# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

# RESEARCH ACCREDITATION PANEL

## Minute

## Tuesday 19 February 2019

**Present**

**Committee Members**
Professor Paul Boyle (Chair)
Siobhan Carey (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency)
Chris Dibben (Independent member)
Tricia Dodd (Independent member)
Rebecca Endean (UK Research and Innovation)
Andrew Garrett (Independent member)
Roger Halliday (Scottish Government)
Glyn Jones (Welsh Government)
Sarah Mathieson (Independent member)
Neil McIvor (Department for Education)

**Advisors**
Peter Stokes (ONS)
Malcom Stead for Andy Wall (ONS)
Nikki Shearman

**UK Statistics Authority**
Simon Whitworth (UK Statistics Authority)
Ross Young (UK Statistics Authority)

**Apologies**
Sarah Henry (ONS)

## 1.     Introductions
1.1     The Chair welcomed members to the third meeting of the Research Accreditation Panel.

1.2     Members approved the minutes from the first meeting of the Research Accreditation Panel. The business of the second meeting was conducted via correspondence.

1.3.     Simon Whitworth updated the meeting with progress on actions from previous meetings. Most actions were complete or in progress and would soon be complete.

## 2.     Responses to feedback received from the Research Accreditation Panel on the Proposed Accreditation of Data Processors and Research Project Application Form
2.1     Simon Whitworth presented the responses to the feedback received from the Panel to the paper on the Accreditation of Data Processors for the Digital Economy Act (DEA) and the Proposed forms for Research Project applications under the DEA both of which were circulated for comment in January.

2.2     The following points were raised in the discussion that followed:

i. The Panel was assured that ONS would provide sufficient resource to handle the expected volume of projects under the DEA.
ii. It was confirmed that when a researcher conducts exploratory research the name of the researcher and the research is published. It was reported that ONS had allowed exploratory research since the ONS Approved Researcher consultation in 2015 and their experience was that most researchers undertaking exploratory research went onto complete a full research application.
iii. It was confirmed that where two or more organisations worked in partnership as a processor all organisations need to be accredited.
iv. It was recognised that there are other application processes to access data in different parts of the UK. The Panel was informed that ONS are working in a coordinated way with other processors so that the application process is as smooth as possible for researchers seeking accreditation under the Research Strand of the DEA.
v. When a researcher wants to link administrative data to health data, the application will be considered by the Research Accreditation Panel to be approved under the Research Strand of the DEA. The research will also be considered by NHS Digital's approval process for approval for the health part of the project.

2.3    The Panel approved the proposed processes for the Accreditation of Data Processors, and the forms for Research Applications, subject to the changes presented in the paper being made.

**ACTION: Pete Stokes was asked to amend the accreditation guidance and project application form in line with the changes presented in the paper.**

**3    User Journey**
3.1    Pete Stokes presented the proposed user journey that users will go through to access data under the Research Strand of the DEA. The Panel was informed that many of the processes presented happen in parallel. It was suggested that this should be made clear in the user journey diagram and that two diagrams should be developed, one for full research applications and one for exploratory research applications. The Panel felt that these should be published to help researchers navigate the process.

**ACTION: The Panel requested that Pete Stokes amend the user journey diagram in line with the Research Accreditation Panel's suggestions prior to publishing.**

3.2    It was suggested that there should be an opportunity for researchers to appeal decisions made by the Panel and Simon Whitworth was asked to develop a proposal for this appeals process.

**ACTION: Simon Whitworth to develop a proposal for appeals and share with RAP at a future meeting.**

3.3    It was stated that the Research Accreditation Panel would not consider projects where the data suppliers were unwilling to release data for the project. The Research Accreditation Panel asked to have sight of the titles of those projects which data suppliers were not willing to provide data for, the names of the data suppliers who were not willing to support the projects and the reasons why the projects were not supported.

**ACTION: Simon Whitworth and Pete Stokes to collaborate to provide the Research Accreditation Panel with information on the projects that departments are not willing to provide data for.**

**4.    Accreditation of Researchers and Research Projects**

4.1    Emma Gordon, from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), briefed the Panel that the ESRC fund the Administrative Data Research Partnership (ADRP) which works in partnership with the ONS to strategically acquire and curate admin data and make these available to researchers in a secure way, to drive high-quality research and impact around prioritised policy themes within the UK. The Panel heard that the ESRC and ONS are working alongside the chief statisticians for the devolved administrations and their teams to deliver the new data infrastructure. The following points were raised in the discussion that followed:

   i.    It is important to discuss access to data for research purposes with the research and policy people in potential data supplying departments. The Panel were assured that discussions were being held with both these groups within Departments.
   ii.   It was confirmed that ESRC funding would potentially be available to government researchers to conduct policy-relevant research through the ADRP.
   iii.  The proposal of having a data catalogue of data available for research purposes was supported by the Panel. It was suggested that it would be important to regularly refresh the available data to enable researchers to access up to date data. Departments need to be aware of this when they make data available for research purposes. It was recognised that storage issues may have to be considered when refreshing some high-volume data sets.
   iv.   The importance of communications to inform the research community of the opportunities presented by the ADRP was discussed. The Panel heard that the ESRC were allocating resource to this. It was felt that targeted communications would work best in the early days of the investment.
   v.    It was confirmed that any dataset created through the ADRP would potentially be available to commercial sector researchers for research for the public good.

4.2    The data that the Department for Education (DfE) are making available for accredited research purposes via the ONS Secure Research Service was discussed. This was welcomed by the Panel. It was reported that DfE were waiting for final permissions from some other departments who provide data to these datasets before permission to make this available for research could be granted. Neil McIvor was asked to provide an update on this at the next meeting.

**ACTION: Neil McIvor to provide the Panel with an update on progress with making DfE data available for research purposes via the ONS Secure Research Service.**

4.3    Emma Gordon agreed to come back to the Research Accreditation Panel in six months time to report on the progress that had been made.

## 5.    Any other business
5.1    Members were informed that the secretariat would be in touch to obtain a biography of each member for the Research Accreditation Panel web pages.

## 6.    Date of Next Meeting
6.1    The Research Accreditation Panel will next meet on the 29 March.