

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

1 Constitution and Purpose

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 The Animal Welfare Ethical Review Board (AWERB) has oversight of ethical matter in relation to research involving animal experimentation.

2 Remit

- 2.1 The primary remit of UREC is to have oversight ethical matters in relation to the University's research and innovation activities. This includes the responsibility to:
 - 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.

Research and Innovation includes:

- 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.
- 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 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

2.2 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:
 - do not receive unanimous approval or agreement within School/Institute ethical review processes.
 - 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.

3 Composition and Membership

3.1 The Chair of the Committee is nominated by the Deputy Principal (Research and Impact) and approved by the UCRI.

3.2 Membership of the Committee shall include:

- a) the Chair of the Committee
- b) the Vice Chair of the Committee

- c) Deputy Principal (Research and Impact)
- d) a representative of Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB), selected by the chair of that committee
- e) Research Ethics Representatives from Schools (nominated by Director of Research in consultation with Heads of School)
- f) Representative from the Dubai campus
- g) Representative from the Malaysia campus
- h) Research Ethics Representatives from the Global Research Institutes (nominated by Director/CEO)
- i) Representative of Research Engagement Directorate (nominated by Director)
- j) Postgraduate Research Student Representative
- k) External Members, (proposed by Members of the Committee and approved by Chair of the UCRI)

3.3 Members are appointed to the Committee by the Court. The Committee's current membership is as follows:

- a) Dr Stephen Yarwood, Chair of the Committee
- b) Professor Jon Shephard, Vice Chair of the Committee
- c) Professor Steve McLaughlin, Deputy Principal (Research and Impact)
- d) Professor Helinor Johnston, Chair of AWERB
- e) Professor Sarah Johnsen, Representative - School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society
- Professor Jon Shephard, Representative - School of Engineering & Physical Sciences
- Dr Patricia Vargas, Representative - School of Mathematical and Computer Sciences
- Dr Kirin Hilliar, Representative - School of Social Sciences
- Professor Julian Malins, Representative - School of Textiles and Design
- f) TBC, Representative from the Dubai Campus
- g) Professor David Ngo, Representative from the Malaysia Campus
- h) TBC x 4
- i) Ms Carolyn Brock, Representative of Research Engagement Directorate
- j) Mr Sean Keenan, Postgraduate Research Student Representative
- k) Dr Susanna Lacey, External Member
- Dr Richard Spiers, External Member

3.4 In attendance:

Mr Phil Rowsby, Clerk to the Committee

3.5 The following are eligible to attend meetings:

University Secretary

4 Equality and Diversity Statement

4.1 The Committee exercises its responsibility, as far as possible, to promote diversity of representation within its membership and the membership of any working group or committee established by the Committee. The Committee, in carrying out its business, will also act to promote equality of opportunity for all.

5 Quorum and Voting

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 All members of UREC are entitled to vote in any vote of the Committee.
- 5.3 A person invited to be 'in attendance' at one or more meetings of UREC is not entitled to vote.
- 5.4 The Chair has a deliberative vote and a casting vote.

6 Committee Chair

- 6.1 The Chair of the Committee is nominated by the Deputy Principal (Research and Impact) and approved by the UCRI.
- 6.2 A Deputy Chair of the UREC, is drawn from amongst the Committee Members and approved by the Deputy Principal (Research and Impact).
- 6.3 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 Frequency of Meetings

- 7.1 The UREC normally meets three times per year.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 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.

8 Attendance at Meetings

- 8.1 The UREC may co-opt members as appropriate for a specified period and report such co-options to the UCRI at the earliest opportunity.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 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.

9 a) Reserved Business

- 9.1 There may be occasions when the Committee's business is designated reserved and/or commercially sensitive. On such occasions, with the approval of the Chair, any persons in attendance may be asked to withdraw from the meeting during consideration of a particular reserved item of business.

9.2 The record of matters with which the Chair and the Committee are satisfied should be dealt with on a reserved basis and will be recorded separately.

9 b) Conflict of Interest

9.3 Where it is identified that a member of the Committee has a conflict of interest with respect to a given matter, the Chair may, on the advice of the Secretary, request that the member in question withdraw from participation in relevant business. Depending on the nature of the business, this may allow for participation in discussions without taking part in decision-making or may require complete non-participation and/or withdrawal from that part of the meeting.

9.4 All instances of identified conflicts of interest shall be recorded in the minutes.

10 Reporting Procedures

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

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

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

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

11 Forward Planning

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

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

11.3 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.

Supporting Information

Groups reporting to the University Research Ethics Committee	
The Animal Welfare Ethical Review Board (AWERB).	
Effectiveness and lifespan	
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.	
Actions that may be taken by the Committee	
The Committee may:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="display: inline-block; width: 45%;">• Approve <li style="display: inline-block; width: 45%;">• Endorse <li style="display: inline-block; width: 45%;">• Note <li style="display: inline-block; width: 45%;">• Recommend <li style="display: inline-block; width: 45%;">• Receive <li style="display: inline-block; width: 45%;">• Reject <li style="display: inline-block; width: 45%;">• Consider <li style="display: inline-block; width: 45%;">• Ratify 	
Minuting style	
Traditional/formal minutes in accordance with internal University guidance.	
Resources	
Clerk	Phil Rowsby, Senior Governance Officer, GALS.
Meetings	Normally 3 meetings per year.

Version	Amendments	Approved by
V1		Senate - 2017
V2	The link between UREC and the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) is referenced. Minor amendments to reflect changes in Committee membership. Details transferred to the new University template.	UCRI – November 2021
V3	Names of members updated. Global Director of GALS was removed and University Secretary's attendance amended to replicate UCRI ToR.	UCRI – 14 November 2022