

Academic Ethics and Compliance Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on October 08 2024 at 2pm via video-conference

Meeting Attendance

Members present: Prof Bryony Beresford, (Chair)
Prof Dawn Coverley, Biology
Richard Fuller, IT infrastructure
Dr Duncan Jackson, Academic Quality and Development
Samir Belgacem, Student Representative
Dr Anna Bramwell-Dicks, School of Arts and Creative Technologies
Prof Tony Royle, School for Business and Society
Dr Justine Daniels, Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange
Dr Cylcia Bolibaugh, Education
Pauline Painter, Lay Member

In attendance: Jen Mayne, Policy, Integrity & Performance (Secretary)

Apologies: Dr Angela de Bruin, Psychology
Dr Siamak Shahandashti, Computer Science
Prof Jonathan Finch, Archaeology
Dr Anna Einarsdottir, School for Business and Society

Section 1: Standing Items

Declarations of interest in items on the agenda (oral report)

24-25/1 Members were invited to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the business of the meeting. None were declared.
Members were reminded to complete the central annual declarations of interest register.

Unreserved minutes of the last meeting held on June 11 2024 [AEC.24-25/01]

24-25/2 The Committee **confirmed** the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on June 11 2024 as an accurate record.

Action tracking and matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda [AEC.24-25/02]

24-25/3 The Committee **noted** progress in relation to actions arising from the minutes as follows:

1. M20-21/29: Ethics software/IT solutions will be considered as part of the “changing the work” initiative. AECC no longer leading on this action. Monitor & support progress.
2. M22-23/4b: Preliminary meetings have been held with the new head of Involvement at York to progress the action regarding the interaction of ethics and Public Participation and Involvement.
3. M22-23/4a: Planning for meeting of REC Chairs is complete and will be removed.
4. M23-24/07: Training provision will be considered as part of the larger changes around ethics committee structure and application processes.

5. M23-24/27: Clarification of the policy on payment of “vulnerable” participants has been circulated to all University ethics committees. Action is complete and will be removed.

Update from the Director of Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange (RIKE) on the ethics element of Changing the Work (oral report)

24-25/4

The Director of RIKE **reported** the following:

1. A single system for ethics management is being considered. This would allow for consistency, transparency and integration with existing systems, while meeting governance needs.
2. It is likely that the IT/software consideration will be one of the primary actions as a helpful starting point. Considerations of committee role, size, number and structure are also important.
3. Some Faculties are already moving forward with restructure of ethics committees, in the knowledge that further changes are expected.

A full discussion followed, **noting** that:

There is the potential to adapt an existing departmental system developed by University IT specialists or purchase commercially available software; Preliminary conversations have been held with Worktribe. Dr Daniels clarified that planning is at an early stage, and a project plan, including timescales, is not yet available.

Members are keen to be involved, highlighting that whatever is implemented has to work for users and different committees may have differing needs.

The Chair closed the discussion by reiterating that the Committee are keen to contribute to move this action forward and asking that a verbal update continues to be brought to AECC meetings.

ACTION: Director of RIKE to share further details regarding preliminary project plan including objectives and timescales at December meeting.

Section 2: Strategic Development, Planning and Performance Monitoring – items for consideration and/or decision

Horizon scanning and agreeing priorities for the 2024/25 academic year (oral report)

24-25/5

The Committee **considered** priorities for the 2024/25 academic year noting the following proposed areas of focus:

1. Support in delivery of the ethics aspects of the Changing the Work initiative.
2. Work with Involvement at York to define ethics requirements for public involvement and participatory approaches in research across the University of York.
3. Participate in and support delivery of the AI in Research task and finish group, noting that two members of the AECC also sit on that group.
4. Participate in and support delivery of the Open Research Strategy Group, noting that two members of the AECC also sit on that group. Of particular relevance is an ORSG action to clarify responsibilities and implement mechanisms and processes for ethics committees in relation to data management.
5. Introduce a standing agenda item on “sector good practice” to increase awareness of what could go wrong, and to ensure the University has appropriate measures in place.

ACTION: Secretary to add standing agenda items for verbal reports from ORSG and the AI in Research T&F group.

Secretary to liaise with the Policy, Integrity & Performance team to agree how best to monitor and report on sector good practice.

Receipt of the reflective review of ESRC Grant funded project [AEC.24-25/03]

24-25/6

It is a requirement of the ESRC that major research organisations should undertake an annual ethical conduct audit of at least one ESRC project per year (ESRC Framework for research ethics, 2010, rev. 2012).

The Committee considered and **approved** the ESRC review completed by the Psychology research ethics committee.

The Committee noted that the report was thorough and demonstrated the Psychology research ethics committee's ongoing reflection on learning and change, with improvements to forms since those used in the study which started in 2020.

Receipt of the Annual Report covering AECC Activity for the 2023/24 academic year [AEC.24-25/04]

24-25/7 The Committee **received** the report, noting that it was approved by University Research Committee on 26 September 2024.

ACTION: Secretary to provide updated version with confirmed membership to Senate.

Section 3: Policy and Regulatory Matters

Reconfirmation of AECC Terms of Reference and membership [AEC.24-25/05]

24-25/8 The Committee **approved** the existing terms of membership, noting the need to review in-year to align with upcoming changes. All members confirmed their intention to continue on the Committee with the exception of the student member, Samir Belgacem, as he reaches the end of his studies. The committee thanked Mr Belgacem for his service.

ACTION: Secretary to commence recruitment of a new student member.

Section 4: Sub-committee Summaries and Meeting-related information

Committee reports

24-25/9 The Committee **received** the following minutes:

- Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body, [AEC.24-25/06, confidential]

Any Other Business

It was noted by a committee member who is Chair of a local Research Ethics Committee that the lack of administrative support is causing concern and impacting ethics committee function. While planned changes may address this in the longer term, in the short term this is proving difficult to manage.

It was agreed that the next meeting should be in person, if possible, with an option to be present by zoom.

ACTION: Secretary to organise hybrid meeting.

Jen Mayne, Secretary
October 10 2024