

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
RESEARCH ACCREDITATION PANEL

Minute

Friday 17 January 2020

Present

Committee Members

Professor Paul Boyle (Chair)
Siobhan Carey (NISRA)
Tricia Dodd (Independent member)
Kevin Fletcher (HM Revenue & Customs)
Andrew Garrett (Independent member)
Emma Gordon (UK Research and Innovation)
Roger Halliday (Scottish Government)
Sarah Henry (ONS)
Glyn Jones (Welsh Government)
Sarah Mathieson (Independent member)

Advisors

Richard Green (Research Services & Data Access, ONS)
Jason Riches (representing Nikki Shearman, Legal Services, ONS)
Peter Stokes (Research Services & Data Access, ONS)
Andy Wall (Chief Security Officer, ONS)
Ross Young (Data Protection Officer, UK Statistics Authority)

UK Statistics Authority

Lily O'Flynn
Simon Whitworth

Apologies

Chris Dibben (Independent member)

1. Introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed the members to the eleventh meeting of the Research Accreditation Panel.
- 1.2 Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2019.
- 1.3 Lily O'Flynn updated the meeting with progress on actions from previous meetings. All actions were complete or otherwise in progress.

2. Research Accreditation Panel Terms of Reference

- 2.1 Simon Whitworth provided the Panel with the updated Terms of Reference, which had been amended to reflect the Research Accreditation Panel's Appeals Process, as agreed at the October 2019 meeting.
- 2.2 The Panel agreed to the publication of the updated Terms of Reference on the UK Statistics Authority website, subject to including in the Terms of Reference that the Appeals Panel may have the option of including an independent subject matter expert on the Appeals Panel, depending on the nature of the project.

ACTION: The Secretariat to make the agreed amendment and publish the updated Research Accreditation Panel Terms of Reference on the UK Statistics Authority website.

3. DEA Processor Accreditation Status Update

- 3.1 Andy Wall updated the Research Accreditation Panel on the status of the ongoing accreditation of processors. An accreditation report for Swansea University's SAIL/UKSeRP facilities will be considered at this meeting, while the Panel can expect accreditation reports for NISRA Census and UK Data Archive at the February 2020 meeting. The Panel welcomed this progress.
- 3.2 The Panel raised concerns over ADR Scotland's ongoing processor accreditation application, given the repeated postponement of the Accreditation team's site visits at the request of the Scottish environments. The Panel welcomed confirmation from Roger Halliday that the teams in the Scottish processing environments recognise the rescheduled February 2020 site visit as a priority.

4. Accreditation Report for SAIL/UKSeRP

- 4.1 Andy Wall presented the Panel with an accreditation assessment for the joint Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) and UK Secure eResearch Platform (UKSeRP) facility. The Research Accreditation Panel agreed that the accreditation process had been applied rigorously to SAIL/UKSeRP and took the decision to accredit the facilities for five years.
- 4.2 The Panel welcomed the speed at which SAIL/UKSeRP and the UK Statistics Authority Accreditation team were able to both provide and assess DEA accreditation application evidence. The Panel noted SAIL/UKSeRP's need to reflect on recently implemented access control policies, which will be considered as a point of particular interest during annual DEA Accredited Processor audits.

ACTION: The Chair to write to SAIL/UKSeRP to inform them of their accreditation.

- 4.3 The Panel asked for more detailed information on the UK Statistics Authority Accreditation team's plans for annual DEA Accredited Processor reviews and audits. Andy Wall confirmed that the Accreditation team had finalised a draft of the full processor accreditation review process and that this would be shared with the Panel for comments.

ACTION: Andy Wall to present a draft of the DEA Accredited Processor full annual review process at the February 2020 meeting.

- 4.4 The Panel discussed the DEA accreditation status of UKSeRP, as it is a secure e-research platform that is licenced in multiple environments outside of the SAIL facility. The Panel confirmed that this accreditation decision relates directly to the joint SAIL/UKSeRP facility, and does not include other facilities that use UKSeRP. However, the Panel would welcome DEA processor accreditation applications from other facilities using UKSeRP technology.
- 4.5 Emma Gordon advised the Panel that Health Data Research UK (HDR-UK) recognise and support the Research Accreditation Panel's process of accrediting data processing and provision environments under the Digital Economy Act. At HDR-UK's request, the UK Statistics Authority Accreditation team agreed to facilitate a discussion on the benefits and requirements of DEA processor accreditation for environments primarily providing access to health data.

