1. Constitution and accountability

1.1 The Joint Schools Research Ethics Sub-Committee for Humanities, Law and Social Science and Public Policy (RESC) has resolved to establish Research Ethics Panels (REPs) in each of the Schools of Law, Humanities and Social Science and Public Policy. In the case of the School of Social Science and Public Policy three Research Ethics Panel will be established: one War Studies, Defence Studies Department (DSD) and the King’s students undertaking degrees at the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS), the second covering the Waterloo based parts of the School – Education, and Management and the third to cover Geography, Gerontology and the Social Care Workforce Research Unit.

1.2 Each REP will operate under authority delegated to it by the RESC and will be accountable to that body. Copies of the minutes of meetings will be supplied to the RESC and an annual summary will be provided to the RESC outlining the REP’s work in the preceding year.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 The REP is responsible for ensuring that research on human participants within the War Studies and Defence Studies departments, and by the KCL students and staff at the Royal College of Defence Studies is carried out safely and with considered consent and respect for the autonomy and privacy of the research participants, and in accordance with the ethical principles set out in the Declaration of Helsinki and other relevant guidelines. In addition, the REP will ensure that relevant legal requirements, such as compliance with data protection legislation and College protocols on records management are complied with.

2.2 The REP is not responsible for considering the ethics of research falling under the remit of Department of Health approved ethics committees who abide by governance arrangements for Department of Health research ethics committees.

2.3 The REP has delegated authority from the RESC to:

(i) give ethical approval to research involving human participants undertaken by KCL staff or student members of the School of Social Science and Public Policy in the War Studies and Defence Studies departments, and the Royal College of Defence Studies;
(ii) ensure that all members of the REP and all members of staff undertaking the task of supervising student research projects undergo training in ethical issues relating to the conduct of research;
(iii) to report to the RESC through a yearly summary of the research projects that have received approval and any other relevant developments.

3. Membership

3.1. Appointments to the REP, including members and the Chair, will be confirmed by the RESC. They will comprise:

(i) four members of staff (at least one each from the War Studies department, Defence Studies department and the Royal College of Defence Studies), being recommended by the Head of School and being qualified for appointment by their experience of research involving the use of human participants and by their knowledge of broader ethical issues relating to the conduct of research.
(ii) one postgraduate research student

3.2. A quorum will be the Chair plus two other members and the Secretary will not count towards the quorum.

3.3. The term of office of members will normally be 3 years, renewable once.

3.4. Members of the REP must inform the Chair if they have a personal or financial interest in any research project or project sponsor. The Chair will decide whether the interest disqualifies the member from the discussion.
3.5. A member may resign from the REP at any time upon giving notice in writing to the Chair. Membership will lapse if a member fails without excuse/notifying the Chair to attend three consecutive meetings of the REP. The member will be notified of such lapse of membership by the Chair in writing. Steps shall be taken by the Chair of the REP to fill any vacancy which may arise.

3.6 The War Studies Group REP will work ‘virtually’ using email between meetings in order to review / approve applications.

4. Accountability and Reporting

4.1 The REP shall be accountable to the RESC in the conduct of its business. Copies of the minutes of meetings will be supplied to the RESC.

4.2 The REP shall submit a written summary to the RESC on its activities during the preceding year. It shall describe the number of meetings held, and shall include, if relevant, statistics describing nature of activity, a list of the applications, the decisions made and the names of the members of the REP serving on the panel during the year.

5. Procedures

5.1 Dates for submission of applications for research ethics authorisation will be publicised within the School. Closing dates for submission of completed applications will be 14 working days prior to the meeting.

5.2 The REP will ensure that the procedure devised by the RESC for gaining ethical clearance for research undertaken by staff and student members of the War Studies and Defence Studies departments, and the Royal College of Defence Studies involving human participants is duly followed.

5.3 The procedure requires

(i) All applications for ethical approval from the War Studies and Defence Studies departments, and the KCL students and staff at the Royal College of Defence Studies from Policy to be completed in writing on the pro formas devised by the RESC.

(ii) All applications indicating that the research entails minimal risk (as defined in the pro forma), to be submitted to the REP for endorsement. A pro forma list of approvals will then be sent to the RESC.

