



QUEEN MARY ETHICS OF RESEARCH COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Date of Meeting – 2 March 2022

Main Items Discussed

Research ethics application ‘software as a solution’ system

Further to a successful tender process, supported throughout by IT and Procurement teams, the Research Ethics team has appointed Infonetica as the company that will provide the ‘software as a solution’ online application system that will host our application form and also represent our database and information repository.

Infonetica have much experience in this very niche field of providing online application form solutions for Research Ethics Committees, including the IRAS form for NHS studies. The contract was signed by all parties in May 2022 and we are now in the process of providing the company with the application form content and establishing workflows through the system for the user. The researcher will no longer have to view any question that is not essential and pertinent to the ethical review of their research project. Further it will act as a communication tool so that by logging on – via the secure single sign-on Queen Mary log-in page – researchers and reviewers alike will be able to see exactly the status of their application.

We will work with the company to provide them with the information and they will build the software for us, bespoke to our requirements as per the contractual agreement. We will conduct user testing with a group of researchers and our own Committee members before roll-out but hope to launch the new application form Sept-Dec 2022.

Devolved School Research Ethics Committees (DSRECs)

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

- Geography - UG
- Business and Management (SBM) – PGR & Staff
- Business and Management (SBM) – PGT & UG
- Department of Psychology (S&E)
- Department of Linguistics (LLF, HSS)
- Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (EECS)
- Politics and International Relations (SPIR)
- Centre for Medical Education (IHSE)
- Sports & Exercise Medicine (WHRI).

Expressions of interest and early conversations are also underway with:

- Global Public Health
- Language Centre (LLF, HSS)
- Drama (Theatre & Performance Studies)
- History
- Economics & Finance
- Trauma Sciences (MSc)
- Law.

The QMERC membership are supporting each DSREC by naming an individual 'QMERC link person'. With the growing popularity of this initiative, the QMERC has established a specific sub-committee, Chaired by Deputy Chair Prof Dylan Morrissey, in order to expedite applications and avoid delays, thus new applications can be reviewed at either DSREC sub-committee or full QMERC Main Meeting (6 meetings a year). The DSREC sub-committee held its inaugural meeting in January 2022 and invited to each meeting will be the representatives of all DSRECs (Chairs and Deputies) to review future DSRECs applications but also to act as a forum for sharing challenges and best practices. Furthermore the DSREC Chair (Deputy or nominee)

are encouraged to become a member of one of the Review Panels so that communication, learning and development is reciprocal.

QMERC Panel membership and recruitment

We have successfully recruited 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. All have received reference checks, honorary contracts from HR, training from the research ethics team on processes and procedures, training from our lay Chair and attended their first REC meeting in observer capacity. All have now been assigned to Panels and meetings with the Chair.

Panel meeting days/times

Queen Mary Research Ethics Committee Panel meetings have always traditionally been held on a Wednesday at 2pm. As times have changed and the pandemic forced us to hold all meetings on online platforms, we have addressed the need to be more flexible and offer more choice to potential members. Not only will this extend the opportunity of REC membership to our colleagues who have Wednesday afternoon commitments, but also to accommodate our international lay members who will be joining our meetings from different time zones. Last but not least we aim to offer a range of meeting options so that the Committee is more compliant with Athena Swan recommended working hours.

Other Issues

Further to correspondence received from Prof Sophie Harman, Director of Research of SPIR, QMERC were presented with a number of concerns expressed by senior faculty in SPIR regarding the application process and the conduct and communication from QMERC and the research ethics office. We immediately offered a face-to-face meeting but a written response was preferred instead. We have addressed each point individually and thoroughly and are in the process of ensuring that our response resolves any remaining issues.

FIG 1

The report below provides a summary of the applications for QMERC ethical approval received and approved between **02 November 2021 and 24 February 2022**.

Low risk applications received	141
Low risk applications approved	59
Panel review applications received	24
Panel review applications approved	8
DSREC applications received	5
DSREC applications approved	3
QMERC applications received	0
QMERC applications approved	1
Amendments received	-
Amendments approved	6
TOTAL APPLICATIONS IN 4-MONTH REPORTING PERIOD	170
TOTAL REJECTED	1

FIG 2

The report below provides a summary of the applications for QMERC ethical approval received and approved between **25 February 2022 and 31 May 2022**.

Low risk applications received	164
Low risk applications approved	115

Panel review applications received	33
Panel review applications approved	20
DSREC applications received	1
DSREC applications approved	2
QMERC applications received	1
QMERC applications approved	1
Amendments received	30
Amendments approved	20
TOTAL APPLICATIONS IN 3-MONTH REPORTING PERIOD	229
TOTAL REJECTED	2

Contact officer

Katherine Ouseley

Designation

Research Support & Development Manager, JRMO

Email: research-ethics@qmul.ac.uk