

## Procedure for handling complaints received by CUREC and its subcommittees

1. This document outlines the process for dealing with complaints made about research approved by one of the subcommittees of the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC), and complaints made about a CUREC subcommittee.

### CUREC subcommittees:

- Medical Sciences Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee ([MS IDREC](#))
  - Oxford Tropical Research Ethics Committee ([OxTREC](#))
  - Social Sciences and Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee ([SSH IDREC](#))
    - Departmental Research Ethics Committees ([DRECs](#))
2. Information regarding complaints should be treated in confidence. All individuals involved during the investigation will be asked to respect the confidential nature of the matter. Wherever possible, personal identifiers must be redacted.
  3. Research participants must be provided with the contact details of the Principal Investigator (PI) (and other members of the research team, if appropriate) and information about how to raise a concern or make a complaint.
  4. If research participants or others have concerns or would like to make a complaint, they should contact the PI in the first instance.
  5. If the PI is unable to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the complainant, complaints may be referred to the Chair of the research ethics committee that reviewed and approved the research.
  6. The following sets out template wording for information for participants (to be adapted for the research as appropriate):

Who do I contact if I have a concern about the study or I wish to complain?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please contact *[insert primary researcher name and University tel. no./ox.ac.uk email address]* or *[insert supervisor name and University tel. no./ox.ac.uk email address]*, and we will do our best to answer your query. I/we will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible:

*Include the contact details for the committee that reviewed and approved the ethics application:*

The Chair, Medical Sciences Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee;  
Email: [ethics@medsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@medsci.ox.ac.uk); Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD or

The Chair, *[insert relevant Departmental Research Ethics Committee name]*;  
Email: *[insert relevant departmental research ethics committee email address and postal address]* or

The Chair, Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee;  
Email: [ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk); Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD or

For applications reviewed by the Oxford Tropical Research Ethics Committee (OxTREC), please insert the contact details for the local ethics committee that reviewed your study.

### **Investigation**

7. Any complaints made about projects involving the administration of a licensed or unlicensed drug or other (non-drug) substance, medical device, Magnetoencephalography (MEG) recordings, Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), and brain stimulation will be notified to the University Risk and Insurance Manager at the earliest opportunity.
8. The Chair will then investigate the complaint and respond to the person who has made the complaint in a timely manner.
9. In the case of a conflict of interest, the complaint will be investigated by the Vice-Chair, or referred to the ethics committee to which the subcommittee reports (i.e. to CUREC if the complaint was received by OxTREC, MS IDREC or SSH IDREC; or to the SSH IDREC if received by a DREC).
10. If the SSH IDREC receives a complaint that relates to a DREC-approved research project, this will be referred to the Chair of the DREC who will investigate the matter and respond to the person who has made the complaint, informing the SSH IDREC of how this has been addressed and resolved.
11. Complaints made about an ethics committee itself will be considered by the ethics committee to which it reports, i.e. complaints about a DREC will be considered by the Chair of the SSH IDREC, complaints about an IDREC or OxTREC will be considered by the Chair of CUREC.
12. The Chairs of the ethics committees will be supported by the appropriate Research Ethics Manager within Research Services in the assessment, investigation and resolution of any complaints received.
13. During the investigation, progress should be communicated, as necessary, to the complainant, Principal Investigator and any other relevant personnel.

### **Reporting**

14. The DREC, IDREC or OxTREC Chair must be notified as soon as possible by the PI (or another departmental representative) if there could be a conflict of interest or if the complaint relates to a situation that could result in possible risks or harms to participants, researchers, the Department or the University.
15. Researchers and DRECs may contact the Research Ethics Manager of their ethics committee for advice and guidance.
16. The Chair (with support from the appropriate Research Ethics Manager) will consider whether there are any third parties who may have a legitimate interest in the research that should be notified of the complaint and how this has been resolved. This may include (but is not limited to) a Head of Department, regulatory body, NHS Trust, a co-investigator, research collaborator, research funder, journal editor or employer. It may also be necessary to seek advice from the University's Legal Services if there may be potential legal liabilities associated with the complaint.
17. Each CUREC subcommittee will keep records of any complaints they receive and how they were resolved and receive confidential reports of these at their meetings.
18. Each DREC will keep records of any complaints they receive and how they were resolved, and report these termly to the SSH IDREC.

19. As part of their annual reports, each CUREC subcommittee will provide CUREC with a confidential summary of the number and type of complaints they have received and how these were resolved.
20. If a PI is unable to resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant, the CUREC subcommittee must be informed as soon as possible.
21. If a DREC is unable to resolve a complaint, the IDREC must be informed as soon as possible.
22. If an IDREC or OxTREC is unable to resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant, the Chair of CUREC must be informed as soon as possible.

#### **Relationship with existing policies**

23. This process will operate in conjunction with University [policies](#) and [guidance](#). If all or part of a complaint falls outside the scope and remit of the research ethics committee, it will be referred through the appropriate process for consideration.

#### **See also**

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/complaints>

<https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/academic-integrity-in-research>