Ethics roundtable discussion: School of X

Draft slides to be used in hosting and ethics round table discussion as ethics & integrity training in the Schools

Includes:

- Introductory and scene setting slides (including text which could be re-used in publicity materials)
- A set of introductory slides about ethics and integrity – in case these are needed (may not be in all cases)
- The various scenarios suggested as cases for discussion if no examples presented by the audience – may not want to use all the examples at every session; could also be provided to attendees in advance as preparatory materials
Purpose of session

• Best practice in research ethics is constantly evolving and changing
• Evaluating the ethical ramifications of a piece of work is a critically reflective process
• The aim of the session is to provide a forum for real ethical issues to be discussed and evaluated with your peers
Structure of session

• The session will be facilitated by a combination of your Departmental Research Ethics Officers (DREOs), the Chair of your School Ethics Committee and members of the College Ethics Committee

• The session will start with a brief overview of ethics and integrity matters

• You are asked to bring any current ethical issues in your research that you are wrestling with to be discussed

• Some genuine ethical questions raised by research projects undertaken by members of the College will also be discussed to illustrate the breadth and depth of the Challenges we encounter
Ethics and integrity

What is research integrity?

• In general terms, it is simply ‘good citizenship applied to professional life.’ Steneck, N., 2007. Office of Research Integrity Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research Revised Edition.

• Council for Science and Technology: Rigour, respect and responsibility (2006)

• Principles and standards that apply to the entire life cycle of a research project, from beginning to end.
Ethics and integrity

What are the key principles of ethical research?

• honesty, rigour, transparency, openness, care and respect in relation to all their activities, including the planning and conduct of research.

• Where a project raises ethical concerns ethics approval should be sought

• For further information see (links)
Ethics and integrity

- **Honesty** in all aspects of research
- **Accountability** in the conduct of research
- **Professional courtesy and fairness** in working with others
- **Good stewardship** of research on behalf of others
Why seek ethics approval?

• To protect you if something goes wrong

• To make sure the risks of harm have been considered from different perspectives and effective risk mitigation strategies are in place

• Requirement from funders

• Helps maintain our culture of research integrity

• Can flag health and safety concerns (and vice versa)
Examples of ethical challenges:

(Discussion of dilemmas raised by the audience)
Other examples of ethical challenges:

Travel

• A researcher wishes to travel to a high-risk area in order to undertake research

• What are the particular ethical issues in this case?

• How do these considerations change if the researcher in question is a PhD student and therefore not employed by the College?
Other examples of ethical challenges:

Conflict of interest (1)

• A climate change researcher is offered a large unrestricted research donation from an individual with links to a climate-change denying body. Should they accept it?

• What are the ethical considerations to take into account?

• What if the same donation was offered to the College for non-research related purposes? (e.g. widening participation)
Other examples of ethical challenges:

Conflict of interest (2)

• Your student designs a project which involves collecting data about your colleagues. You are not happy with how the data collection process was conducted and do not believe anonymity cannot be suitably protected.

• The student wants to publish their findings, and you could really do with another output for REF.

• What do you do?
Other examples of ethical challenges:

How informed is informed consent?

• The research is a low risk study but requires participation from adults with developmental disorders.

• The researchers say that the subjects will have capacity to consent to being part of the research. But they also say they will ask the parents will consent as well to make sure.
  • but this would imply the subjects don't have capacity to consent...

• How can the research team effectively assess capacity and allow/support the adults to make their own decisions?
Other examples of ethical challenges:

Routine research:

• The College guidance says that “research projects which so closely follow previous research already given ethical approval within the last 3-5 years that the ethical issues are identical and have already been considered” Can be considered as routine and be signed off by the local researcher.

• How should the terms “closely follow” and “ethical issues are identical” be interpreted?

• Which factors should be considered?
Other examples of ethical challenges:

The right to privacy

• We are currently putting together a project that will involve individuals wearing a bodycam that captures events around them, that could theoretically be used for weeks on end.

• What measures we can/should take to ensure confidentiality/privacy etc.?

• The project is being developed with an SME partner. How does this influence or change the considerations?