

REC Activity Report

(Note: This inaugural report covers REC activities from July 2004 to January 2006)

Membership of committee

The committee was constituted in July 2004. Since then, there have been three retirements, and two new appointments:

Current Members:

- Mr. Brian Trench (Chair)
- Dr. Donal O'Mathuna (Vice-Chair)
- Dr. Declan Raftery (Secretary)
- Ms. Fiona Brennan (Rapporteur)
- Dr. Donal O'Gorman
- Dr. Jane Horgan
- Fr. Paul Tighe
- Dr. Mary Shine-Thompson
- Dr. Peter Nowlan
- Ms. Eve Merton
- Dr. Robert O'Connor
- Dr. Adam McAuley (appointed October 2005)
- Ms. Grainne Healy (appointed October 2005)

Retired Members:

- Ms. Marian Vickers
- Dr. Siobhan O'Sullivan
- Dr. David Tomkin

At end January 2006, there are two vacancies to be filled - one layperson, one scientist

Meetings

The full committee has met a total of 8 times. In addition, a subcommittee comprised of the REC Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Rapporteur met between full meetings to discuss procedural issues.

Ethical reviews

Taking into account proposals pending at end January 2006, the REC has processed 97 applications for ethical review. Full committee review was required for 47 of those applications, and the remainder were processed via expedited review.

Procedures

The following procedural adjustments have been made:

- The application form for research with human participants was shortened, guidelines for completing the form were expanded and sample templates for informed consent forms and plain language statements were made available on the website
- The application form for research with animal subjects was finalised; this will be incorporated into the procedures of the School of Biotechnology Bioresources Committee.
- The review process for committee members moved from hard copy distribution of applications to electronic distribution: applications are now posted to a password-protected site, enabling members to review proposals remotely and provide feedback on expedited reviews in a more timely fashion.

Ethical Awareness

In order to promote ethical awareness within the DCU research community, the Research Ethics Committee staged two workshops in September 2005, one focusing on research ethics issues pertaining to the natural sciences and the other on the social sciences and humanities. Both events were well received by the DCU research community. Guest speaker presentations were made available to staff via the REC website (http://www.dcu.ie/research/research_ethics.shtml)

As part of the Researcher Development Programme organised by the Office of the VP for Research and the Training and Development department in Human Resources, the REC Chair presented a session on DCU research ethics policies and procedures to DCU researchers.

Future work

- Producing Guidelines on Best Practice in Research Ethics, to be incorporated into the DCU Good Research Practice Guide
- Organising a joint Humanities-Natural Sciences ethics seminar in 2006
- Compiling a library of research ethics reference material in association with the relevant subject librarians in DCU
- Working with Research Convenors in Schools and Centres to raise ethics awareness in the university
- Support for Schools and Centres in improving applications before submission
- Ongoing development of the REC website, including update of documents explaining research ethics issues and procedures
- Training for researchers in preparation of 'lay descriptions' and 'plain language statements'