

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
PHYSICAL SCIENCES & ENGINEERING ETHICS BOARD**

**SCHOOL ETHICS OFFICERS:  
BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE AND DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES**

**Best Practice Information for Research Ethics Officers**

The following guidance has been produced to reflect the duties and workload commitments of School Ethics Officers, including guidance from the Board's Policy.

The guidance is not intended to be exhaustive, however it should be useful for both Ethics Officers and Heads of School when considering the requirements of the role. Heads of School have committed to ensuring that the commitments of School Ethics Officers are reflected in workload allocation.

**School Ethics Officers**

Each School will designate two Ethics Officers. The responsibilities of the School Ethics Officer are to:

- Be a member of the Physical Sciences & Engineering Ethics Board and participate in discussions of the Board<sup>1</sup>;
- Complete the University's online research ethics training course (and the mandatory online Research Integrity training course). If required, provide training on research ethics to colleagues and students across the institution;
- Ensure that there are effective mechanisms to bring any policy, guidelines or procedures developed by the University concerning the good conduct of research and research ethics to the attention of staff and students in the School. Mechanisms must make it clear that it is a University requirement that policies, guidelines and procedures are followed;
- Be aware of relevant professional guidelines and other external guidance relevant to all disciplines within their School, and bring details of developments to the attention of staff and students within their School and to the Board<sup>2</sup>;
- Advise faculty and students on matters relating to ethical scrutiny;
- Keep ethical issues in the School under review, and normally be members of School Research Committees or equivalent;
- Manage and monitor the implementation of research ethics procedures within the School;

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<sup>1</sup> The Committee will meet on two occasions per year.

<sup>2</sup> Each School Ethics Officer must ensure that the Board is informed of ethical expectations specific to research areas in their School. This will ensure that reviewers are aware of any potential inconsistencies/differing research methods between research areas.

- Ensure that appropriate records of applications and decisions for ethical review of UG and PGT research activity are kept for the School<sup>3</sup>;
- Report to the Head of School and the Board where appropriate, on research ethics issues;
- Undertake the review of applications for the ethical approval of research activity<sup>4</sup>;
- Provide advice to colleagues on matters relating to research ethics (including advising on the completion of the application form for the ethical review of research).

### **Period of Office**

The period of office will normally be four years, with the opportunity to renew/extend the appointment by agreement with the Head of School and the Convener of the Board.

### **Additional Support**

Newly appointed School Ethics Officers will receive mentoring from a Board member. Further support and guidance will also be available from the Convener of the Board.

School Ethics Officers will be required to familiarise themselves with the [University's Research Governance Handbook](#), which provides a framework for research ethics and governance at the University and applies to all academic disciplines.

School Ethics Officers should also be aware of the requirements of the [Research Data Management Policy](#) and associated [guidance](#). Further information on Research Data Management can be obtained from the [Research & Knowledge Exchange webpages](#) on Staffnet, or contact [digitalresearch@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:digitalresearch@abdn.ac.uk) .

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<sup>3</sup> These records should be retained by the School for a period of six years following the end of the student's programme of study, using the School's shared drive.

<sup>4</sup> This includes review of applications from within the School and also review of applications from colleagues/PGR students in other Schools associated with the Board. This may also involve reviewing applications submitted from other disciplines, as a reciprocal agreement has been reached with the other Ethics Committees that applications for ethical review of research should be submitted to the Committee with the most appropriate knowledge of the ethical issues specific to the research project.