UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

RESEARCH ACCREDITATION PANEL

Minute

Tuesday 19 November 2019

Present

Committee Members
Professor Paul Boyle (Chair)
Mark Brewin (representing Kevin Fletcher, HMRC)
Chris Dibben (Independent member)
Emma Gordon (UK Research and Innovation)
Roger Halliday (Scottish Government)
Glyn Jones (Welsh Government)
Sarah Mathieson (Independent member)

Advisors
Nikki Shearman (Head of Legal Services, ONS)
Bill South (representing Peter Stokes, Research Services & Data Access, ONS)
Andy Wall (Chief Security Officer, ONS)
Ross Young (Data Protection Officer, UK Statistics Authority)

UK Statistics Authority
Emily Mason-Apps
Lily O'Flynn

Apologies
Tricia Dodd (Independent member)
Siobhan Carey (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency)
Andrew Garrett (Independent member)
Sarah Henry (ONS)
Neil McIvor (Department for Education)

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

1.2   Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2019.

1.3   Ross Young updated the meeting with progress on actions from previous meetings. All actions were complete or otherwise in progress.

1.4   Further to the Panel's approval of the Appeals Process in October, Ross Young confirmed that the Research Accreditation Panel's Terms of Reference require amendment to reflect the agreed Appeals Process. The Chair asked the Secretariat to make agreed amendments and send the updated Terms of Reference to the Panel via correspondence for agreement.

ACTION: The Secretariat to update the Terms of Reference to reflect recent changes in the Research Accreditation Panel's processes and procedures. Updated

Terms of Reference to be shared with the Panel for comments via correspondence prior to publication on the UK Statistics Authority website.

2.   DEA Processor Accreditation Status Update

2.1   Andy Wall updated the Research Accreditation Panel on the status of the ongoing accreditation of processors. It was reported that Processor Accreditation team expect the applications of seven institutions to be presented to the Panel for accreditation within the next two months. The Panel welcomed this progress.

2.2   Andy Wall confirmed that the ONS Processor Accreditation team are happy to share a high-level summary of processor assessments with data owners who are agreeing to make their data available via DEA-accredited processors, on request. The Panel asked for this process to be formalised for consideration at the next meeting to give the Panel a formal opportunity to agree the arrangements for assuring data owners of the security of DEA-accredited processors' environments. It was agreed that, in the intervening period, this information can be shared with the Department for Work and Pensions in respect of the processing environments they are particularly interested in, to enable research to proceed, as two research projects using DWP data have already received accreditation from the Panel subject to the processing environments in Scotland themselves being accredited.

ACTION: Andy Wall to present a suggested DEA-accredited processor security assurance framework to the December meeting of the Research Accreditation Panel.

3.   Re-using linked HMRC, DWP and 2011 Census data

3.1   Bill South, on behalf of Peter Stokes, provided the Panel with an update on ADR-UK and ONS engagement with the Department of Work and Pensions and HM Revenue & Customs as part of approving in principle the use of benefit and income data for upcoming research projects.

3.2   The Panel agreed that it would be willing to undertake initial reviews of project applications requesting use of Race Disparity Audit data, however the Panel reiterated the condition that the Research Accreditation Panel would only accredit research projects that have received, and show evidence of, the necessary full and final approvals from the relevant data owners. The internal approval mechanisms of data owners are therefore a matter for data owners themselves to determine, including the role of Ministers. The Panel agreed to review and provide provisional comments on research project applications that do not have the required data owner approval when appropriate, but will await confirmation of full data owner approval before taking any accreditation decisions.

3.3   Mark Brewin updated the Panel with HM Revenue & Customs' position on making the Race Disparity Audit dataset available to researchers. The HMRC executive data governance board will review the proposal at the end of November 2019 with the aim of agreeing a procedure which will allow the dataset to be re-used across the research community, without the need for ministerial approval to approve project applications on a case-by-case basis.

ACTION: Mark Brewin to update the Research Accreditation Panel on the outcome of the meeting of HMRC's executive governance board in respect of the RDA dataset at a future meeting.

4.   Project Accreditation: Major Revision Re-submissions
4.1   The Panel reconsidered two projects that had implemented major revisions recommended by the Panel at its meeting in October 2019. The following project was accredited, following satisfactory implementation of revisions:

- Class in the UK's creative industries: Beyond participation

5.   Project Accreditation: New Projects
5.1   Members of the Panel noted that, on the whole, research project applications lack critical detailed discussion of how projects provide wider public benefit. The Panel would also welcome research project applications being much clearer and more detailed in how researchers have considered (and mitigated) any potential ethical risks.

ACTION: ONS's Research Support and Data Access team to provide increased user support to ensure project risks are comprehensively addressed in the research project application form and ethics self-assessment form, alongside improved commentary on the public benefit arising from research projects.

5.2   The Panel considered nine new projects and the following four projects were accredited:

- The contribution of digital economy in Wales, a measurement by an information and communications technology satellite account
- Understanding saving behaviour in the UK
- The spatial distribution of UK Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): causes, effects, and policy
- Improving Regional Economic Indicators – Regional Consumer Prices

6.   Any Other Business
6.1   Research Accreditation Panel members requested an update on ONS's proposed online Shopfront portal for research project applications, following assurances to the March meeting of the Panel that the Shopfront portal would be available to researchers in the Summer of 2019. The Panel is keen to see early progress on the revised 'go live' date for the portal given the high volume of paperwork circulated for each Research Accreditation Panel meeting, primarily caused by the length of paper-based research project applications while the Shopfront application is being finalised.

6.2   Bill South assured the Panel that the Shopfront portal should be made available to researchers wishing to submit project applications to RAP in January 2020.

6.3   The next meeting of the Panel will be held on 12 December 2019.