5. DEA Processor Accreditation Guidance Update

- 5.1 Andy Wall presented new guidance for the processor accreditation process, which has been updated to provide additional information on applicant requirements, the assessment process, and the process for assuring data owning government departments of the security of DEA accredited processors.
- 5.2 The Panel agreed for the updated guidance to be published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

ACTION: The Secretariat to publish the updated DEA Processor Accreditation Guidance on the UK Statistics Authority website.

6. DEA Accredited Research Projects Status Update

- 6.1 Richard Green, ONS Research Services and Data Access, presented an update on the status of projects that have been accredited by the Research Accreditation Panel since October 2019.
- 6.2 The Panel noted that delays in the commencement of some research projects is usual and in keeping with historic patterns of data access for research purposes. The Panel agreed on the continued need for updates of this nature to ensure DEA accredited research projects are receiving access to requested data in a timely manner.

7. Project Accreditation: New Projects

- 7.1 The Panel highlighted the particularly high standard of applications submitted to this month's Research Accreditation Panel meeting.
- 7.2 The Panel considered five new projects and the following four projects were accredited:
- How does tax affect incorporation and business outcomes
 - Spatial sorting in housing and employment: impact of public investments, planning decisions, housing subsidies, and business rates
 - Medina Valley Marine Sector Proposition and Funding
 - The interplay between bridging and bonding social capital in shaping diversity and entrepreneurial activity across the UK and local communities
- 7.4 The Panel asked why HMRC data could not be released for use within a DEA accredited processing environment to allow the IFS project using both ONS and HMRC data to proceed in one processing environment. Kevin Fletcher agreed to investigate this issue and feed this back to the Panel at the February 2020 meeting.

ACTION: Kevin Fletcher to update the Panel on the specific issue that prevents the transfer of some HMRC data to a DEA accredited processing environment at the February 2020 meeting.

- 7.5 The Panel suggested that the public good of DEA accredited research should be communicated as widely as possible and that it would be useful to hold an event to showcase DEA accredited research.

ACTION: The Secretariat to engage with relevant stakeholders, such as ADR-UK and RSS, to develop plans to hold an event to showcase the public good of the Research Strand of the Digital Economy Act. These plans are to be shared with the Panel at a future meeting.

8. Upcoming Projects Re-Using Linked HMRC, DWP and 2011 Census Data

- 8.1 Peter Stokes updated the Panel with the status of three projects requesting access to Race Disparity Audit data that have been submitted to ONS's Research Services and Data Access team, but cannot proceed for consideration by the Research Accreditation Panel as they do not have the full and final approvals from all data owners. It was confirmed the three projects have full approval from both HMRC and ONS's Census team but that DWP has not yet given their approval.
- 8.2 The Panel welcomed HMRC's agreement to use of the Race Disparity Audit data as positive recognition of the utility of the Digital Economy Act as a legal gateway allowing access to data owned by multiple government departments for research purposes and the security of DEA accredited processing environments.
- 8.3 Kevin Fletcher updated the Panel with his plans to secure ongoing approval from HMRC's executive data governance board for the use of Race Disparity Audit data by DEA accredited researchers in projects accredited by the Research Accreditation Panel.

ACTION: Kevin Fletcher to update the Panel with the outcome of his paper relating to ongoing data access for DEA accredited projects to HMRC's executive data governance board at the February 2020 meeting.

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1 Emma Gordon presented the Panel with an update on upcoming government data linkages facilitated by ADR-UK. The Panel can expect to see research project applications that utilise the following data in the coming months:
- Linked national crime and education data, which will be made available in the ONS Secure Research Service by April 2020; and,
 - Linked justice data from approximately 40 data sources, which will be available in the ONS Secure Research Service in May 2020.
- 9.2 The Panel welcomed the introduction of these datasets, owned by Department for Education and Ministry of Justice, to the ONS Secure Research Service, which Emma Gordon confirmed will be made available for research purposes through the Research Strand of the Digital Economy Act.

ACTION: Emma Gordon to present an update on the progress of making these data available for research purposes through the Digital Economy Act at the March 2020 meeting.

- 9.3 Peter Stokes updated the Panel on the progress of the Shopfront portal that was due to be made available to researchers wishing to submit project applications to RAP in January 2020. Peter confirmed that the Shopfront portal will go live in public beta in February 2020. The Panel asked to see a demonstration of the portal at the next meeting.

ACTION: ONS's Research Services and Data Access team to demonstrate the Shopfront portal to the Panel at the February 2020 meeting.

- 9.4 The date of the next meeting is 13 February 2020.