STU-SOP-TS-002 – Standard Operating Procedure on Requirements for Trial Steering Committee, and Data Monitoring Committee in trials

1. Purpose

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) describes the procedure of creating and managing research project oversight committees as required by the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research 2017, the Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations 2004 and the requirement of sponsors and funders.

This SOP also outlines committee reporting requirements for both Clinical Trials of an Investigational Medicinal Product (CTIMP) and other trials which require Trial Steering Committees (TSCs), and Data Monitoring Committees (DMCs).

Trial Management Groups (TMGs) and other operational committees required for all research projects are outlined in STU-SOP-TS-003 Research Project Operational Committees.

2. Background

Where appropriate for trials, TSCs, and DMCs are set up to oversee the conduct of that project and to provide advice to support and resolve problems that might occur.

It is the responsibility of the sponsor to establish these groups but this is usually delegated to the Chief Investigator (CI) who is also responsible for reporting to the committees in a timely manner using high quality data.

It is a requirement to develop charters or terms of reference for the individual groups so that they understand their role and how they will interact with each other.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The **Sponsor** has overall responsibility for defining the requirement for project TSCs, and DMCs, but will usually delegate this role to the CI. The sponsor via a risk assessment shall ensure that appropriate oversight groups are defined and shall assess the requirement for sponsor representation.

The **Funder**, where required, has responsibility for approving the oversight committee membership.

The **Chief Investigator (CI)** has delegated responsibility for setting up and managing TSCs, and DMCs, but will usually assign this role to the Trial Manager (TM). The CI will provide advice on suitable candidates to be invited to the TSC and DMC.

The **Trial Manager (TM)** will invite members to the relevant group, draft charters for review at the inaugural meeting and manage the groups throughout the trial. They will also produce key outputs for discussion in meetings.

For larger trials with a **Data Manager (DM)**, the CI may delegate the role of organising and managing the DMC to that person. The DM may also be delegated the task of producing data-related outputs for meetings by the TM.

The **Trial Statistician (TS)** is responsible for performing any statistical analyses to be reported to any meetings and to liaise with the Independent Statistician as appropriate.

The **Independent Statistician** is responsible for assessing the analyses provided, and for generating the authorisation to unblind data when required.

The **Unblinded Researcher,** where required, is responsible for managing any unblinded data for a trial when the TM and DM are blinded. They will assist the independent statistician with preparing any unblinded analyses and can attend the closed DMC.

The **Chairperson** of the TSC or DMC will be an independent member and responsible for representing the committees views in communications with other groups as part of the trial reporting structure.

The role of the **TSC** is to convene at least annually to review progress and conduct of the research.

The role of the **DMC** is to monitor accumulating research data and to make recommendations to the Sponsor and TSC on whether there are any ethical or safety issues with the primary aim of protecting patient safety. In a blinded trial, the unblinded report shall be discussed by the DMC in a 'closed session' with only independent members and the unblinded statistician present. After each meeting, the DMC will provide the CI and the TSC with written recommendations regarding research modification, continuation or termination.

External use of SOP: this SOP and Associated Documents (AD) may be used for research projects not adopted by STU where Swansea University (SU) staff and associated NHS organisations require guidance. In such instances, oversight responsibility for any associated tasks will not be the responsibility of STU.

4. Procedure

4.1 Setting up a TSC or DMC

The Sponsor should decide whether the study requires both a TSC and DMC or whether they can be combined.

The CI proposes the membership of the TSC and DMC for the trial, for approval by the Sponsor and the funder, where required. Once agreed, the CI, or funder (as appropriate), will approach and formally appoint members. The research protocol stipulates the requirement for each committee.

Membership will depend on the design of the trial but Table 1 illustrates a typical example:

Role	TSC	DMC	DMC (closed)
Chairperson	✓	✓	✓
Independent clinicians	✓	✓	✓
[*Independent medical experts depending on trial design e.g. radiologist, paramedic, surgeon, pharmacist*]	✓	✓	✓

Lay representatives (2 per group, where possible)	✓	✓	✓
Independent statistician	✓	✓	✓
Chief Investigator	✓	(✓)	
Trial Manager	✓*	✓*	
Data Manager		(✓)*	
Trial statistician		(✓)	
Unblinded researcher		✓*	(✓)*
STU representative	✓	(✓)	(✓)*
Other representative(s) from the trial e.g. clinician, laboratory lead	(✓)		
Sponsor representative	✓	(✓)	
Funder representative	✓		
Site PIs / other delegated local staff	(✓)		
Ad hoc independent expert	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)

Table 1: Example of members for each group for a trial.
Notes:
(✓) indicates that this member is optional or may be requested to attend individual meetings.
** Indicates that this member may also be asked to be the secretary for the group.*

A DMC must be fully constituted and established prior to enrolment of participants into a research project.

4.2 Committee Charters

Template Charters are available for both TSC (STU-AD-TMP-010) and DMC (STU-AD-TMP-011) to be adapted for each trial according to its bespoke requirements.

The Charter should be ratified at the first TSC or DMC meeting.

Charters should be reviewed annually or as required. Revised Charters must be signed by all members.

4.3 Committee meetings

4.3.1 Timing of meetings

The frequency of meetings will be determined by the committee Chairperson in discussion with the CI and funder if required and will be detailed in the Charter. Each committee will meet at least annually.

4.3.2 Meeting documentation

Minutes of committee meetings, along with documentation indicating actions to address recommendations made by the TSC or DMC will be held in the TMF. However, minutes from 'closed sessions' of the DMC must be held separately and securely to avoid unblinding.

The CI will send open minutes from the TSC and DMC, and documentation of actions taken, to the Sponsor and the Trial Management Group as required.

Further guidance is available in STU-AD-GDN-010 TSC/DMC Guidance.

5. References

- Damocles Charter template located at http://bcrsrc.jhmi.edu/courses/c34066001/DAMOCLES%20article_Lancet%202005.pdf
- Health Research Authority website (HRA) - http://www.hra.nhs.uk/
- Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency website (MHRA) - https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/medicines-and-healthcare-products-regulatory-agency/services-information
- NIHR Project Oversight Groups Guidance https://www.nihr.ac.uk/funding-and-support/documents/funding-for-research-studies/how-to-apply/NETSCC_Project_Oversight_Groups_Guidance.pdf
- UK policy framework for health and social care research (2017) - https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/policies-standards-legislation/uk-policy-framework-health-social-care-research/
- UK Medicine for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations 2004 - http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1031/contents/made

It is assumed that by referencing the principal regulations that all subsequent amendments are included in this citation.

6. Associated Documents

Number	Title	Location
STU-AD-TMP-010	TSC charter template	Q-Pulse
STU-AD-TMP-011	DMC (Damocles charter template)	Q-Pulse
STU-AD-GDN-010	TSC/DMC Guidance	Q-Pulse

7. Abbreviations

List of Abbreviations	
AD	Associated Documents
HRA	Health Research Authority
MHRA	Medicine and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency
NHS	National Health Service
QMS	Quality Management System
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
STU	Swansea Trials Unit
SU	Swansea University

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Document History

Version No:	4	**Effective Date:**	22-Apr-2024
Description of changes:	Updated to SOP Template v5		