

## DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH ETHICS OFFICER ROLE DESCRIPTION – BEST PRACTICE

The University seeks to promote the highest standards of scientific and professional integrity and to give due consideration to the ethical, social and environmental issues arising from its activities. The principal aim of ethics review is, as far as possible, to protect all groups throughout the lifetime of the activities and into the dissemination process. As part of the University's commitment to maintaining high ethical standards each Head of Department/ School of Management appoints an Officer with specific responsibility for the management of ethical issues raised by the work of the Department/School.

Whilst the responsibilities of the Departmental Research Ethics Officer (DREO) are set out in general terms, the role of the DREO has varied in accordance with departmental circumstances and the time allocation in the workload model should reflect this (see 3 below). The purpose of this report is to identify key attributes and tasks relating to the DREO role and to define best practice.

### 1. BACKGROUND

The University Ethics Committee's Terms of Reference include the provision of advice and guidelines to departments / School of Management and individuals on ethical issues. In recent years the Ethics Committee has provided a number of documents to support good practice and professional conduct. This report sets out a profile of how the DREO might approach their responsibilities and what constitutes best practice.

There are a number of tasks that apply to all DREOs and these are listed. However, it is recognised that the requirements of departments / School of Management will vary and the DREO role will be responsive to departmental/School needs.

### 2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND ATTRIBUTES

#### 2.1 INDUCTION

The post-holder should induct the new DREO into the role and responsibilities. The paperwork should be in order and the new DREO's name should be notified to [business-support-systems@bath.ac.uk](mailto:business-support-systems@bath.ac.uk) to enable access to view online ethics forms. The ethics form is required for all research projects whether externally funded or not, consultancies and KTP proposals. The new DREO should be advised of any training opportunities and referred to relevant web site information. The Secretary of Ethics Committee should be informed promptly of the name of the new DREO to ensure that web and email lists are kept up-to-date. There is a list of all DREOs at: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/statutory-bodies-committees/bodies-and-committees-senate/ethics/dreos.html>. It is suggested that Departmental / School of Management staff contact lists add DREO to identify individuals with this role (in the same way that Directors of Teaching and others are noted).

#### 2.2 ETHICS FORMS

The DREO should become familiar with the online ethics form system for which there is a guide at: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/using-the-online-ethics-form/>. For all funded and unfunded research, consultancy, KTP and other relevant activity, there should be an EIRA 1 form (Ethical Implications of Research Activity). The DREO will review ethics forms and

reassure themselves that there has been sufficient ethical review and there is a process in place to manage ethical issues.

The DREO will complete each year the annual monitoring report for review at Ethics Committee (EIRA 2 Form). This report will identify any issues or concerns that require special management or the resolution of which is outstanding. The DREO will work pro-actively to improve the management of ethics issues.

The DREO will be mindful of the need to support new research staff. In the case of new staff, the DREO will provide a general induction to the ethical review processes at the University. The DREO will also consider with the new member of staff resources being transferred from their previous institution (including human tissue samples).

### **2.3 HTA**

The DREO should be familiar with the Human Tissue Act (HTA) and the University's monitoring process. The University does not currently hold an HTA licence as it is not aware of any proposed or current activity that requires a licence from the HTA. The annual return relating to the HTA is completed each year by Departments/School of Management (SoM). Its covering note sets out some key questions to consider when reviewing research activity.

### **2.4 TRAINING**

The DREO will attend the annual training event organised for them and will consider any other training needs to enhance their skills. These may be discussed as part of the SDPR (Staff Development Performance Review) process. The DREO will promote the online training courses (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/carrying-out-ethically-responsible-research/>). The Research Integrity module is mandatory for all research staff and doctoral students.

Where the DREO identifies training needs that are general to all DREOs, they will inform the Secretary of Ethics Committee so that these may be incorporated into the annual training event.

The DREO will check courses and lectures taking place at the University and externally, for example by the Association for Research Ethics, to see whether any event is relevant to their needs.

The DREO should be open to the broadening of their role as the University may require. Any significant extension of the role would be subject to consultation.

### **2.5 ADVICE AND SHARING OF RESOURCES**

The DREO will provide advice to colleagues or students on ethical matters referring them to departmental/Faculty ethics committees as appropriate. Any matter that cannot be dealt with in a departmental/Faculty ethics committee may be referred to the University Ethics Committee which has the powers to set up a Panel comprising of three people and the DREO to review the ethical issues arising in the research. The DREO will also refer colleagues to the ethical codes applying to their professional associations.