(iii) Every application submitted by a student accompanied by a Research Ethics Review Checklist indicating that the research entails more than minimal risk is to be submitted to the REP for consideration. A list of approvals will then be submitted to the RESC with a recommendation for final approval.

(iv) Every application submitted by a member of staff accompanied by a Research Ethics Review Checklist indicating that the research entails more than minimal risk will be submitted to the RESEC for consideration.

5.4 When considering applications, the REPs decisions will be categorised as follows:

(i) Approved: The application is satisfactory and needs no amendment or correction.

(ii) Approval in Principle: The application is essentially ethically sound, however the applicant needs to make some minor amendments before it can be approved (normally by Chair's action).

(iii) Deferred: The Committee could not reach a decision and need to seek further advice.

(iv) Not Approved: The application is seriously flawed and requires major revision before it can be reconsidered. Protocols in this category have to be considered by the full Committee if resubmitted.

(v) Rejected: The study is deemed unethical.

5.5 The REP will give full written reasons for requiring modification to proposals or rejecting them.

5.6 Appeals against decisions of the REP will be dealt with by the RESC.

5.7 The War Studies Group REP will meet three times a year but will consider applications at other times by working virtually using email.

6. Administration

The REP shall normally consider every correctly completed application which it receives at its next available meeting, provided that the application is received at least 14 working days prior to such a meeting. All completed applications and associated documents received by the Secretary shall be circulated by the Secretary with a meeting agenda to all members of the REP at least 5 working days prior to the next meeting. Agendas circulated
to the REP members shall include minutes of the previous meeting along with any documentation identified as relevant by the Chair. Applications received between meetings that cannot wait until the next meeting of the REP will be considered by the REP working together by email.

7. Meetings

7.1. The REP will meet 3 times per year according to a publicised schedule but the Chair will be able to organise additional meetings if required. Applications received between meetings that cannot wait until the next meeting of the REP will be considered by the REP working together by email.

8. Miscellaneous

8.1. The Chair of the REP may:

(i) issue guidance documents to assist applicants in the proper completion of applications
(ii) request the applicant to supply any further information in relation to an application and/or request the applicant to attend a meeting of the REP at which the application will be considered for the purpose of providing information to and answering questions from the REP members
(iii) request any information which they consider appropriate as to the objectives, methods or facilities of a project or the qualifications or experience of individuals involved, or any other matter relating to the carrying out of research, which relates to applications which it is considering or has considered
(iv) investigate the competence or qualifications of anyone involved in a research project, review any matter pertaining to a research project, or inspect the facilities involved in a research project
(v) make any observations or recommendations in relation to an application or the conduct of research generally including that an approval of an application should be subject to certain conditions

9. Records

9.1 In consultation with the RESC in respect of record storage protocols, the Secretary shall:

(i) create and allocate an identification number and keep on file a copy of each application and associated correspondence.
(ii) record details (ie the names of the researchers, the research methods being used, financial sponsors, etc) of all research projects being carried out in the within the War Studies and Defence Studies departments, and by the KCL student and staff members of the Royal College of Defence Studies.
(iii) retain one copy of all applications received and opinions which issued together with any correspondence between the applicant and the REP. These records shall be kept securely for at least 15 years, in facilities provided by or paid for by the College.
(iv) prepare minutes of all meetings of the REP

9.2. The members of the REP shall treat as and keep confidential all information and documents which relate to research projects referred to them where these are not already in the public domain and shall not disclose the same to any third party. However, applicants will be told that the title of their project, or a version of such presented by the application, may be included in an annual list of applications which may be made public at the discretion of the RESC.

10. Amendment

10.1 This constitution may be amended in the following manner:

(i) a proposal may be made by any REP member,
(ii) the proposal must be put in writing and circulated to all REP members for their consideration prior to a meeting and cannot be tabled for immediate action,
(iii) the views of the members should be discussed at the next scheduled meeting of the REP, and a vote taken at that meeting. However, any member unable to attend such a meeting, may register his or her views in writing to the Chair,
(iv) the proposal shall be adopted for recommendation to RESC only if a majority of the members agree to the amendment.