Queen Mary
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Senate

Paper Title	Ethics of Research Committee (QMERC)
Outcome requested	To **note** the executive summary report of the QMERC meeting on 21 June 2023 and action taken since.
Points for Senate members to note and further information	
Questions for Senate to consider	N/A
Regulatory/statutory reference points	N/A
Strategy and risk	N/A
Reporting/ consideration route for the paper	QMERC Senate
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QUEEN MARY ETHICS OF RESEARCH COMMITTEE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Date of Meeting – 21 June 2023

Main Items Discussed & Relevant Action Since

Chair's succession planning / Securing strong leadership

Dr Helen Jenner is stepping down as Chair of QMERC at the end of 2024, after what will be 6 years of service. In collaboration with Dr Jenner, we are working towards recruiting her successor. We are also exploring ways to restructure the format of the Chairs roles. The current QMERC structure consists of external lay Chair of QMERC and one Deputy Chair who has been an internal, academic member of Faculty, in addition, the Committee has a membership based on the Chairs and Deputies from each of its 7 Review Panels. In recent years QMERC Committee(s) workloads have grown markedly as research ethics and integrity have become embedded throughout Queen Mary and research activity across our research-led institution has increased. This has led to year-on-year increases in application volume and complexity.

One proposal being considered is that the creation of three Vice Chair roles occupied to support the Chair and Deputy Chair would facilitate communication and embed research ethics in all Faculties. These three additional individuals should come from each of the three academic Faculties of Queen Mary. With one representative from each Faculty, it is hoped that communication between the QMERC, its central Review Panels and our research community will benefit as the relevant messages are transferred to the Directors of Research & Education, Heads of Schools and the active researchers in Faculties, working directly to achieve our Strategy 2030.

Application form goes online – successful launch of "QMEthics"

On 18 July the Research Ethics team launched QMEthics online application system. It has been an overwhelming success, much of which is owed to the staff and students who took part in the user acceptability testing phase and the careful planning and preparation in the design and implementation stages. The launch was not without glitches, these were recognised early and resolved within hours of identification. To continually monitor the system for user experience and functionality, we created 2-stage feedback opportunities. The first feedback form is sent with the application submission acknowledgment email and the second after a final decision on the ethics application. The information gathered will be used to understand user experience and to make improvements.

Devolved School Research Ethics Committees (DSRECs)

The DSREC Sub-Committee – whose dual function is to review the incoming applications from new DSRECs and to serve as a forum for debate among the Chairs and Deputies of our now n=12 operational DSRECs - met in June and September 2023. The subject of the June Sub-Committee was a discussion around the support and recognition for ethical review work; administrative and resource allocation and workload recognition for time spent conducting ethical reviews. We intend to submit a paper making the case for better recognition for the contributions to research ethics across the university, at the moment a voluntary endeavour. The subject of the September Sub-Committee was a discussion around the needs and requirements of the DSRECs to successfully integrate/onboard them into QMEthics.

The DSREC audit programme started in May, with the first audit of one of the longest running DSRECs, Sports and Exercise Medicine. The Psychology and School of Business Management (staff and PGR) DSRECs are scheduled to be audited in October.

Panel Membership

In September 2023 Panel G was created to enable quicker review times for our researchers and alleviate the current workload pressures felt by existing Panel

members and Chairs and prevent the addition of unscheduled meetings to meet fluctuating demand. As a result of the creation of Panel G we have made some changes to the membership of each of the 6 existing Panels, to ensure balance across Faculty representation. We have also promoted existing members to ensure our Deputy Chair roles are filled.

Breaches of Queen Mary Policy

We have seen a recent spike in the number of breaches of Queen Mary policy (where studies have started without ethical approval in place) reported to QMERC. This is not unexpected at this time of year as it follows thesis' deadline submission season and failure to obtain the necessary approvals become evident, however they number more than we would have hoped. The vast majority are low-risk studies and reported through the DSRECs; thus the greater number is probably a reflection of broader engagement with research ethics across the University, leading to better reporting, as opposed to greater incidence.

Each of these are investigated with the support of the QMERC Chairs and dealt with individually. James Patterson, Research Integrity and Assurance Officer has been involved where necessary.

Lay members annual review

Dr Jenner held her annual meeting with the Lay members of Ethics Review Panels to thank them for their contributions and role development. The Lay and QM members will be invited to observe a QMERC Main Committee meeting as part of their continual development.

Metrics for 1 May 2023 to 30 September 2023

The report below provides a summary of the applications for QMERC ethical approval received and approved between **1 May 2023 to 30 September.**

	Received	Reviewed
Panel review apps	22	18
Low risk apps	64	81
QMERC apps	0	0
Amendments	22	20
Generic applications	0	0
DSREC set up applications	1	2
Total	109	121

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