# **HRA guidance – self-directed learning**

As you will be aware from your letter of appointment, Research Ethics Committee (REC) members are required to attend a minimum of one training day per year (i.e. five hours learning).

We encourage attendance at one of our many training days or completion of one of our online learning courses or interactive webinars. The benefits of this include experiencing training delivered by experts, the opportunity to hear and take part in debate and networking with other members.

We appreciate that sometimes it is difficult to make the time to attend a full training day, so self-directed learning (SDL) can be used to complement face-to-face training or webinars provided by the HRA. Five hours of self- directed learning equates to a full day’s training.

SDL for REC members must be linked to the work of the Research Ethics Committee and relate to either issues of ethical principles or legislation relevant to ethical review. If you are in any doubt about the suitability of the learning you wish to undertake as relevant training for accreditation purposes, please consult your REC manager.

**Essential SDL principles**

* development should be continuous in that a committee member should always be seeking to improve his/her performance
* the learner owns and manages her/his own development.

**What’s in it for you?**

* enhanced performance in your role as a committee member
* while completion of training by the HRA would be the preferred way of learning, SDL provides a further option to undertake learning relevant to your role without attending a training day**.**

**What do you have to do?**

The aim of training for committee members is to reflect on a mixed balance of activities undertaken, such as courses attended, seminars, conferences and informal learning.

Examples of SDL that are particularly relevant to membership of a REC, and can be recorded as members’ training, are listed below, together with some examples of what is not generally accepted as relevant SDL.

Regional managers can decide if anything in addition to this list can be recorded, or seek advice from the HRA learning and development team.

**Key Points**

* there are clear benefits to committee members in undertaking SDL
* the SDL system is cyclical, following a simple system of planning, doing and evaluating SDL, and is ‘owned’ by the individual
* an SDL learning log should be used to record your learning achievements and outcomes.

**Accreditation of HRA self-directed learning**

To accredit SDL for the purposes of your membership of a Research Ethics Committee, you should complete the form on page seven with details of the self-directed learning you have undertaken – which must be relevant to research ethics *–* including the time taken.

The signed form should be given to your REC manager, who will arrange for it to be signed off by the regional manager as relevant training, and add it to the committee’s training records.

A record of all REC members’ training is included in the REC’s annual report, naming each member and listing the training he/she has undertaken during the year.

**Self-directed learning for HRA staff**

We recognise that HRA staff may wish to broaden their knowledge of research ethics issues, and they are very welcome to use the SDL form in the same way as members – completed forms should be given to your Line Manager and recorded in your own training record.

**Learning that may be recorded as SDL**

* authorship, presenting papers on research ethics related topics
* mentoring of Research Ethics Committee members
* distance learning – ethics-related
* private reading about ethics issues *(see suggestions below)*
* workplace experience and practice, e.g. active involvement in research, teaching research ethics
* obtaining formal ethics qualifications
* Attending meetings of other RECs – *this refers to attending a meeting of another REC for a particular learning purpose, e.g. observing how a different REC operates, observing how particular types of studies are reviewed, which your own REC does not normally review. However, attending a meeting of another REC as a co-opted member does not count as self-directed learning but does count towards your annual record of attendance*
* attendance of REC chairs, vice-chairs and alternate vice-chairs at NREAP (National Research Ethics Advisory Panel)-hosted meetings can be counted as three hours self-directed learning.

1. **eLearning**

The HRA is increasing its online learning presence to provide open access eLearning courses and training opportunities for stakeholders, researchers and Research Ethics Committee members. We have been developing our [Learning Management System (LMS)](http://elearning.hra.nhs.uk/) as well as moving more courses that have previously been offered face-to-face to online or to blended learning formats.

All of our eLearning courses on the LMS can be accessed without using a login or password, using guest access, however, you will not be able to obtain a certificate of completion if you complete the eLearning as a guest. For this reason, we ask members to create and use a login and password when accessing eLearning courses on the LMS. You will receive a certificate after successfully completing each module and we ask you to send this to your REC manager.

A few examples of the modules on the Learning Management System are, Medical Devices, Reviewing the Research Design of Clinical Trials and Research involving participants lacking mental capacity.

We also have modules specifically for REC members:

[**Induction for new Research Ethics Committee members**](http://elearning.hra.nhs.uk/course/view.php?id=4)takes approximately one hour to complete. This course will enhance knowledge and awareness of the work of RECs during a new member’s first few months. It supports the mandatory face-to-face induction training that members are required to complete.

[**Equality, Diversity and Human Rights**](http://elearning.hra.nhs.uk/course/view.php?id=5)is the eLearning course for REC members who need to complete equality and diversity training within the first 12 months of their appointment and again during the first 12 months of reappointment after five years’ service.

These modules can be accessed [here](http://elearning.hra.nhs.uk/login/index.php) on our website, along with instructions for how to create an account. Please contact your REC manager if you require any assistance.

1. [**HRA guidance on information sheets and consent forms**](http://www.hra.nhs.uk/resources/before-you-apply/consent-and-participation/consent-and-participant-information/)

Providing guidance for researchers and reviewers on the design and review of participant information sheets and consent forms.

