

Job Description

Research Ethics Officer

Salary:	Grade 6
Contract:	Part time (0.5FTE), fixed term until 31 July 2028
Location:	Canterbury Campus
Responsible to:	Research Development Manager
Job family:	Administrative, professional and managerial

Kent and Medway Medical School

KMMS welcomed its first students in 2020 and achieved full GMC accreditation in 2025. Our mission is to widen participation, train excellent doctors, and improve health in Kent and Medway. We deliver a five-year undergraduate programme and a growing portfolio of postgraduate study, including the MSc in Clinical Education and Physician Associate Studies.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

KMMS is proud to have a diverse and inclusive community of students and staff. We welcome applications from members of all the non-majority parts of our community and KMMS is committed to fair treatment and to ensuring that the learning and working environment are supportive and inclusive to all. Duties in the delivery of learning, teaching and supporting students and staff should be performed in a manner in keeping with the School's core values.

Job purpose

The Research Ethics Officer will have responsibility for all aspects of administration associated with research ethics and research integrity procedures and will support the promotion of good research conduct across KMMS, and more widely across the universities.

The role holder is part of the KMMS Research Team, although will liaise with a range of professional service and academic colleagues, as well as students, to provide dedicated support to KMMS' Research Ethics Advisory Group (REAG) by facilitating the process via which researchers are required to apply for research ethics review for their research activity. The role holder will be a key, initial point of contact for researchers applying for ethics review and will play an important role in maintaining best practice in the ethical review of research projects and compliance with funder and legislative requirements in relation to good practice in research. They will also provide administrative support for the KMMS Research Ethics Advisory Group meetings and associated tasks for the Research Ethics Lead.

The role holder will have effective organisational and communication skills, be able to nurture relationships with a range of people across the School and the wider universities, and will ideally have an appreciation of ethical issues in relation to research and experience of providing expert advice in this area.

Key accountabilities

The following are the main duties for the job. Other duties, commensurate with the grading of the job, may also be assigned from time to time.

- Work with relevant colleagues across the School to administer and support the internal research ethics review process, including the ongoing development and implementation of ethics templates, procedures, policies, systems and practices, ensuring alignment with changing guidance and requirements and supporting associated training activities.
- Liaise with the Business Development, Research and Innovation (BDRI) local delivery teams and other relevant staff in facilitating the internal ethical review process for proposals being submitted to external funding agencies.
- Help deliver training in conjunction with the KMMS Ethics lead in university ethics and governance procedures and provide induction for new research active staff, and members of the REAG and the wider KMMS community.
- Coordinate the business of the KMMS REAG and be accountable for efficient and effective functioning of the REAG including initiation and preparation of agendas, distribution of REAG papers, recording and preparing accurate minutes, execution of all decisions of the REAG, preparing reports and briefings for the Chair, line manager or Director of Research as required.
- Preview submitted applications for ethical approval to ensure applications are complete and allocating them to reviewers according to research expertise and ethical review experience. Flag high-risk / requires significant review cases for discussion prior to allocation to a reviewer.
- Responsible for processing, preparing and sending general correspondence and ethics response letters to researchers regarding the decisions of the REAG including approvals, conditional approvals and other correspondence related to research protocols and modifications, adhering to set deadlines. Organising and facilitating ad hoc meetings or ethical reviews outside of scheduled meetings.
- Request and review correspondence from external bodies relating to the ethical approval of projects, including NHS Research Ethics Committees and IRAS correspondence, etc., through project life cycle. Send copies of correspondence where required to principal investigators, the REAG Chair, etc.
- Respond to general queries and provide accurate and timely advice in relation to complex matters about research ethics applications and the university procedures. Proactively keep track of open queries and requests for approvals. Request additional documentation as required and follow up outstanding items where amendments are requested by REAG.
- Manage ongoing monitoring processes for projects throughout their lifecycle and administer monitoring and ad hoc reviews.
- Support the creation of a culture that is high performance and contribution focused, built on a foundation of equality, diversity, belonging and inclusivity and that inspires people to bring their best every day.
- Responsible for the administration of research requests involving KMMS students and/or staff members, known as the KMMS Gatekeeper process, including previewing submitted applications for completeness, processing, preparing and sending general correspondence to Gatekeepers and Applicants.
- Provide support during whole school events including Multiple Mini Interviews, and Objective Structured Clinical Examinations, where the wider KMMS staff body assists to ensure an excellent student, staff and applicant experience.

