# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

# RESEARCH ACCREDITATION PANEL

## Minute

## Friday 29 May 2020

**Present**

**Committee Members**
Professor Paul Boyle (Chair)
Tricia Dodd (Independent member)
Chris Dibben (Independent member)
Andrew Garrett (Independent member)
Sarah Henry (ONS)
Paul Jackson (representing Emma Gordon, UK Research and Innovation)
Glyn Jones (Welsh Government)
Sarah Mathieson (Independent member)

**Advisors**
Jason Riches (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

**In Attendance**
Orla Bateson (NISRA Research Support Unit), for item 2
Peter Benton (Population and Public Policy Operations, ONS), for item 6
Louise Corti (UK Data Archive), for item 2
David Ford (SAIL Databank), for item 2
Deborah Wiltshire (UK Data Archive), for item 2

**Apologies**
Siobhan Carey (NISRA)
Kevin Fletcher (HM Revenue & Customs)
Roger Halliday (Scottish Government)
Paul Lodge (Department for Work & Pensions)
Neil McIvor (Department for Education)

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

1.2 Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2020.

1.3 Lily O'Flynn updated the meeting with progress on actions from previous meetings. All actions were complete or otherwise in progress.

**2.    Processor Accreditation: Provision of User Support**

2.1    The Chair invited presentations from each of the DEA accredited secure data access processing environments to understand their plans to use the legal gateway provided by the Research strand of the Digital Economy Act and learn what user support is provided to researchers wanting to access secure data under the DEA.

2.2    Pete Stokes confirmed that ONS use the DEA as the default legal gateway to make data available for research purposes, through the Secure Research Service (SRS). Some data made available in the SRS are not currently accessed under the DEA, either because older projects were approved under legacy gateways, or because other data owners prefer to use established approval processes within their Departments. Those projects are not subject to the independent scrutiny provided by the RAP, but all researchers are trained and accredited using the framework the RAP has approved.

2.3    ONS would prefer if all legally protected data it holds was made available under the DEA, because it would simplify work for the SRS team and simplify the application process for researchers. Pete confirmed that the ONS is working with all Departments who make data available through the SRS to achieve this ambition, while recognising that transitioning from existing Departmental controls and legal gateways is complex.

2.3    Louise Corti confirmed that approximately 70 percent of the secure access datasets held by the UK Data Archive are owned by ONS. Thus, the UK Data Archive is working closely with the ONS SRS to align user support processes for researchers wanting to access ONS data via the DEA, using the secure environment provided by the UK Data Archive. The Panel supported Louise's suggestion of the creation of a publicly-available central catalogue advertising all datasets available under the DEA for research purposes.

**ACTION: The Secretariat to explore the creation of a publicly-available data catalogue that includes details of all data available under the Research strand of the DEA, for the benefit of all DEA accredited processors and the research community.**

2.4    David Ford confirmed that most accredited projects taking place in the SAIL Databank will link data available under the DEA to multiple Welsh health datasets available outside of the DEA. The Panel noted SAIL's ongoing work with the RAP Secretariat to streamline approvals processes to ensure that the dual approval required for projects accessing data under multiple legal gateways is as efficient as possible for researchers.

2.5    Orla Bateson thanked the RAP Secretariat for the support it has provided the NISRA Research Support Unit (RSU) in ensuring research projects using the NISRA RSU secure environment have an efficient route to the RAP for consideration. Orla confirmed senior-level support for the Research strand of the DEA within NISRA, as NISRA wish to focus on the curation of linked datasets using data owned by multiple public authorities, enabled by the DEA. The Panel agreed that the creation of research-ready, themed datasets is a common goal among DEA accredited processors and encouraged processors to work together to support this work.

**ACTION: The Secretariat to facilitate a regular meeting of all DEA accredited processors to enable collaborative work on shared goals, such as the creation of themed datasets involving data owned by multiple public authorities, which can be enabled by the Research strand of the DEA.**

2.6     The Panel noted the increasing likelihood of research project applications being reviewed by multiple approvals panels as more processing environments receive DEA accreditation and researchers want to link data available under the DEA with data that is made available outside of the DEA. The Panel agreed on the need to minimise duplication in project approval governance processes, while recognising that the RAP has a statutory duty to provide independent scrutiny of projects requesting access to data under the Research strand of the DEA.

