   to keep appropriate records of practices and decisions and to issue a common form of Certificate of Approval which will cover statutory and ethical compliance, research integrity and, where appropriate, sponsor specific requirements.

(k)   to refer cases to the Research Ethics and Integrity Committee that require decision or require advice / opinion.

(2) *Composition:*

- A member of academic faculty distinguished in research (Chair).
- One (or more) member(s) from each School undertaking research relevant to the Committee, nominated by the relevant Head of School (proportionate to applications reviewed by the cluster).
- At least one external lay member
- School Research Ethics Officers (SREO) from the academic schools in the cluster*
- Additional (non-voting) attendees may be invited by the Chair for meetings or items to ensure an appropriate range of expertise.

*Not all SREOs will act as C-REC reviewers (through full membership of the C-REC) for high risk PGT, undergraduate studies or staff and PGR applications.
The terms of the SREO's reviewing duties, as specified in the letter of appointment, will be agreed by the Head of School, and will reflected in the time allocated within their overall responsibilities.

(3) *Reports to:* Research Ethics and Integrity Committee

C-REC CHAIR

C-REC Chair

Overview of Role

In addition to the key responsibilities set out for C-REC Members (attached), the main purpose of this role is to be Chair to [SPECIFIC C-REC]. The Chair as leader of the C-REC is responsible for the Committee's ethics review function, and ensuring responsive, independent, and informed consideration of the ethical design of research from schools within the cluster. The Chair will also take a lead role in promoting a culture of research integrity across the Schools. The Chair will receive support, and work closely, with the Social Sciences & Arts C-REC Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance Administrator, C-REC members and SREOs.

Key Responsibilities:

1. Oversee the consistent and timely management of the C-REC ethics review processes within a culture of honesty and respect for participants, the environment and the full range of stakeholders of University in accordance with the *Code of Practice for Research* and the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*.

2. Implement review mechanisms for staff and student projects that ensure that University research ethics policies are applied in a manner appropriate to such projects and that any associated research governance requirements are identified and dealt with in a manner consistent with the highest standards of research practice;

3. To be aware of Equality and Diversity and ensure that applicants to the C-REC are treated fairly and equally regardless of age, gender, sexuality, religion, disability or ethnicity.

4. To nominate a Deputy Chair, and to offer ongoing support to the person in this role, ensuring they are able to take over the duties of the Chair when required. In the event that a Deputy Chair is not available, the School that employs the Chair, shall, in the first instance, ensure that cover is available until such time as a new Chair can be formally appointed.

5. Promote the effective working of the C-REC as a cohesive group, providing guidance to members regarding potential conflicts of interest and any concerns which might lead to their disqualification.

6. Identify any training needs for C-REC members, and work with the Research Governance Officer to make arrangements for training provision. Address issues of poor performance from members in the first instance.

7. Organise and Chair a minimum of one physical meeting of the C-REC per year.

8. Provide general advice and guidance to the C-REC Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance Administrator, C-REC members, SREOs.

9. Provide advice and guidance to Supervisors and researchers (staff and students).

10. Support and advise School Research Ethics Officers and receive an annual report from them on School-level ethics review.

11. Where appropriate, assist Heads of Schools in recruitment of new members to the C-REC.

12. Sit as an *ex-officio* member of the Research Ethics and Integrity Committee (REIC), attending a minimum of two meetings per year. Provide periodic reports to REIC, summarising the C-REC's and relevant Schools' ethics review activities.

13. Contribute to development, monitoring and review of ethics policies, procedures and processes.

14. Oversee the auditing of a percentage of previously approved studies according to Research Ethics and Integrity Committee requirements.

15. Participate and facilitate in periodic auditing of previously reviewed applications by other C-RECs and across SREOs within the C-REC to assist in the maintenance of consistent standards across the University.

16. Liaise with the Research Governance Officer, to lead development and management of cross school activities and training to promote research integrity within and across schools, and university wide.

17. Produce and ensure dissemination of cross-school specific guidance for faculty and students on research ethics review processes and procedures; support C-REC members and SREOs to do the same tailored for specific schools.

Appointment: by Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research) following nomination by Heads of Relevant Schools.

Tenure: 2 years, renewable for a further term

C-REC Member

Overview of Role

The main purpose of this role is to carry out independent and informed review of the ethical design of research projects from across those Schools which are relevant to the C-REC, and to bring specific expertise to the review process from the School that the member represents. The C-REC member will also take a lead role in promoting research integrity and good practice in research ethics across their School, and the University more widely.

Key Responsibilities:

1. To provide independent, competent and timely review of the ethics of proposed research studies from faculty and students within a culture of honesty and respect for participants, the environment and the full range of stakeholders of University research.

