UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

RESEARCH ACCREDITATION PANEL

Minute

Monday 16 March 2020

Present

Committee Members
Ross Young (Chair)
Mark Brewin (representing Kevin Fletcher, HM Revenue & Customs)
Siobhan Carey (NISRA)
Tricia Dodd (Independent member)
Chris Dibben (Independent member)
Andrew Garrett (Independent member)
Emma Gordon (UK Research and Innovation)
Roger Halliday (Scottish Government)
Sarah Henry (ONS)
Glyn Jones (Welsh Government)
Paul Lodge (Department for Work & Pensions)
Sarah Mathieson (Independent member)

Advisors
Nikki Shearman (Legal Services, ONS)
Peter Stokes (Research Services & Data Access, ONS)
Andy Wall (Chief Security Officer, ONS)

UK Statistics Authority
Lily O'Flynn
Simon Whitworth

Apologies
Professor Paul Boyle (Chair)
Neil McIvor (Department for Education)

1.   Introductions
1.1   In the absence of Paul Boyle, the Panel agreed for Ross Young to Chair the thirteenth meeting of the Research Accreditation Panel.

1.2   Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2020.

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

1.4   Mark Brewin, on behalf of Kevin Fletcher, updated the Research Accreditation Panel on HMRC's decision to approve the use of Race Disparity Audit data by DEA accredited researchers in DEA accredited projects on an ongoing basis. The decision is still ongoing and HMRC's executive data governance board are due to discuss this before Easter 2020.

2. DEA Processor Accreditation Status Update

2.1   Andy Wall updated the Research Accreditation Panel on the status of the ongoing accreditation of processors. Accreditation reports for Edinburgh Parallel Computing Centre (EPCC) and the UK Data Archive will be considered at this meeting. While the Panel welcomed this progress, the Panel noted that proposed timelines for ongoing processor accreditations may need extending, given the work and travel restrictions implemented across the UK in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.2   Given the recent accreditation of the SAIL and UKSeRP environments in Wales, the Panel asked when it can expect to see an accreditation report for the final environment that makes up the Welsh data infrastructure, the NHS Wales Informatics Service (N-WIS). Glyn Jones confirmed that representatives of Welsh Government and SAIL Databank have been in touch with N-WIS to discuss a proposed timetable for submitting a DEA processor accreditation application.

ACTION: Glyn Jones to update the Panel on the NHS Wales Informatics Service's plans for DEA processor accreditation at the April 2020 Research Accreditation Panel meeting.

2.3   Roger Halliday confirmed that there are a further four institutions in Scotland that are keen to explore DEA processor accreditation. The institutions, from the academic and health sectors, will look to begin the DEA processor accreditation process in late 2020.

3. Processor Accreditation: Edinburgh Parallel Computing Centre (EPCC)

3.1   Andy Wall presented the Panel with an accreditation assessment for Edinburgh Parallel Computing Centre. It was confirmed that, as this processing environment is a technical infrastructure only, no capability controls were applicable for this DEA processor accreditation assessment. The Research Accreditation Panel agreed that the accreditation process had been applied rigorously to EPCC and took the decision to accredit the facility for the provision of data for five years.

ACTION: The Chair to write to Edinburgh Parallel Computing Centre to inform them of their accreditation.

3.2   The Panel agreed that EPCC should not be available for researchers to select as a DEA processing environment through the Research Accreditation Service online portal until the two related environments that make up the Scottish data infrastructure, eDRIS and National Records Scotland, also receive DEA processor accreditation. EPCC are unable to provide access to de-identified data under the DEA until all parts of this infrastructure are accredited.

4. Processor Accreditation: UK Data Archive

4.1   Andy Wall and Peter Stokes presented the Panel with an accreditation assessment for the UK Data Archive. The Research Accreditation Panel agreed that the accreditation process had been applied rigorously to the UK Data Archive and took the decision to accredit the facility for the provision of data for five years.

ACTION: The Chair to write to UK Data Archive to inform them of their accreditation.

4.2   Peter Stokes confirmed that the Digital Economy Act is the default legal gateway that ONS use to make their data available for research purposes. As the UK Data Archive is now a DEA accredited processor, all research project applications from the UK Data Archive requesting use of ONS data will now use the legal framework provided by the DEA. This is likely to mean an increase of project application submissions to

the Research Accreditation Panel of approximately 20 to 25 applications per month. The Secretariat will continue to assess the expected increase in project application submissions and explore the ways in which the Research Accreditation Panel can scale its governance processes to manage this increase.

