



Administrative Data  
Research Network

An ESRC Data  
Investment

# ADRN Approvals Panel

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## *Terms of Reference*

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## Scope

This document outlines the terms of reference for the ADRN Approvals Panel. It does not include information about how the Approvals Panel operates, which is included in the *ADRN015-AP Operating Procedures* document.

## Definition of Terms

See ADRN018 Glossary for a list of definitions  
(<http://www.adrn.ac.uk/get-data/documentation/>)

## **1. Background**

1.1 The Approvals Panel (AP) is established to ensure that there is a transparent, independent, process for evaluating ADRN project proposals to determine their suitability for using ADRN data and services.

1.2 The AP also helps ensure that academics and other researchers perceive ADRN as a level playing field with no privileged access, and provides data owners with expert assessment of projects to minimise their burden in processing applications for data access and linkage.

## **2. Purpose**

2.1 All research projects wishing to use ADRN facilities and services to access data regardless of whether they are led by academics, public sector researchers, or researchers from other accredited organisations, must be approved by the Approvals Panel.

2.2 The purpose of the Panel is to review all formal proposals for access to data through the Network and recommend whether they should be approved as ADRN projects. Decisions of the Panel will be communicated by ADRN staff to the researchers making the applications.

## **3. Membership**

3.1 The Approvals Panel will consist of the following roles:

- a Chair (to be selected by ESRC)
- 3 representatives of organisations who produce administrative data or who are public sector users of administrative data based research
- 3 senior researchers (with different primary research areas)
- a member, expert in privacy and data protection
- 2 lay members
- the ADS Director or their nominee (ex-officio member)

A list of current members is detailed in Appendix A.

3.2 In addition to the standing Panel, the AP will consult, when deemed necessary by the AP, experts specialising on particular data or a research area to provide advice. A list of experts will be maintained by ADS on behalf of the ADRN, potentially including members of the ADRN in order to harness their significant knowledge and experience. Experts will be nominated by the Panel or identified by ADRN colleagues and will provide information in relation to issues on which they are asked to comment.

3.3 All members of the AP are drawn from representatives of different stakeholders of the ADRN (data providers, researchers, experts and general public) and are nominated by the ADRN and the ESRC. The Approvals Panel Chair is appointed directly by the ESRC. The Vice-Chair will be appointed by the Chair and will be drawn from the regular members of the Panel. The ADS Director or their nominee will serve as an ex-officio member with no voting or decision making rights.

3.4 Members of the panel will be reimbursed for their travel and accommodation expenses incurred as part of their role. The Chair of the AP and the lay members will additionally receive an honorarium. Administration of expenses will be undertaken by ADS.

3.5 The terms of office for the regular members of the Approvals Panel will be 4 years. The terms of office for the chair will be 5 years. The terms of office for the vice-chair and the lay members will be 2 years. Terms of office are renewable, except in cases where members decide to resign

or their position is terminated.

3.6 ADS will provide secretariat for the Panel on a permanent basis.

3.7 Membership for all members may be terminated by non-renewal of the term, by resignation, retirement or termination for adequate cause.

3.8 *Adequate cause* includes demonstration of professional incompetence, a serious breach of professional ethics or ADRN policy, persistent non-attendance, or other behaviour which impacts significantly on the ability of the Panel to function.

3.9 Termination of regular or lay membership requires approval of the Chair of the Approvals Panel and the ADS Director.

3.10 Termination of the chair's membership requires approval of the ESRC and the ADRN Directors Group.

3.11 ADS will communicate any termination decisions to the relevant members.

## **4. Accountability**

4.1 A list of AP members will be made publicly available via the ADRN website.

4.2 The ADRN website will display information on all projects Approved by the Panel.

## **5. Meeting arrangements**

5.1 Since much of the work required to address the Governance agenda is developmental, and it is important to be responsive as issues arise, the meeting arrangements will be flexible. The AP will aim to have monthly virtual meetings and meet face-to-face quarterly.

5.2 A meeting will not be considered quorate (and so shall not commence) until at least half of the appointed panel members are present, including at least 1 lay member. If a quorum is not forthcoming, the chair will set an alternative date for the meeting as soon as is practical, preferably within the next week.