1. [**IRAS (Integrated Research Application System) training module**](https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/ELearning/IRAS_E_learning.htm)

Taking the user from an introduction to IRAS to completing and submitting research applications, right through to management of research projects this module is an excellent source of information about the use of IRAS. Detailed question-specific advice is included at each stage.

1. **[HRA guidance on approval of research involving ionising radiation](http://www.hra.nhs.uk/resources/before-you-apply/types-of-study/knowledgebase-ionising-radiation-2/)**

This document provides guidance to researchers, radiation experts, employers (including NHS trusts) and Research Ethics Committees on procedures for planning, review and authorisation of all medical and biomedical research involving any use of ionising radiation.

1. [**HRA guidance on research involving medical devices**](http://www.hra.nhs.uk/resources/before-you-apply/types-of-study/medical-devices-research-2/)

Notes intended to assist researchers, medical device manufacturers, members of Research Ethics Committees and NHS R&D offices in understanding arrangements for regulation and ethical review of trials of medical devices in the UK, and to give practical guidance to applicants.

1. **Sharing your own learning with your committee**

Feeding back learning from a training day you have attended to your fellow committee members (as part of a formal agenda slot) can be counted as one hour’s self-directed learning.

1. **[RES Adults lacking capacity](http://www.hra.nhs.uk/resources/before-you-apply/consent-and-participation/adults-unable-to-consent-for-themselves/)**

An online toolkit on research involving adults lacking capacity to consent for themselves. The toolkit covers the provisions of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the separate provisions for medicinal trials under the Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations 2004. It includes a specific module on research in emergency medicine.

1. [**RES Mental Capacity Act 2005 - questions and answers**](http://www.hra.nhs.uk/resources/research-legislation-and-governance/questions-and-answers-mental-capacity-act-2005/)  
   Questions and answers on the Mental Capacity Act 2005, including principles, scope of the research provisions, applying for approval under the Act, approval criteria, consultees, loss of / regaining capacity during research.
2. [**RES informed consent in CTIMPs**](http://www.hra.nhs.uk/resources/before-you-apply/consent-and-participation/consent-and-participant-information/)An information paper on informed consent in clinical trials of investigational medicinal products
3. [**RES language and exclusion**](http://www.hra.nhs.uk/resources/before-you-apply/consent-and-participation/consent-and-participant-information/)

A document looking at how RECs should consider and decide about the inclusion or exclusion of participants in research who may have difficulties in adequate understanding of English.

1. [**MRC eLearning module on Human Tissue in relation to research**](http://www.ecmcnetwork.org.uk/events/training/mrc-e-learning-research-and-human-tissue-legislation-online)

A free eLearning module, designed in consultation with the Human Tissue Authority and Research Ethics Service, giving an overview of human tissue legislation in all parts of the UK with practical examples of how it applies to research. Suitable for researchers, research managers, members of RECs and others with an interest in the subject.

1. [**MRC experimental medicine toolkit**](http://www.em-toolkit.ac.uk/home.cfm)

A toolkit designed to support investigators, research managers and research ethics committees in:

* assessing the risks involved in experimental medicine studies
* devising risk proportionate management and monitoring strategies.

1. [**MRC data and tissue toolkit**](http://www.dt-toolkit.ac.uk/home.cfm)

A site developed by the MRC, in close collaboration with HRA/RES, NIGB, HTA, NHS R&D Forum, AMS and other UKCRC partners. It contains practical help with the legislative and good practice requirements relating to the use of personal information and human tissue samples in healthcare research in the UK, e.g. Data Protection Act (1998), Human Tissue Acts.

1. [**MRC Research Data and Confidentiality**](http://www.byglearning.co.uk/mrcrsc-lms/course/category.php?id=1)

An eLearning course developed by the MRC Regulatory Support Centre in consultation with HRA/RES, the Ethics and Confidentiality Committee and others. It explores the concepts of confidentiality and data protection. This is a complex field, but the course aims to provide you with the framework and tools to interpret the requirements for research with confidence.

1. [**Guidance on ethical review for members**](http://www.hra.nhs.uk/research-ethics-committee-members/guidance-on-ethical-review-for-members/) This guidance is available on the HRA website – a range of information relating to ethical review that could be recorded as SDL.

**Examples of activities that may not be recorded as SDL**

**If in doubt please contact your regional manager in the first instance:**

* reviewing ethics applications
* information governance training/debate
* attending HRA meetings (other than REC chairs attending six-monthly chairs network meetings)
* teaching topics unrelated to ethics
* pharmacology presentations
* attending conferences/meetings not directly related to ethics
* obtaining certificates e.g. Pharmacist Independent Prescribing
* translation of medical texts to/from another language.

## HRA self-directed learning log – record of learning relevant to research ethics

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name (in capitals)** | **Committee** | REC Manager |
|  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Key dates** | **What did you do and why?**  **(Description)** | **Learning achieved/outcome** | **Time taken (hours)** |
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**Signed** ................................................................................ (Member)

**Date** ………………….…

**Signed** ................................................................ (Regional Manager)

**Date** …………..………..