

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

University of Cambridge Research Ethics Review Appeals Procedure

A. Background

- i. The University is committed to advancing high quality academic research and ensuring that any research activities which involve human participation or personal data are undertaken in such a way that the dignity, rights, health, safety, and privacy of those involved are safeguarded. As part of this commitment, the University has established a procedure to allow appeal against the decisions of local and School-level Ethics Committees.
- ii. This procedure applies to all University staff and students engaged in a research project to which the University's Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants and Personal Data applies, and to other persons engaged in a University-led research project who, as a condition of being granted access to University facilities or premises, have agreed in writing that the policy will apply to them.
- iii. A researcher may appeal the decision of any local and/or School-level Research Ethics Committee on any of the following grounds:
 - a) That there existed material circumstances relating directly to the case of which the reviewing committee was not aware;
 - b) That procedural irregularities occurred in the review process, which were of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the Committee would have reached the same conclusion had the irregularities not occurred; and
 - c) That there is demonstrable evidence of prejudice, bias, or inadequate review.
- iv. If the University Research Ethics Committee are of the view that a complaint does not fall within any of the grounds specified above, they shall dismiss the complaint and shall inform the complainant accordingly. Dissatisfaction with the decision of a local or School-level Research Ethics Committee alone is not sufficient grounds for appeal.

B. Appeal procedure

- i. If a researcher wishes to appeal the decision of a Research Ethics Committee, he or she should notify the Secretary of the University Research Ethics Committee within ten working days of being notified of that decision. The appeal should be sent to the address given on the University's Research and Research Ethics websites. If significant new information concerning the project comes to light after this date, the researcher should approach the initial reviewing REC in the first instance.
- ii. An appeal should be submitted in writing and must include:
 - The title of the research proposal, and name of the supervisor, if appropriate
 - The name of the Research Ethics Committee to which it was submitted and the date of the decision to be appealed

- The reason for the appeal
 - Any documentary evidence to support the appeal.
- iii. The University Research Ethics Committee Chairman will decide on a case by case basis whether the appeal will be dealt with electronically or in person.
 - iv. The Committee will co-opt experts if deemed necessary.
 - v. The Secretary shall obtain all relevant information from the Secretary of the Committee(s) that made the initial decision and circulate it to all University Research Ethics Committee members. The researcher and the Committee(s) that made the initial decision will also be required to provide any additional information relevant to the case for consideration by the University Research Ethics Committee. Up to fifteen working days from receipt of the appeal will be allowed for the gathering of this information.
 - vi. The Secretary shall ensure that any institutional obligations and/or relevant contractual obligations to research funding bodies and partner institutions are met, which may include notifying them of the appeal and its outcome.
 - vii. In any case that involves allegations of misconduct, in accordance with the University's established procedures, the Secretary shall ensure that the Academic Secretary is fully aware of the appeal.
 - viii. The University Research Ethics Committee will deal with requests for appeal with all reasonable expedition. The Secretary shall set a deadline for the completion of the appeal process and, where appropriate, provide a date for the Appeal hearing, and inform the appellant accordingly.
 - ix. Both the researcher and the secretary of the Research Ethics Committee involved will be notified of the result in writing.
 - x. Those making an appeal to the University Research Ethics Committee are protected by University policies on victimisation and harassment:
<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/policy/dignity/procedure.html> .