

Appendix E – Independent REC member role description

Role Descriptions may be edited by College/Department RECs to reflect local circumstances but must meet the standards outlined in the Research Ethics Framework and its appendices. The independent member may also be referred to as the lay or public member.

Purpose of the role

Independent REC members are required provide a 'lay' perspective and challenge to the REC on, for example, matters of public interest. Independent members should consider whether processes are effective in providing quality assurance and maintaining appropriate checks and balances. RECs may determine (and document in their Standard Operating Procedure) where independent members are required to undertake ethical review; this may, for example, include the review of projects classified as higher risk, or a sub-set of total projects rather than involvement in all ethical reviews undertaken.

Specific requirements

The independent Research Ethics Committee member must not have an existing relationship with the University of Exeter. Any links to the University or potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed to the Chair of the REC.

The Independent member does not need to have experience in research or research ethics but must be willing to undertake training before starting the role.

Key Responsibilities

- Processing applications as described in the REC Standard Operating Procedure, providing competent and timely review
- Challenging the REC on matters in the public interest
- Maintain confidentiality
- Escalating queries to Chair of Research Ethics Committee or to the Research Ethics & Governance team, recognising when it is appropriate to escalate rather than responding directly
- Undertaking training and development as appropriate to the role
- Helping to identify training, policy and guidance needs (e.g. based on common patterns, issues) within the College/Department or REC
- Working with the Research Ethics and Governance Manager and other REC independent members to ensure that the role is of value both to the role holders and to the REC
- Maintaining an awareness of Equality & Diversity, ensuring that applicants and members are treated fairly and equally regardless of age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality or ethnicity

Term of office

The term of office will normally be three years, renewable for further terms as agreed with the PVC [or ADR or Head of Department if delegated] in consultation with the REC Chair.

Appointed by: PVC [or ADR or Head of Department if delegated] in consultation with the REC Chair

Expenses and payments

Independent members should receive reasonable expenses for their work on the REC and for undertaking any relevant training and development activities. Honoraria payments may be made according to current University of Exeter policy, reflecting INVOLVE guidance and following current financial procedures.

Expenses should be claimed by independent members according to the current University of Exeter financial procedures.