ACTION: The Secretariat to monitor the expected increase in research project application submissions to the Research Accreditation Panel following the accreditation of UK Data Archive, and explore the ways in which the Panel can scale its governance processes to manage this increase.

5. **Processor Accreditation: Proposed Timetable for annual Review of Processor Accreditation evidence for ONS (and ONS Secure Research Service)**

5.1   Peter Stokes provided the Panel with a series of updates on the changes to the operations of the ONS Secure Research Service (SRS) processing environment.

5.2   Peter confirmed that the Research Accreditation Service is now live and all researchers from all organisations can access it. The Panel can expect to see research project applications from the ONS SRS in this new format by May 2020. The Panel welcomed this, along with the inclusion of other DEA accredited processing environments on the Research Accreditation Service portal.

5.3   Peter asked the Panel to agree the proposed timeline for the submission of the ONS Secure Research Service's DEA processor accreditation evidence refresh, as the current SRS is moving to the latest versions of supported infrastructure software. The Panel agreed that the ONS SRS will remain accredited as a DEA processor during the upgrade period and welcomed a submission of an updated DEA accreditation report for the ONS SRS at the May 2020 meeting.

ACTION: The UK Statistics Authority Accreditation team to submit an updated DEA processor accreditation report for the ONS SRS at the May 2020 Research Accreditation Panel meeting, to reflect the completed technical changes associated with the SRS technological refresh.

5.4   Peter Stokes presented the Panel with proposed processes from the ONS Research Support team that set out how change requests for ongoing DEA accredited research projects will be handled. The Panel agreed the processes for handling change requests of the following nature:

      i.   Addition or removal of researchers;
      ii.   Change to the project timescale;
      iii.   Change to the dataset variables;
      iv.   Addition of datasets; and,
      v.   Change to project scope.

5.5   The Panel agreed these processes for use within the ONS accredited processing environments and asked if similar processes are in place within the other DEA accredited processing environments that will give the Panel oversight of changes to DEA accredited projects. The Panel stated that a process should be put in place for change requests to projects that are accessing data through multiple legal gateways, as may be the case for projects taking place in alternative DEA processing environments.

ACTION: ONS Research Service and Data Access to hold discussions with all DEA accredited processing environments to ensure standardised processes are in

place to handle and report to the Panel change requests to DEA accredited projects.

6. Project Accreditation: New Projects
6.1 The Panel considered eight new projects and the following six projects were accredited:

- Contextualised Admissions and University Choice
- Panel conditioning and rotation group bias effects in business surveys
- Local labour market effects of immigration
- Innovation analysis for Knowledge Transfer Network
- Wage progression and firm productivity
- Firm-level analysis of research and development (R&D)

7. Data Access Approvals Landscape
7.1 Due to time constraints, the Panel agreed to move this paper to the April 2020 meeting.

ACTION: The Secretariat to present the Data Access Approvals Landscape paper at the April 2020 Research Accreditation Panel meeting.

8. ADR-UK: Actions leading to Accredited Projects
8.1 Emma Gordon presented on ADR-UK's ongoing initiatives to increase researcher demand to use administrative data for research purposes, including:

i. Investment in a linked Census 2011 and All Education Dataset for England dataset, for which ADR-UK is funding an initial exemplar project;
ii. Sponsoring the Ministry of Justice Data First linkage, which will be made available for research purposes in the ONS Secure Research Service and the SAIL Databank; and,
iii. Linking Department for Education and NHS Digital data to understand school and hospital episodes experiences and the interactions between them.

8.2 Emma discussed the importance of providing a comprehensive and widely-available data catalogue for researchers. ADR-UK and ONS are also working together to create user guides for researchers wanting to access newly available datasets, to provide support in understanding types of research that is feasible with that data.

ACTION: Emma's slides to be re-circulated for the April 2020 Research Accreditation Panel meeting, to provide additional context to the Data Access Approvals Landscape paper which is to be presented at that meeting.

9. Any Other Business
9.1 There was no other business.

9.2 The next meeting of the Research Accreditation Panel is on 20 April 2020.