



**Senate**

<b>Paper Title</b>	<b>Executive Summary – Ethics of Research Committee</b>
<b>Outcome requested</b>	Senate is asked to <b>note</b> the report.
<b>Points for Senate members to note and further information</b>	An updated Terms of Reference and membership list will be reported to Senate at its March meeting.
<b>Questions for Senate to consider</b>	
<b>Regulatory/statutory reference points</b>	
<b>Strategy and risk</b>	
<b>Reporting/consideration route for the paper</b>	
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# QUEEN MARY ETHICS OF RESEARCH COMMITTEE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Date of Meeting – 10 November 2021

### **Main Items Discussed**

#### **Research ethics application 'software as a solution' system**

Whilst it is imperative the Queen Mary research ethics application form includes the whole range of questions - to ensure we capture the ethical issues, risks and burdens relating to any given study, be it low / moderate / high risk, international, interventional, observational, qualitative / quantitative, taking human tissue - this makes the form, currently hosted on a Word document, unwieldy. The Queen Mary Ethics of Research Committee are acutely aware that by including all questions, in order to encompass the wide variety of cross Faculty research that the University supports, this ensures that some sections of the form are inevitably redundant for any given research project.

Furthermore, the expertise of the Research Ethics team is wasted in spending a considerable amount of time entering the information from the application form into a database, currently held on Excel. To streamline the review of applications for ethical approval, to ensure that reporting is comprehensive, transparent and efficient at every stage, and to assure good research governance across the University, the Committee and the Research Ethics team are in search of a software solution.

After receiving approval from the IT Strategy Board in July 2021 the Queen Mary research ethics team has been working with Procurement to explore available solution options. Responses to method statements and demonstrations have been delivered and evaluated (Sept and Oct 2021) and assessors have recently conducted a ratification of the pricing structures (Nov 2021); which have been returned to the companies with requests for further information, clarification and confirmation. After the most suitable SAAS (software as a solution) for the needs of the University has been selected, this system will be piloted before being launched across the University.

## **Generic review process and DSRECs**

The invitation to establish Devolved School Research Ethics Committees continues to be well received, and since March 2021, generic approval applications have been submitted by the following Schools / Departments:

- Geography
- Business and Management (SBM)
- Department of Psychology (S&E)
- Department of Linguistics (LLF, HSS)
- Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (EECS)
- Politics and International Relations (SPIR)

Expressions of interest and early conversations are also underway with:

- Global Public Health
- History
- Centre for Medical Education (IHSE)
- Law.

The Research leadership in HSS are considering centralising their entire low-risk review process, with standardised processes and forms across their Schools/departments.

The QMERC membership have agreed to support the DSRECs by naming an individual from QMERC to be the 'QMERC link person' for an individual DSREC, thus supporting the development of these nascent RECs. Further QMERC will set up a specific sub-committee, Chaired by Deputy Chair Prof Dylan Morrissey, to review future DSRECs, to ensure these are reviewed with minimal delay, inviting representatives from the DSRECs to share best practice. The DSREC Chair or Deputy are invited to become a member of one of the Review Panels so that communication, learning and development is reciprocal.

The Research Ethics team have developed a DSREC Welcome Pack and will continue to support colleagues with obtaining generic approval.

## **QMERC Panel membership and recruitment**

The QMERC was delighted with the responses to advertising campaigns for external lay members and additional Professional Services staff to strengthen the Committee's Review Panel membership. New Queen Mary staff have now joined Review Panels from across the Faculties plus five new Professional Services representatives, including Health & Safety

Directorate representation on the Main Committee of QMERC to strengthen the links between ethically reviewed and risk-assessed research.

We are in the final stages of recruiting twelve new Lay Members, coming from a variety of cultural backgrounds and professional fields of work, who will join the ethical debates at Queen Mary from all corners of the globe and will play a vital role on Research Ethics Committees.

### **Research Ethics team staffing**

The Research Ethics team is currently in a transition period having received resignations from our two Facilitators in quick succession. In the immediate term we have short-term (3 month) cover being provided by recently retired ex-Facilitator Hazel Covill on a part-time 0.8FTE basis and an administrator sought through QTemps. Recruitment for permanent staff is underway but we ask for patience and understanding during this time. QMERC is pleased to report that the team will be strengthened with a Senior Research Ethics Facilitator.

### **Self-Assessment Tool for the Concordat to Support Research Integrity**

The UK Research Integrity Office has published a new edition of its self-assessment tool for the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The self-assessment tool was discussed at the meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> November, and it was decided that with numerous projects currently on-going, the daily workload of applications plus the challenges of stretched resources, the QMERC would properly address this next year. The QMERC was pleased to hear a new role Research Integrity & Compliance Officer has been recruited and look forward to working with the future post-holder.

### **Other Issues**

There have been a number of cases of researchers challenging existing agreed research ethics procedures and policies, and whether they are necessary. Each of these are being dealt with individually.

### **Metrics for 01 October 2021 to 30 November 2021**

The report below provides a summary of the applications for QMERC ethical approval received and approved between 01 October 2021 to 30 November 2021.

Low risk applications received	76
Low risk applications approved	28
Panel review applications received	11
Panel review applications approved	2
QMERC applications received	4
QMERC applications approved	0
Amendments received	3
Amendments approved	0
TOTAL APPLICATIONS IN 2-MONTH REPORTING PERIOD	87
TOTAL REJECTED	2

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