Key challenges and decisions

The following provide an overview of the most challenging or complex parts of the role and the degree of autonomy that exists.

- Understanding complex procedures and explaining their operation to varied audiences, responding to enquiries efficiently and effectively.

- Assessing applications for quality/completeness and requesting missing elements/documents from applicants before processing them.
- Liaising between applicants and reviewers and progressing applications in accordance with published timescales.
- Maintaining accurate and auditable records.
- Building a working knowledge of research ethics and legislation/guidance as applicable to university research activity.
- Working to tight timescales to avoid delays to research studies.
- The role holder will work under regular supervision but is expected to be able to work with initiative and autonomy, including planning and managing a busy workload with competing priorities. The role holder will be expected to work independently and proactively when arranging their work, with regular changing priorities and urgent requests that mean that planned work may need to be rearranged, or deadlines negotiated, to meet KMMS objectives.

Facts & figures

The Research Team currently consists of three professional services staff members including the Research Development Manager, in addition to any externally funded project roles, with overall management of the team sitting with the KMMS Project Manager.

The Research Team directly supports the planning and delivery of KMMS research projects, as well as a number of widespread activities and events, including an expanding portfolio of funded research projects, affiliated PhD students, as well as other ad hoc events and activities. Frontline support is predominantly given to members of academic staff who undertake research and other income-generating activity, including the Director of Research, as well as KMMS affiliated postgraduate students.

Internal & external relationships

Internal: Research Development Manager, BDRI staff; Researchers (staff and students); KMMS Research Ethics Advisory Group (REAG) chairperson and reviewers; Professional Service Department (PSD) colleagues at all levels within KMMS and across both university partners; Academic Colleagues; Research and Ethics Governance Chairs and reviewers; Academics.

External: Colleagues in similar roles within external universities; funders and professional bodies; NHS Ethics Committees, attend external groups as appropriate for own professional development; academic collaborators and visitors. The role holder will be expected to contribute to an environment of collaboration and positive partnerships, and will work harmoniously with colleagues, students and other stakeholders of all cultures and backgrounds.

Health, safety & wellbeing considerations

This job involves undertaking duties which include the following health, safety and wellbeing considerations:

- Regular use of Screen Display Equipment
- Conflict resolution
- Pressure to meet important deadlines such as might be inherent in high profile projects
- Ability to occasionally travel in a timely and efficient manner between campuses

Person specification

The person specification details the necessary skills, qualifications, experience or other attributes needed to carry out the job. Applications will be measured against the criteria published below.

Selection panels will be looking for clear evidence and examples in an application, or cover letter (where applicable), which back-up any assertions made in relation to each criterion.

Essential Criteria:

- Educated to A level or equivalent (A)
- Experience of acting as a source of expert advice and communicating complex or specialised information to colleagues with varying levels of knowledge or experience of the subject (A,I)
- A thorough appreciation of ethical issues in relation to research and the requirements of a process to review these issues (A,I)
- Experience of operating or supporting an ethical review process in a higher education or similar professional environment (A,I)
- Excellent written and spoken communication skills (I,T)
- Excellent organisation and time management skills (I,T)
- Able to work with accuracy and attention to detail (I,T)
- Willingness and ability to work both independently and as part of a team, recognising when to escalate matters as appropriate (I)
- An ability to rapidly assimilate new and complex information and to learn and effectively operate unfamiliar processes (I)
- Proficiency in the use of MS Office applications (T)
- Ability to establish and maintain good working relationships with a diverse range of people including researchers (staff and student), professional services colleagues, and the staff of external bodies, such as research funders and research collaborators (A,I)
- Ability to maintain high levels of confidentiality (I)
- A firm commitment to fostering a working and learning environment that is respectful, inclusive and values diversity, including diversity of thought, and which enables staff and students from a wide range of backgrounds to thrive (I)

Desirable Criteria:

- Undergraduate degree or equivalent experience (A)
- Knowledge of major research funders' (for example UK Research Councils, major research charities) policies and requirements in relation to good practice in research and of relevant legislation (A,I)
- Experience of research administration in a higher education environment (A)

Assessment stage: A - Application; I - Interview; T - Test/presentation at interview stage