

Research Ethics Review Board

TERMS OF REFERENCE: LAY MEMBER

About the LSE Research Ethics Review Board

The Research Ethics Review Board (RERB) is a sub-committee of Research Committee. Its core functions are:

- i) to review and make recommendations on the School's Research Ethics Policy and procedures and related guidance;
- ii) to undertake the review, and make any relevant recommendations regarding approval, of ethics applications submitted by staff and students which are designated as higher risk and requiring review by the Board, ensuring that the proposed research has appropriate safeguards in place with respect to both researcher safety and that of any participants or others who will be involved;
- iii) to provide guidance to staff and students on matters relating to research ethics.

The full Terms of Reference of the RERB, as well as details of current membership, can be found at: <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/research-and-innovation/research/committees-and-working-groups/Research-ethics-committee>

Information on the School's research ethics policy and review procedure can be found [here](#).

Role of RERB members

1) Review of research ethics applications

Applications submitted for ethics approval are reviewed by RERB members electronically as and when they are received. Applications are usually reviewed by two members (more for particularly complex applications). The Research Ethics Managers assign applications to members for review, trying to ensure that workload is distributed evenly over time whilst at the same time taking into account members' areas of expertise. At the busiest times of year (usually February to June) a member can expect to review approximately two applications a month. The Research Ethics Managers collate comments from the reviewing members and send an anonymised summary of points/questions for clarification to the researcher. Once members are happy to recommend approval, a final decision is usually made by the Chair or Deputy Chair of the Committee.¹

2) Board meetings

In addition to the review of applications, members are expected to attend Board meetings and contribute to the discussions of and decisions on RERB business as appropriate. The Board meets once a term (usually in October, March and June).

¹ The Board's Terms of Reference and mode of operation can be found here: <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/research-and-innovation/research/Assets/Documents/PDF/RERB-ToR-2025-6.pdf>

The specific role of a Lay member

The Board has two Lay members. The role of the Lay member is the same as that of LSE academic members of the Board. However, Lay members are expected to provide a ‘lay perspective’, representative of the public, to both the Board’s policy discussions and the review of applications. Constitutionally, Lay members help bring greater transparency to the Board’s function. In addition, they bring expertise that complements that of the academic members, usually based on direct experience of working in important areas, for example mental health, homelessness, the media, working with the police, young offenders, etc.

Remuneration

The role is voluntary. For attendance at the termly Board meetings reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed.

Term of appointment

The term of appointment is normally up to 3 years with potential for renewal. The Board usually includes two Lay members at any one time.

The generic LSE ‘Role of Committee Member’ can be found below.

ROLE OF COMMITTEE MEMBER

Being a committee member is not only about attending meetings but about working with the other members of the committee to reach a consensus about the business before it. Committee members should make decisions as a collective group. Collective responsibility entails members supporting a decision a committee has made even though the member may not have voted in favour of it, or may have been absent from the meeting. Members are responsible for ensuring that all decisions are taken in the best interests of the School and in accordance with the School’s mission aims and objectives.

The whole LSE community, including all staff, students, and governors of LSE, are expected to act in accordance with the principles which are set out in the LSE Ethics Code², which incorporate the ‘Nolan Principles’ of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Unless explicitly stated in the terms of reference, members of committees are not at meetings as representatives of a particular group. Members are on committees as individuals, and are chosen because they have skills, knowledge or interests relating to the areas dealt with by the committee. While members may be nominated or elected from a particular group and can bring the views of that group to the meeting, the interests of the School must always be the overriding consideration.

It is important to remember that, whatever the item under discussion, a committee is not empowered to discuss individuals, or individual cases, unless this is explicitly set out in the committee’s terms of reference.

Specifically, committee members should:

- Endeavour to attend all meetings, or send apologies to the chair for absences.
- Provide comments on papers where you are unable to attend.

² <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Secretarys-Division/Ethics/Ethics-Code>

- Prepare for the meeting by reading the agenda, papers and any emails before the meeting.
- Talk to the chair before the meeting if you need to clarify anything.
- Arrive on time. Stay to the end.
- Participate fully in the meeting, listening to what others have to say, contributing positively to the discussion, and providing concise comments.
- Draw attention to any potential conflicts of interest that may arise in the meeting.
- Fulfil any responsibilities assigned to you at the meeting and be prepared to report back on your progress at the next meeting.
- Maintain confidentiality where required.