5.3 Members who are aware they will be unable to attend a meeting should notify the Chair as soon as practicable.

5.4 If members fail to attend more than 4 out of 6 meetings the Chair has the right to cancel their membership and seek alternative members.

5.5 The Approvals Panel agenda will typically include:

- a. adoption of agenda, minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising from these minutes
- b. review of project proposals carried over
- c. review of current list of new project proposals
- d. any other business (AOB)

5.6 In each meeting the panel will consider each application submitted, take into account, ethical review, privacy issues, feasibility, scientific merit and potential for public benefit, and make a decision. The following decisions are available to the Panel:

- a. Approved
- b. Approved with comments

- c. Approved subject to adoption of minor changes
- d. Approved subject to discussion with nominated Panel member and (if relevant) adoption of minor changes
- e. Substantial changes required - resubmission to future meeting requested
- f. Rejected

NB: To inform these decisions the AP may ask the ADS to approach anyone on a list of experts that will be administered by the ADS. After the initial consultation, the AP may also request further expert views before concluding their review.

5.7 The processes relating to each of the decisions available to the Panel are specified in the Approvals Panel Operating Procedures ADRN015.

5.8 A definitive record of the decision will be recorded by the Panel secretariat and held by ADS.

5.9 The Panel will consider each project in turn and will make a collective decision on each project.

5.10 Any member of the panel may request that procedural arrangements for the panel be formally discussed at the next available meeting. These will be discussed by the Panel at the discretion of the Chair and if time allows, with priority being given to reviewing the project proposals. If the item requires additional documentation to be prepared by ADS, the item must be emailed to ADS (help@adrn.ac.uk) no later than 10 working days in advance of the meeting to which it refers.

5.11 ADRN will take all reasonable steps to ensure that applications are sufficiently developed to be considered by the Panel before they are scheduled to be discussed at a Panel meeting. Applicants may insist that their application is put forward to the next available panel, however ADRN will work with applicants to minimise the number of cases in which the Panel have to refer back to the applicant for more information.

5.12 ADS will, as a minimum, circulate relevant documents to the Approvals Panel no later than 5 working days before the meeting. If a high volume of applications are to be considered at a Panel meeting this cut-off may be brought forward.

5.13 ADS may seek to add an item to the agenda as an emergency item. An emergency item can only be one which could not have been foreseen 5 working days in advance of the meeting and which must be resolved before the next scheduled meeting.

5.14 Occasionally, it may be appropriate to deal electronically with an urgent item which needs to be resolved before the next scheduled meeting. The permission of the Chair to do this must be sought in all cases. If permission is granted, ADS will circulate the documentation relating to the item by e-mail and will request responses by a specified date and time. After the deadline has passed, ADS will inform the Panel, by e-mail, of the outcome of the discussion. The outcome will be noted in the minutes of the next scheduled meeting.

## **6. Appeals procedure**

6.1 Researchers will have a right to appeal Approvals Panel decisions. The Appeals Procedure is detailed in the Approvals Panel Operating Procedures ADRN015 (available on the ADRN website). The initial route of raising an appeal is to contact ADS.

## **7. Review of Terms of Reference**

7.1 The terms of reference will be reviewed when changes requiring amendments to the terms of reference occur, or are identified as necessary, and at least once every 12 months. 6 months during the first year of operations (August 2014 to July 2015), with the next review in January

2015, then annually, unless changes requiring amendments to the terms of reference occur in the interim.

## Appendix A

Members as at: 04/05/2017

<b>Role</b>	<b>Member</b>
Chair	Sir Ian Diamond (University of Aberdeen)
Representatives of data providers	Jane Naylor (ONS) Yee-wan Yau (HMRC) Steven Rose (Birmingham City Council)
Senior researchers (with different primary research areas)	Professor Richard Harris (Durham University) Dr John Power (Northern Ireland Assembly) Professor Robert T Woods (Bangor University)
Member, expert in privacy and data protection	Lynn Wyeth (Leicester City Council)
Lay members	William Mehaffey Denise Kazmierczak
Secretariat - ADS Director or their nominee (ex-officio member)	John Sanderson