The Faculty level DREO (who will be a member of Ethics Committee) will oversee the sharing of resources and information across departments/SoM. There is scope for learning and improving practices so that the Faculty has a consistent and comprehensive approach to ethical review.

The DREO should ensure that once a year ethics is the focus of a Departmental/School meeting. This might include a presentation by the DREO or an invitation to a speaker

external to the Department/School or University.

The DREO will try to ensure that the knowledge and expertise of individuals is used and shared across the department/Faculty.

The DREO will try to ensure that any University directives relating to research ethics procedures are complied with and any new information is promptly brought to the attention of staff. The DREO will check regularly the information on the Research Integrity and Ethics web pages: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/research/governance/ethics/> and the external University of Bath, About Us – Our Values – Ethics – web pages: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/about/values/ethics/index.html>.

## **2.6 SUCCESSION PLANNING**

The DREO will offer advice and assistance in succession planning for their replacement ahead of their term drawing to a close. The DREO should be available for ensuring a smooth transition.

## **3. SUPPORT FRAMEWORK**

It is anticipated that all Departments/SoM will recognise the workload involved in the DREO's responsibilities and allocate time as appropriate. There might also be a Deputy DREO who could provide support at times when the DREO is away.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

It is important that the University has a robust process for ensuring the ethical review of research, consistent review standards and effective communication across research communities to embed good practice. This report sets out some of the actions that will enable a DREO to be effective in their role.

*November 2017*

---

## **Department Research Ethics Officer Role Definition, Issue 5**

The University seeks to promote the highest standards of scientific and professional integrity and to give due consideration to the ethical, social and environmental issues arising from its activities. The principal aim of ethics review is, as far as possible, to protect all groups throughout the lifetime of the activities and into the dissemination process. As part of the University's commitment to maintaining high ethical standards each Head of Department/School will appoint an Officer with specific responsibility for the management of ethical issues raised by the work of the Department/School.

The Officer should have clear terms of reference, including:

- (a) promoting policies and guidelines developed by the University in relation to research conduct;
- (b) managing and monitoring the procedures in place;
- (c) acting as the liaison point between the Department/School and the University Ethics Committee;
- (d) receiving EIRA1 forms from the Head of Department/School, reviewing issues for action and reporting to the Head of Department/School as appropriate (Note: where joint projects are being undertaken EIRA forms for grants should be filed in all the collaborating departments);
- (e) providing advice to departmental staff and students on ethical issues and procedures, referring to nationally-agreed ethical codes for professional associations where appropriate;
- (f) keeping Departmental/School ethical issues under review and reporting as required (using form EIRA2, the Annual Monitoring Report) to the University Ethics Committee;
- (g) continuing to raise awareness of ethical issues and University procedures and specific requirements for research applications to external bodies within the department/School;
- (h) reporting, where appropriate, via the department, and Faculty/School if appropriate, on any training or development needs related to ethical issues and approval processes.

### Support Framework

Department Research Ethics Officers will be expected to attend an Annual Meeting and occasional relevant training and development events. It is anticipated that the role will be acknowledged in the workload model and Heads of Department/School may wish to consider the option of nominating a deputy Officer with the allocation of an appropriate workload time commitment.

**November 2014**

## Appendix 2

Guidance on ethical principles and procedures can be found in the following places:

- University's Institutional Code of Ethics (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/about/values/ethics/code-of-ethics.html>)
- University's Code of Good Practice in Research (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/corporate-information/code-of-good-practice-in-research-integrity/>)
- Definition of Research Integrity (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/corporate-information/definition-of-research-integrity/>)
- University's Procedure for inquiring into allegations of misconduct in research and scholarship (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/research/pdf/ethics/allegations-of-misconduct-in-research-procedure.pdf>)
- Academic integrity (students) (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/learningandteaching/enhance-learning-experiences/academic-integrity.html>)
- University's Department Ethics Officer and Second Reader Role Definitions (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/statutory-bodies-committees/bodies-and-committees-senate/ethics/dreos.html> and <http://www.bath.ac.uk/corporate-information/second-reader-for-research-grant-application/>)
- Human Tissue Act (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/research/governance/ethics/hta.html>)
- UUK Concordat to support Research Integrity (<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/Theconcordattosupportresearchintegrity.aspx>)