2. Ensure that every project which undergoes ethics review, is dealt with fairly and appropriately in accordance with the University's research ethics and governance policies and procedures. Where there may be a conflict of interest, the member should alert the Chair of the C-REC.

3. To be aware of Equality and Diversity and ensure that applicants to the C-REC are treated fairly and equally regardless of age, gender, sexuality, religion, disability or ethnicity.

4. To undertake training and personal development relating to ethics and research integrity upon taking up the role and to attend training provision that is made available annually.

5. To raise with the Chair any ongoing challenges relating to the review of research ethics to help identify any issues that may need to be dealt with as a matter of policy by the C-REC or the Research Ethics and Integrity Committee (REIC).

6. Attend a minimum of one meeting of the C-REC per year.

7. Maintain confidentiality regarding applications, ethics review deliberations, information on research participants, and related matters.

8. To provide *ad hoc* advice to faculty and students within the member's School on the ethical conduct of research and ethics review processes.

9. Encourage a culture within the member's School which recognises the central importance of ethical considerations in the design and performance of research, and provide an avenue for the promotion of initiatives for research integrity.

10. Ongoing contribution to development, monitoring and review of research ethics policies, procedures and processes.

11. Contributing to the C-REC's auditing of returns from researchers relating to previously approved studies.

12. Support the Chair in participating in periodic auditing of previously reviewed applications by other C-RECs and across SREOs within the C-REC to assist in maintaining consistent standards across the University.

13.   Contribute to development and management of cross-school activities and training to promote research ethics culture within and across schools, and university wide.

14.   Collaboration with C-REC Chair and SREO to produce school specific guidance for faculty and students on research ethics review processes and procedures; liaising with SREO, School based administrative staff and the cluster Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance Administrator to ensure appropriate links from school websites to central ethics website, are established and maintained.

15.   Liaise with SREO on all School specific research ethics and governance issues, and with faculty/supervisors on within- school training and development needs

Appointment: by Head of School. The HoS will seek to appoint members of Faculty who represent the diversity of the School.

Tenure: 3 years subject to circumstances.

School Research Ethics Officer (SREO)

Overview of Role:

Each Head of School will normally appoint at least one School Research Ethics Officer*, with specific responsibility for the oversight of ethics review for Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students.

The main function of this role will be to provide informed, independent and timely ethics review of UG and PGT projects within a culture of honesty and respect for participants, the environment and the full range of stakeholders of University research.

This role will also include provision of guidance and awareness-raising amongst colleagues and students as appropriate.

Key Responsibilities:

(a) providing final and consistent sign-off for those projects which have identified and addressed ethical issues appropriately in the proposal;

(b) discussing with Supervisor, or Supervisor and student, those projects which have not satisfactorily identified and addressed ethics issues;

(c) making final recommendation, in discussion with student's supervisor, for referral to review by the Cross-School Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) for those projects which are not 'low risk';

(d) consulting with the C-REC Chair when there are queries on ethical principles or standards for taught student research

(e) identifying and escalating research governance and regulatory issues requiring the expertise and support of the Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance Administrator or appropriate member of the Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance team;

(f) ensuring that policies and guidelines developed for UG and PGT students by the University and the C-REC in relation to research ethics processes are being followed in the School;

(g) continuing to raise awareness of ethics issues and University procedures and specific requirements for ethical review for UG and PGT projects, including contributions to training and taught programmes where appropriate;

(h) reporting, where appropriate, via the School's C-REC / Research Governance Office, on any unresolved training or development needs related to ethics issues and approval;

(i) monitoring and reporting (with the Director of Learning and Teaching) on an annual basis on behalf of the School to the School's C-REC;

(j) providing ad hoc informed advice and guidance to supervisors, course tutors, module leaders and UG/PGT students on research ethics applications;

(k) ongoing contribution to the development, monitoring and review of ethics policies, procedures, and processes;

(l) in liaison with the Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance Administrator and the Research Governance Officer, lead development and management of cross school activities and training to promote an active culture of research integrity and research ethics within and across schools, and university wide;

(m) producing and ensuring the dissemination of cross school specific guidance for faculty and students on research ethics review processes and procedures; give ad hoc support to C-REC members and other SREOs to do the same tailored for specific schools.

