THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

[Excerpt from] **RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL PROCEDURE**

3.1 The University Procedure in practice

3.1.1 Who conducts the ethical review of research at the University?

Each academic department administers the University Procedure and grants ethics approval for research undertaken by its own researchers. Each department has a designated Ethics Administrator who is responsible for the administration of the procedure on a day-to-day basis, and a pool of ethics reviewers who conduct the ethical review of research projects submitted to the department.

Any University member of staff may become an ethics reviewer (with the approval of their Head of Department). Departments should ensure that staff appointed as ethics reviewers (including as supervisors of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught student research projects) receive appropriate training and/or guidance to help them fulfil this role effectively and that appropriate records of relevant training are maintained (for example via a training log for each reviewer/supervisor, maintained by the Ethics Administrator).

All ethics reviewers (including those who have undertaken ethical review for another organisation but who are new to the University of Sheffield) should have read the University's *Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue*. In addition, they should undertake at least one, and ideally more, of the following:

- attend one of the UREC's regular workshops for ethics reviewers; OR a department-run equivalent (departments are encouraged to use the training materials from UREC workshops as a basis for delivering their own internal training sessions);
- read the key resources for ethics reviewers provided on the central ethics web pages, including the slides delivered at ethics reviewer workshops, and the quick reference guide for reviewers, available here: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/ethicspolicy/further-guidance/universityprocedure2/reviewersc;
- read one or more of the training examples of ethics applications with reviewer comments, available here (in the section headed 'Case Studies'): https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/ethicspolicy/educationresources/trainingresources;
- shadow an experienced colleague whilst they ethically review one or more applications.

It is strongly recommended that only experienced reviewers are appointed to act as the lead reviewer. Reviewers should be encouraged to undertake refresher training from time to time, using any of the routes described above. They should also ensure they are aware of changes to the University's Ethics Policy and Ethics Review Procedure by reading email updates and bulletins circulated by their departmental Principal Ethics Contact and by the UREC.

Each department should also have a group of at least three ethics reviewers, constituting an Ethics Review Panel or Research Committee, who will be available to review contentious applications (i.e. where there is a significant, fundamental difference of opinion between the original ethics reviewers about the ethical implications of the proposed research); none of the members of the Ethics Review Panel or Research Committee should have a conflict of interest with the project in question.

Each department also has its own designated Principal Ethics Contact, who will normally communicate any changes in, or information relating to, the University Procedure to staff and students in the department. This person may also be the Ethics Administrator. The names of Ethics Administrators and Principal Ethics Contacts can be found at:
https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/ethicspolicy/index

Sometimes, due to the requirements of a funding body or any other external body the cooperation of which is necessary for the research to proceed, lay input into ethical scrutiny will be required. In such cases, ethical scrutiny of research projects will be undertaken by a sub-committee of the University Research Ethics Committee (see section 3.1.5 for more details).

N.B. The arrangements for the ethical review of administrative research are set out in Research Ethics Policy Note no.7: 'Administrative research within the University'. If a research project requiring ethical review will be carried out by part of the University that does not fall within the designated procedures for either academic or administrative research, the project leader should contact the Secretary of the University Research Ethics Committee for advice on how to seek ethical approval.