UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

1 Establishment

a) As detailed in the Senate Statement of Primary Responsibilities and Delegations, the University Committee for Research and Innovation (UCRI) is responsible on behalf of the Senate for research governance and standards including research ethics and for oversight of the development of the research skills of Staff and Students undertaking research.

b) UCRI has established the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) as one of its sub-committees to maintain oversight of ethical matters in relation to the University’s research and innovation activities.

2 Reporting

a) The UREC will submit a report following each of its meetings to the UCRI summarising activities, discussions and decisions.

b) The UCRI may also task the UREC to report on or make recommendations in relation to emerging issues of institutional, national or international significance.

c) The UREC should be pro-active in bringing reports of institutional, national or international significance issues to the attention of UCRI.

Note:
The UCRI reports to both the University Executive and the Senate on matters of strategy and policy.

3 Purpose

a) to provide institutional-level leadership on ethical matters arising out of research, innovation and related institutional activities.

b) to recommend policies and procedures for the University in respect of research ethics.

c) to maintain an oversight of research ethics training across the University.

d) to consider and approve (as appropriate) research proposals submitted by Schools – see Section 4a.

e) to advise the UCRI on matters related to research ethics.

f) to receive reports from School Research Ethics committees/representatives where necessary.

g) to have oversight of the application of School policies and procedures.

Definitions:

- Research and Innovation includes:
  
  o research activities of academic Staff, Students registered for research degrees, Students undertaking research projects at any level of study, enterprise activities, business engagement and public engagement.

  o research may cover sensitive subjects which might include (but is not limited to): race, sexuality, politics, drugs and alcohol, faith/religion/belief systems.
• research involving animals and other living subjects only where this is not regulated by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA).

• Research ethics apply principally to research involving human participants, data or tissue carried out by Staff or Students whether on the premises of the University or member of the Heriot-Watt Group or at any other location.

4 Remit

The UCRI delegates authority to the UREC to:

a) develop and implement the University Research Ethics Policy and associated procedures, including:
   • setting standards for School responsibilities in relation to these policies and procedures;
   • ensuring the effective and consistent adoption of the University Research Ethics Policy and associated procedures in Schools and Institutes through regular reports and audits;
   • considering research proposals from Schools that:
      o do not receive unanimous approval or agreement within School/Institute ethical review processes.
      o require consideration at University level.

b) develop a University-wide approach to research ethics training by:
   • ensuring good practice across Schools and Institutes;
   • identifying and encouraging uptake of appropriate professional development provision for Staff and Students in relation to research ethics.

c) ensure procedures and guidance for the use of security-sensitive research material are implemented for the protection of researchers - this will include guidance for the storage and circulation of this material.

d) maintain oversight of developments in research ethics policy by:
   • monitoring, disseminating and reporting on institutional, national or international developments in research ethics policies from, for example, UKRI, SFC, EU;
   • responding (where appropriate) to research ethics policy developments and requests and / or make recommendations to the UCRI

e) provide advice on matters referred by the UCRI which are related to the Committee’s purpose.

f) ensure effective communication of its business with other relevant groups.

g) create short-life working groups (if necessary) to fulfil the responsibilities of the Committee:
   • consider reports from short-life working groups.
   • inform the UCRI of the creation, on-going work and disbanding of any working groups.

5 Composition

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ex-officio members</th>
<th>Membership 2016/2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>TBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Chair</td>
<td>Professor Jon Shephard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Principal (Research and Innovation)</td>
<td>Professor Garry Pender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of related Committee (selected by Chairs of those Committees)</td>
<td>Dr Alastair Lyndon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee for Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act</td>
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Research Ethics Representatives from Schools (nominated by Director of Research in consultation with Heads of School)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society</th>
<th>Professor Sarah Johnsen</th>
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<tr>
<td>School of Engineering &amp; Physical Sciences</td>
<td>Professor Jon Shephard</td>
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<tr>
<td>School of Social Sciences</td>
<td>Dr Louise Delicato</td>
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<tr>
<td>School of Mathematical and Computer Sciences</td>
<td>Dr Patricia Vargas</td>
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<tr>
<td>School of Textiles and Design</td>
<td>Dr Irini Pitsaki</td>
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<tr>
<td>School of Social Sciences - Psychology</td>
<td>Dr Cakil Agnew</td>
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Representative from the Dubai campus

Representative from the Malaysia campus
Director of Research and Enterprise (Malaysia) Professor David Ngo

Professional Services
Representative of Research Engagement Directorate (nominated by Director) Dr Tony Weir

Student Representation
Postgraduate Research Student Representative tbc

External Members (proposed by Members of the Committee and approved by Chair of the UCRI) tbc

In attendance
Clerk to the Committee Phil Rowsby
University Secretary Ms Ruth Moir
Director of Legal and Governance Services Ms Sue Collier
Clerk to University Committee for Research and Innovation Phil Rowsby

6 Chair and Vice-Chair

a) The Chair of the UREC, is nominated by the Deputy Principal (Research and Innovation) and approved by the UCRI.

b) A Deputy Chair of the UREC, is drawn from amongst the Committee Members and approved by the Deputy Principal (Research and Innovation).

c) In the absence of both the Chair and the Deputy Chair from any given meeting, those members present shall appoint one of their number as Acting Chair.