(n) attendance (optional or as necessary) at C-REC meetings;

(o) undertaking training and development activities upon taking up their role and subsequently attending a minimum of one training event annually;

(p) liaising with the Director of Learning and Teaching and the and C-REC's Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance Administrator regarding any specific School related issues;

And, where not also a reviewer for the C-REC**:

(q) collaboration with the School C-REC member to produce school specific guidance for faculty and students on research ethics review processes and procedures;

(r) liaising with the School C-REC member, School based administrative and web personnel to ensure appropriate links from school websites to central ethics website, are established and maintained;

(s) liaising with the School C-REC member, the Director of Learning and Teaching and the and C-REC's Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance Administrator regarding any specific School related issues;

* In those Schools with large volumes of UG and PGT projects requiring ethics review, the Head of School may appoint at least two officers to share the role. The C-REC shall review and approve the basis on which academic schools organise the oversight of School Research Ethics Officers (SREOs) in alignment with the principles of maintaining informed, consistent, timely and independent ethics review.

Schools in which there are low volumes of ethical review of projects, may consider appointing the School's C-REC member to this role.

** Not all SREOs will act as C-REC reviewers for high risk PGT, undergraduate studies or staff and PGR applications. The terms of the SREO's reviewing duties, as specified in the letter of appointment, will be agreed by the Head of School and will be adequately reflected in the time allocated within their overall responsibilities.

Appointment: by Head of School (HoS). The HoS will seek to appoint members of Faculty who represent the diversity of the School.

Tenure: Three years, renewable for a further term.

Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance Administrators
Generic responsibilities

- *Social Sciences & Arts (SSARTS C-REC)[1] (1 position)*
- *Sciences & Technology C-REC (SCITEC C-REC)[2] (1 position)*
- *BSMS Research Governance and Ethics Committee (RGEC)[3] (1 position)*
- *AWERB & Sponsorship [4] (1 position)*

Overview of Role:
The posts are key to supporting the delivery of high quality and effective systems for ethical review as undertaken by Cross-School Research Ethics Committees (C-RECs), the AWERB and School Research Ethics Officers (SREOs). Managed by the University Research Governance Officer, the administrators will also guide researchers in achieving compliance with associated internal and external research governance procedures and standards.

The Research Integrity, Ethics and Governance Administrators will ensure that the C-RECs and the AWERB operate in line with the principles of good governance for university committees and give expert advice to C-REC chairs, vice-chairs and SREOs in undertaking their duties. Physically based in academic schools, the three post holders play an important role in providing key administrative support and input into the further development of wider research integrity policies across the University as members of the Research Governance team in Research & Enterprise Services.

Key Responsibilities:
1. **Support for the online ethical review system and correspondence** - To closely monitor and support online applications for ethical review and approval for research to the Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committees (C-RECs), the AWERB and any associated correspondence to ensure adequate records for internal and external audit purposes or complaints. The post holder will respond to inquiries from University staff and students on the procedural requirements for the ethical review and approval of research, including managing, prioritising and responding to emails to the C-REC or AWERB email account. The post holders will advise on a risk assessment, seeking further specialist internal and external advice where necessary.
2. **Oversight of consistent ethical review processes -** To oversee and assist in managing (working closely with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the C-REC) consistent, appropriate and timely ethical review, including notifying reviewers of applications; chasing reviewers; collating where possible reviewer response and feedback to applicants; liaising with Chair and C-REC members where further adjudication, and/or re-review is needed.
3. **Developing policies and guidance -** To actively contribute, under the supervision of the Research Governance Officer, to the development of any resulting policies, standard operating policies or guidance documents as required both at C-REC and University level in accordance with the research strategy and institutional commitment to the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*. The Research Integrity,

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[1] Covering the following academic schools: Global Studies; The University of Sussex Business School ; Education & Social Work; Law, Politics & Sociology; Media, Arts and Humanities

[2] Covering the following academic schools: Life Sciences; Psychology; Engineering & Informatics; Mathematical & Physical Sciences

[3] Covering the Brighton and Sussex Medical School

[4] Servicing and supporting the activities of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body and the Sponsorship Sub-Committee

Ethics and Governance Administrators will contribute to the work of committees, working groups and any other activities related to research integrity, research ethics and governance.

4.   Support for School Research Ethics Officers - To provide a responsive support service for School Research Ethics Officers (SREOs), in evaluating potentially 'higher risk' applications from taught postgraduates and undergraduates that might require CREC review and in advising on any associated queries. The RIEGAs will give support to SREOs and their School based colleagues in developing School level guidance and practice consistent with University policies and processes.

5.   Delivery of ethical review auditing - To plan, execute and assist in the regular auditing of approved ethical review applications for reporting to the Research Ethics and Integrity under the guidance of the C-REC Chair.

6.   Supporting induction processes - To support Directors of Research & Knowledge Exchange, Directors of Learning and Teaching and Heads of School in the induction of new staff on research governance and ethics processes and systems at the University.

