

School Ethics Committee (SEC) Terms of Reference

There are four School Ethics Committees: Arts; Business, Economics & Informatics; Social Sciences, History & Philosophy combined with Law; Science.

The baseline Terms of Reference for the School Ethics Committee are:

1. To review research proposals on the grounds of ethical acceptability and to approve or reject them where necessary and appropriate. In doing so the Committee shall have the freedom to consult whatever evidence and opinions it considers appropriate to ensure that decisions relating to approval of ethical aspects of research methods are based solely on ethical grounds, and not, for example, on financial interests or solely on the basis of unquestioned current practice.
2. To promote, communicate and give advice within the School on ethical principles and guidelines.
3. To arrange and promote training on matters concerning ethics and ethical issues.
4. To consider and advise on any other matters concerning ethics or ethical issues within the School, referring any matters with College wide implications to the College Ethics Committee.
5. To make an annual report to the College Ethics Committee on the number of ethical approval cases considered, broken down by department, classification of routine and non-routine, actions required (if any) and details of any particular difficulties encountered.
6. The membership of the Committee shall consist of one member of academic staff from each department within the School(s), normally the DREOs, nominated by the Executive Dean plus a DREO from a different School. One member for each School will Chair the Committee. Law and SSHP will decide on whether to have a rotating Chair for alternate meetings, or to appoint one member to Chair for a full academic year. The Assistant School Managers (Research) will normally act as secretaries to the Committees.
7. The Committee has the power to co-opt other such members as it may from time to time deem necessary. A quorum will be constituted by at least one third of the normal membership.
8. The SECs will meet every month to consider applications for ethical approval. If no applications have been received the meeting does not need to go ahead but a record should be kept to this effect and communicated to the College Ethics Committee through the annual report. Dates of meetings should be advertised in advance. Expedited review can happen 'virtually' as described in the 'responsibilities and procedures for ethical review' document.
9. All members of the SECs shall observe the proper conventions regarding confidentiality of information submitted to their Committee.
10. The SECs will ensure that full records are kept of their assessment of proposals.
11. The SEC can delegate decision making for ethical proposals which are in line with disciplinary norms to the DREO as described in the 'responsibilities and procedures for ethical review' document.
12. Conflicts of Interest are addressed as described in the 'responsibilities and procedures for ethical review' document.
13. When appropriate the SEC may be asked to provide advice around questions relating to research integrity