7 Equality and Diversity in Membership

a) The Committee exercises its responsibility, as far as possible, to promote diversity of representation within its membership and the membership of any working groups.

b) The Committee will also act to promote equality of opportunity for all colleagues who are involved in carrying out its business.

8 Quorum and Voting

a) The quorum necessary to transact business is three members, who are members of staff, representing at least three Schools and at least one Member of the UCRI.

b) All members of UREC are entitled to vote in any vote of the Committee.

c) A person invited to be ‘in attendance’ at one or more meetings of UREC is not entitled to vote.

d) The Chair has a deliberative vote and a casting vote.
9 Attendance at meetings

a) The UREC may co-opt members as appropriate for a specified period of time, and report such co-options to the UCRI at the earliest opportunity.

b) In addition to the members, and those normally 'in attendance', other colleagues may from time to time be invited to attend meetings on an ad-hoc basis for particular agenda items, and invited to contribute to discussions at the discretion of the Chair.

c) The UREC maintains a record of attendance at each of its meetings and reports this information in accordance with the Attendance Policy for Senators and Committee Members.

10 Forward Planning

a) The UREC maintains a list of Standing Agenda Items and an annual schedule of activities.

b) The UREC sets dates for its ordinary meetings one year in advance.

c) The annual year-end self-assessment includes:
   - reviewing its performance in fulfilling its Remit;
   - considering possible modifications to its Terms of Reference;
   - reviewing the composition (including the gender balance of its membership, and the opportunity for contribution from the University’s different campuses)
   - submitting recommendations thereon to the UCRI.

11 Culture of Operation

In fulfilling its terms of reference, the UREC shall follow the principles agreed by the Senate to enhance academic governance by:

a) closer alignment between the decision-making structure and the University's strategic objectives, to ensure that the decision making structures are fit for the delivery of the strategy;

b) a more efficient approach to the decision making process, leading to clearer lines of reporting and accountability, a reduction in time taken to reach business-critical decisions, and high quality outcomes;

c) minimisation of business considered by numerous different groups and with appropriate accountability for decisions taken;

d) an assumption that decisions will be reached by consensus wherever possible;

e) an assumption that each Committee will address business internationally;

f) appropriate delineation between governance and management;

g) the papers coming forward to committees should contain clear, evidence-based proposals for consideration;

h) greater use should be made of IT facilities to reduce the amount of paper being circulated, with members of committees and others being able to access committee papers on a local intranet with appropriate access authorisation; and

i) effective communication of decisions to all relevant parties throughout the University.

12 Sub-committees and Short-life working groups of the Committee

None at date of these Terms of Reference.
13 Frequency of meetings

a) The UREC normally meets three times per year.

b) Additional meetings (including meetings held in conjunction with other bodies) may be required – with the approval by the Chair – for more detailed consideration of particular items.

c) Changes to arrangements, such as cancellation, rescheduling or additional meetings will be notified to members by the Clerk as soon as possible, and normally within not less than five working days of the scheduled meeting date.

14 Lifespan and Effectiveness of the Committee

This is an established Committee of the UCRI and its lifespan is ongoing.

UREC will be included in any assessments and formal reviews of effectiveness of UCRI and its sub-committees.

15. Actions that may be taken by the Committee

The Committee may:

- Approve
- Note
- Receive
- Consider
- Endorse
- Recommend
- Reject
- Ratify

16. Minutes

a) Minutes of each meeting are distributed to members within two weeks of the meeting. The Chair approves the content of minutes before release.

b) The minutes are presented to the next ordinary meeting of the UCRI, with any matters for consideration and/or approval highlighted in a cover paper.

c) The UREC’s agenda and minutes, which are FOISA compliant, shall be available for publication on request.

d) Agendas, minutes and papers are held electronically by the Clerk to UREC.

e) UREC has traditional/formal minutes in accordance with internal University guidance on style, and requirements regarding Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

f) The papers and minutes should be copied to the Head of Heritage and Information Governance for archive purposes.

17. Resources

Clerk and admin support Allocated from within Governance and Legal Services.

Meetings Normally 3 meetings per year.

NOTES: Date of last revision: June 2017, revised May 2021, revised June 2021 (UREC meeting 3.6.2021)