

REPHRAIN Research Ethics and Integrity Board

Terms of reference

Board objectives

The aim of the National Research Centre on Privacy, Harm Reduction and Adversarial Influence Online ('REPHRAIN') Ethics Board (hereafter the Board) is to oversee and promote the highest standards of ethics and integrity in all aspects of REPHRAIN's research.

Conducting research to the highest ethical standard - with robust oversight procedures - will be critical to the success of REPHRAIN in addressing its [three missions](#) to deliver socio-technical advances for protecting citizens online.

REPHRAIN places ethical oversight centrally to its research processes, establishing an independent ethical review process to review all research conducted as part of the Centre (both core and commissioned).

The Board and the REPHRAIN Strategic Board operates under the principles set out in UUK's Concordat to Support Research Integrity, and will further adhere to the UKRI/ESRC core principles for ethical research (<https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/our-core-principles/>)

Board remit

The Board will be responsible for advising the REPHRAIN Strategic Board on the ethical integrity of all research projects conducted by REPHRAIN.

The role of the Board will be proactive in relation to emerging issues of significance that fall within the remit of REPHRAIN.

Functions and duties of the Board

Functions include:

- Upholding the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.
- Ensuring that research commissioned or conducted by REPHRAIN is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.
- Reviewing progress of the Board functioning regularly and openly.

Duties include:

- To give researchers approval (with or without modifications to the proposal) or to reject proposals for REPHRAIN research projects. Revised proposals may also be considered.
- To give approval, recommendations of revisions, and rejections to the applicants in written form.
- Advising the REPHRAIN Strategic Board on the development of policies and guidelines relating to research ethics.
- Promoting and monitor good practice relating to ethical considerations and maintaining academic integrity within the work of REPHRAIN.
- Considering any matters concerning ethics and research integrity referred to the Board by the REPHRAIN Strategic Board.

Reporting lines and responsibilities of the Board

The Board reports to the REPHRAIN Strategic Board annually, via the Chair. Minutes are submitted to the Board for noting after each quarterly meeting.

Procedural Rules

Membership and Appointment of Chair

- 1 member from the Strategic Board
- 1 member from the Principal Investigators in the Centre
- 2 independent academic members
- 1 lay member
- 1 independent academic Chair

Co-option

The board may co-opt additional members to provide areas of specific expertise.

The REPHRAIN Ethics Process

The Ethics process follows two-stages

- All researchers need to secure ethical approval from their appropriate institutional research ethics board before applying to the Board.
- Where a project does not ordinarily require ethical review at a host institution (e.g., desk research, secondary data analysis), it is submitted directly to the Board.

Submissions to the Board are made through an online portal [details to be added].

Ethical approval for individual projects must be given by at least 2 Board members plus the Chair. Decisions will be reached within 28 calendar days of the project being submitted to the portal.

The REPHRAIN Ethics Board will meet quarterly online. The dates of meetings will be published on the Centre's website.

In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to take Chair's action on approval outside the normal schedule of meetings. Where this occurs, review by at least one other member will be sought and the outcome will be reported to the next available Ethics Board meeting.

The Board reserves the right to audit all applications that have been approved.

Quorum

There shall be a quorum at meetings of one-half of the membership of the Board.

These Terms of Reference may be amended when necessary following approval by the full Board

Queries on REPHRAIN's ethics processes can be sent to REPHRAIN-centre@bristol.ac.uk.

Version information

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