

# **REPHRAIN Research Ethics and Integrity Committee**

## **Terms of reference**

### **Committee objectives**

The aim of the National Research Centre on Privacy, Harm Reduction and Adversarial Influence Online ('REPHRAIN') Ethics Committee (hereafter the Committee) is to oversee and promote the highest standards of ethics and integrity in all aspects of REPHRAIN's research.

Conducting research to the highest ethical standard - with robust oversight procedures - will be critical to the success of REPHRAIN in addressing its [three missions](#) to deliver socio-technical advances for protecting citizens online.

REPHRAIN places ethical oversight centrally to its research processes, establishing an independent ethical review process to review all research conducted as part of the Centre (both core and commissioned).

The Committee and the REPHRAIN Strategic Board operates under the principles set out in UUK's Concordat to Support Research Integrity, and will further adhere to the [UKRI/ESRC core principles for ethical research](#)

### **Committee remit**

The Committee will be responsible for advising the REPHRAIN Strategic Board on the ethical integrity of all research projects conducted by REPHRAIN.

The role of the Committee will be proactive in relation to emerging issues of significance that fall within the remit of REPHRAIN.

### **Functions and duties of the Committee**

Functions include:

- Upholding the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.
- Ensuring that research commissioned or conducted by REPHRAIN is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.
- Reviewing progress of the Committee functioning regularly and openly.

## **Duties include:**

- To give researchers approval (with or without modifications to the proposal) or to reject proposals for REPHRAIN research projects. Revised proposals may also be considered.
- To give approval, recommendations of revisions, and rejections to the applicants in written form.
- Advising the REPHRAIN Strategic Board on the development of policies and guidelines relating to research ethics.
- Promoting and monitor good practice relating to ethical considerations and maintaining academic integrity within the work of REPHRAIN.
- Considering any matters concerning ethics and research integrity referred to the Committee by the REPHRAIN Strategic Board.

## **Reporting lines and responsibilities of the Committee**

The Committee reports to the REPHRAIN Strategic Board annually, via the Chair. Minutes are submitted to the Strategic Board for noting after each quarterly meeting.

## **Procedural Rules**

### **Membership and Appointment of Chair**

- 2 members from the Strategic Board
- 3 members from the Principal Investigators in the Centre
- 3 independent academic members
- 1 lay member
- 1 independent academic Chair
- REPHRAIN Centre Manager

## **Co-option**

The committee may co-opt additional members to provide areas of specific expertise.

## **The REPHRAIN Ethics Process**

The Ethics process follows two-stages

- All researchers need to secure ethical approval from their appropriate institutional research ethics committee before applying to the Committee.
- Where a project does not ordinarily require ethical review at a host institution (e.g., desk research, secondary data analysis), it is submitted directly to the Committee.

Submissions to the Committee are made through an [online portal](#). All documents should be submitted as a single PDF or Word document.

Ethical approval for individual projects must be given by at least 2 Committee members plus the Chair. Decisions will be reached within 28 calendar days of the project being submitted to the portal – this counter resets when new information is required.

The vast majority of applications are reviewed outside of meetings, where documentation is reviewed by the Chair and assigned to appropriate Committee members as outlined above. All decisions are reviewed as part of the Committee meeting.

In exceptional circumstances, retrospective applications will be reviewed by the Committee in a similar manner to those outlined above, with the addition of an explanatory note from the applicant to the required documentation.

Amendments to submitted applications will be reviewed by the Chair in the first instance to determine whether the changes are substantive enough for re-review by the Board – if they are deemed to be major changes, the application will be reviewed in the same manner as outlined above. The Committee reserves the right to withdraw approval to positively reviewed applications as necessary.

In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to take Chair's action on approval outside the normal schedule as described above. Where this occurs, review by at least one other member will be sought and the outcome will be reported to the next available Ethics Committee meeting.

The REPHRAIN Ethics Committee will meet quarterly online to discuss Ethics Board business. The dates of meetings will be published on the Centre's website.

The Committee reserves the right to audit all applications that have been approved.

## **Quorum**

There shall be a quorum at meetings of one-half of the membership of the Committee.

These Terms of Reference may be amended when necessary following approval by the full Committee.

Queries on REPHRAIN's ethics processes can be sent to [REPHRAIN-centre@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:REPHRAIN-centre@bristol.ac.uk).

## **Version information**

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