**ACTION: The Secretariat to work with all DEA accredited processors to understand the governance processes of approvals panels that allow access to data outside of the DEA, and consider how duplication in governance processes can be minimised.**

**3.      Project Accreditation: New Projects**
3.1     The Panel considered twenty new projects and the following sixteen projects were accredited:

- Population mobility and housing dynamics in the 21st Century
- Examining the relationship between engaging in design and exporting
- An examination of the relationship between the population disclosing domestic violence to the Intimate Violence Module and the Victim Module of the CSEW
- Centre for Research on Energy Demand Solutions – Flight Emissions
- Zero Hours Contracts: Characteristics, Prevalence and Impacts on Workers
- Evaluation of the Small Business Bonus Scheme in Scotland
- Developing experimental estimates of regional skill demand, supply and mismatch
- Understanding co-creation in small businesses
- The effects of broadband quality in firm and local performance
- UK coastal tourism: efficiency and revival
- Corporate response to energy-efficiency agreements: evidence from the UK manufacturing industry
- Social factors impacting offending and resettlement in Northern Ireland
- Wage and employment dynamics
- Controlling COVID-19 through enhanced population surveillance and intervention (Con-COV): a platform approach
- ESCoE Project 2.9: Using Firm-Level Surveys to Understand Industrial and Regional Capacity, Investment, Productivity and Output Growth
- Evaluation of the Enterprise Capital Funds

3.2     The Panel thanked the Secretariat for refining the significant volume of paperwork required for this month's meeting, and agreed that this paperwork requires further refinement to make future RAP meetings more manageable. To focus the RAP's discussions, the Panel asked the Secretariat to provide additional information in the project overview table to highlight project applications that the RAP Triage Group felt needed additional clarification.

**ACTION: The Secretariat to provide additional information in the project overview table that provides the RAP with the details of the RAP Triage Group's prior discussions on project applications.**

3.3     Given the recent increase in the number of project applications submitted to the RAP for consideration, the Panel agreed to trial allocating each RAP member a sub-set of projects to assess in depth to make the consideration of projects manageable, while maintaining the required level of scrutiny. While the Panel were supportive of trialling

this new approach, it was agreed that the RAP would benefit from the addition of more independent members to provide scrutiny of the significant number of projects the Panel are beginning to receive.

**ACTION: The Secretariat to explore expanding the independent membership of the RAP and provide the Chair with a list of possible candidates for new Panel members.**

**4.      Project Accreditation: Precedent Report**
4.1      Lily O'Flynn presented the Panel with a report of the two projects that the RAP Triage Group agreed could be accredited via precedent, given their high level of similarity to previous projects, as agreed at the April 2020 Research Accreditation Panel meeting.

4.2      To ensure due diligence following the establishment of the precedent process, the Secretariat provided the Panel with a full report of project 2020/029 that was agreed could be accredited via precedent. The Panel agreed that the precedent process had been implemented in a way that provides both sufficient scrutiny of research projects and allows the RAP to maintain necessary oversight of project approvals.

4.3      The Panel agreed that the RAP Secretariat can continue to take the precedent process forward on the basis of a similar public good use of the data where the project had a robust methodology and data owner approval, while ensuring that research projects that are requesting access to novel datasets or have particularly innovative research aims are submitted to the RAP for full consideration.

**ACTION: The Secretariat to continue to implement the precedent process and provide the RAP with a report of those projects accredited via precedent on a monthly basis, while ensuring that all research projects with novel research aims or requesting access to new datasets come to the RAP for consideration.**

**5.      Processor Accreditation: Ongoing Applications Update**
5.1      Andy Wall updated the Research Accreditation Panel on the status of the ongoing accreditation of processors. Andy confirmed that the accreditations of NRS, eDRIS and NWIS are currently delayed due to the work that the organisations are involved with to contribute to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.2      Andy updated the Panel on the extension of remote access to DEA accredited secure environments from home for urgent and time-critical analysis, during the period of social distancing restrictions. The RAP welcomed this and agreed that allowing home working via secure data processing environments during this time sets a precedent for greater flexibility for remote access once social distancing measures are lifted.

**ACTION: The Panel to have a wider discussion at a future meeting of the Research Accreditation Panel to consider the precedents that have been set during the period of COVID-19 social distancing restrictions, and discuss how these precedents may be approached once social distancing restrictions are removed completely.**

**6.      COVID-19 Infection Survey**
6.1      Peter Benton, ONS Population and Public Policy Operations, presented the Panel with an overview of the COVID-19 Infection Survey, which was accredited via Chair's action on 28 April 2020 due to its urgency and criticality to the UK Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

6.2 The Panel supported this project, and welcomed the upcoming extension to include the Devolved Administrations in the study.

6.3 In response to the Panel, Peter Benton confirmed that the data used in the COVID-19 Infection Survey will be made available to other researchers under the Research strand of the DEA for research projects in the public good. Given that the weekly publication of the project's results currently remains high-profile, the RAP agreed that making this data more widely available across the research community is subject to sensitive timing considerations.

**7. Any Other Business**

7.1 The Panel noted the accreditation report detailing the minor revisions projects that have been approved at official level and the researchers that have been accredited under the DEA in the last two months.

7.2 The Panel requested an updated metrics dashboard to be presented at the July RAP meeting.

**ACTION: The Secretariat to present an updated metrics report at the July 2020 Research Accreditation Panel meeting.**

7.3 The Panel recognised and reflected upon the enormous contributions to UK research of Professor Harvey Goldstein and Professor Chris Skinner, and the Panel conveys its sincere condolences to their families and friends.

7.4 The next meeting of the Research Accreditation Panel is on 9 July 2020.