 7.   Cooperation and collaboration with other University departments - To liaise on an ongoing basis with academic and administrative Departments in the University and with the Research Governance Officer to ensure coordinated delivery of ethical review and approval of research and integration of research governance processes within wider university and school administrative systems as appropriate (e.g. Joint Clinical Research Office, Office of the General Counsel, Insurance Office, Data Protection Officer, Health and Safety Office, Brighton & Sussex Clinical Trials Unit etc.)

8.   Producing reports and data - To produce data, management information and reports from the C-REC and AWERB records and the online ethical review system on request for monitoring and audit purposes, and for the Research Ethics and Integrity Committee or any other committees that may require them.

9.   Secretarial support - To provide secretarial support (including drafting minutes and following up of actions) to any physical meetings of C-REC as needed. Providing occasional cover for other research governance committees as and when required.

10.   Support for training and research ethics and integrity events - To provide administrative support for university wide and cross school research ethics events and training activities, contributing to delivery where appropriate.

11.   Developing and maintaining expert knowledge - To develop and maintain a strong working knowledge of the wider Sussex Research Governance Framework and the external legislation and regulations relevant to University research sufficient to advise applicants to other C-RECs to cover short absences or to compensate for occasional heavy workloads (Data Protection Act (2018), UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care (sponsorship), HMPPS, MODREC, Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, Human Tissue Act (2004), Mental Capacity Act (2005) – non definitive list). RIEGAs will support and advise staff with specific roles (such as Designated Individuals for the HTA licence) in developing policies, Standard Operating Procedures and regulatory returns as required.

Other - Other relevant tasks in support of the Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance Team, and any relevant support required for the R&E Management Team.

Research Ethics and Integrity Committee Terms of Reference
Key role

To ensure that the University upholds the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.

(1) *Terms of Reference:*

    a. To keep under review and recommend University policies on issues related to:
- ensuring integrity in all University research
- upholding the principles of ethical research in all its forms
- giving oversight to due diligence of non-standard research collaborators and funders
- reviewing the outcomes of investigations into research misconduct

The above to be undertaken with a view to ensuring that the public, staff and students are protected from harm and that the reputation of the University is safeguarded.

    b. to ensure that University policy in the areas outlined above (including the *Code of Practice for Research*) is adhered to;

    c. to ensure that each Cross-School Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) is set up and operates in accordance with the requirements laid out in the University's codes and policies relating to research governance;

    d. to approve internal Schools' research governance structures and processes (including review by School Research Ethics Officers (SREOs)), and to advise, inform, and update School committees on matters of research ethics and integrity

    e. to ensure compliance with the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity* and any other significant external policies or standards relevant to University research

    f. to review anonymised accounts from any investigations into allegations of misconduct in research, offering advice and making recommendations from their outcomes

    g. to consider reports from Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee on the management of research ethics and integrity and offer advice and make recommendations;

    h. to assure the provision of appropriate training for research ethics and integrity;

    i. to consider and offer guidance on cases of uncertainty and make decisions on cases which cannot be resolved by the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) or any one of the C-RECs; to hear appeals from applicants relating to decisions of those Committees;

    j. to seek clarification from the University's external advisors or other expert bodies, as necessary, on matters of policy and practice in relation to research ethics and integrity;

    k. to receive regular reports from the C-RECs, the AWERB and the Research Governance and Quality Assurance Committee, cooperating and communicating to ensure complementary oversight and understanding of any inter-related areas.

(2) *Composition:*
Membership

Appointed by the Vice-Chancellor:

Chair – An experienced University researcher with a significant practical understanding of research ethics and/or the application of the principles of research integrity
(Term – two years renewable once)

Members appointed by the Chair to reflect the diversity of research at the University

Representatives from each of the Cross-School Research Ethics Committees:
Social Sciences and Arts Cross-School Research Ethics Committee (SSARTS C-REC) – 3
Science and Technology Cross-School Research Ethics Committee (SCITEC) – 2
Brighton and Sussex Medical School Research Ethics Committee (BSMS RGEC) – 1
School Research Ethics Officers – 3
(Term – three years renewable once)

Lay members (2)

Ex-Officio members

The Chairs of the three Cross-School Research Ethics Committees (3)
The Chair or Deputy-Chair of the AWERB
The Chair of the Research Governance and Quality Assurance Committee

In attendance:

The Pro VC (Research)
Director of Research & Enterprise Services
Research Governance Officer
The Cross-School Research Ethics Committee Administrators (x 3)

(3)   *Reports to:* Senate

A quorum shall consist of a third of members of the Committee (5)
Secretarial duties – Research & Enterprise Services

Approved by:
Research Ethics and Integrity Committee, 10 February 2021
Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, 24 May 2021

Queries: rgoffice@sussex.ac.uk

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/governance