



# Smart Energy Research Lab (SERL) Data Governance Board (DGB)

## Terms of reference

June 2020

**Document Purpose:** This document summarises the Terms of Reference of the SERL Data Governance Board.

<b><u>Document information</u></b>
<b>Status:</b> Draft
<b>Authors:</b> Eoghan McKenna, Maxine Frerk, Simon Elam
<b>Version:</b> 13
<b>Version Date:</b> 26/06/2020
<b>Summary of latest changes:</b> Amended to reflect thoughts and feedback from the Chair.
<b>Associated documents:</b> See table below

### Key Associated Documents

<b>Associated Documents</b>	<b>Authors</b>
SERL DGB Operating Procedures	
SERL Data Governance Framework	
SERL UCL Research Ethics application	
SERL Participant Management Processes (which includes compliance with SEC Privacy Controls Framework)	
UKSA guidance for ethics self-assessment	

### Our research partners



## Introduction

The Smart Energy Research Lab (SERL) is a £6m, 5-year (2017-2022) programme funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). SERL is a consortium research project made up of University College London (lead institution), University of Essex (UK Data Archive), University of Edinburgh, Cardiff University, Loughborough University, Leeds Beckett University, University of Southampton, and The Energy Saving Trust.

SERL aims to:

- 1) Recruit 10,000 GB households, collect smart meter data for these households, and link this data to contextual data such as a participant survey, weather data and Energy Performance Certificate data.
- 2) Enable innovative research by providing accredited UK researchers working on approved projects with access to SERL's data via a secure virtual lab environment hosted by UK Data Archive.

SERL is a UK University research project led by UCL that involves human participants and so requires ethical approval by UCL's Research Ethics Committee (UCL REC) before any data can be collected or used for research. SERL received approval from UCL REC on 30 January 2019.

SERL has established the Data Governance Board (DGB) to oversee and review research project applications for the access of SERL data. This document describes the Terms of Reference for this board. Note that SERL has purposefully aligned its research application procedures with those of the UK Statistics Authority relating to access to data under the Digital Economy Act.

## Roles and responsibilities

The primary purpose of the DGB is to ensure that the process for approving access to SERL data is transparent, independent, and consistent.

The secondary purpose of the DGB is to provide advice to the SERL management team on wider privacy and related issues, where the management team retain ultimate responsibility e.g. SERL Data Governance Framework.

All researchers wishing to access SERL data must be ONS/DEA Accredited Researchers.

Under exceptional circumstances and where there is a compelling reason, the SERL PI may make decisions on approving research projects independently of the DGB. Such cases will be documented, information about them will be made publicly available, and the decision will be reviewed by the DGB at the next possible occasion.

It is the responsibility of the DGB to:

- Review all applications for research projects for the use of SERL data
- Assess whether applications for research projects meet the approval criteria
- Approve or reject research projects applications

- Ensure the process for decision-making is transparent and independent
- Ensure that their decisions are impartial and credible

The SERL website will display information on all projects approved by the DGB.

## Principles and criteria

In reviewing applications for research projects, the DGB shall ensure that the process adheres to the following principles:

- Transparency
- Accountability
- Independence
- Credibility

The DGB shall adhere to these principles through its membership and meeting arrangements.

Applications for research projects shall be required to demonstrate they meet the following criteria:

- Is there public benefit?
- Is there demonstrable analytical merit?
- Is the project feasible?
- Are any relevant privacy implications sufficiently mitigated?
- Has the project successfully completed a formal ethical review?

The DGB shall be required to consider projects against these criteria and assess the balance of any wider negative impacts, including the risk of disclosure of personal information, against the potential benefits of the project.

Project application procedures are further documented in the DGB Operating Procedures.

## Membership

The DGB shall be formed of:

- An independent Chair (appointed by SERL Principle Investigator)
- Regular members (number to be determined by Chair)

Members shall be selected such that the DGB shall demonstrate:

- A level of knowledge and ability to consistently interpret the level of adherence to the criteria used to assess applications for research projects
- a reasonable level of trust from the perspective of data subjects and data users
- That any conflicts of interest are declared and made explicit
- That a list of DGB members with their affiliations will be made publicly available via the SERL website

The terms of office for the Chair will be 3 years. The terms of office for the regular members of the board will be 3 years. Terms of office are renewable, except in cases where members decide to resign, or their position is terminated.

Members of the DGB will be reimbursed for their travel and accommodation expenses incurred as part of their role. Administration of expenses will be undertaken by the Secretariat (see below).

The Chair of the DGB is nominated by the Secretariat in consultation with the SERL Independent Advisory Board and appointed by SERL PI.

The regular members of the DGB are nominated by the Chair in consultation with the Secretariat.

## Membership

DGB membership (as of 04/06/2020)

- **Chair:** Independent consultant – Maxine Frerk
- BEIS - Andrew Charlesworth
- Citizen's Advice - Colin Griffiths (tbc)
- Energy Systems Catapult – Richard Dobson
- MHCLG – Claire Smith
- Oxford University – Sarah Darby
- UK Data Service – Louise Corti

## Meeting arrangements

The DGB will aim to meet 3-4 times per year which may be in person or virtually. Additional meetings may be called as required.

Projects can be approved or rejected by correspondence.

Decisions by the DGB may set precedents that can be used when assessing new project applications.

The SERL Secretariat and UKDS will validate each application against the approval criteria and make summary recommendations for the DGB to consider when reviewing applications.

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

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

## Secretariat

Secretariat for the DGB will be provided by SERL and consist of:

- SERL Director
- SERL Lead – data governance
- SERL Consortium Manager
- Other persons as appropriate

Secretariat membership roles (as of June 2020)

- UCL – Kenan Direk
- UCL – Simon Elam
- UCL – Eoghan McKenna
- UCL – James O'Toole



## Currency

To maintain maximum efficiencies in the use of infrastructure, projects will be time-limited, and the DGB approval will thus be time-limited. Extensions to any project will require researchers to re-assert the status on certain items on their application form to ensure that they are current. Researchers shall not use the data for any other purposes than those given on the approved project application form.

## Appeals

Researchers will have a right to appeal DGB decisions. Appeals will be to SERL Principal Investigator who will consider the decision afresh.

Appeals must be submitted to the SERL Secretariat within 28 working days of the Panel's initial decision.

SERL PI's decision is final and there can be no appeal of this.

SERL Secretariat will inform the appellant of the conclusion of the appeal process.

## Review

The first task for the DGB will be to review and approve these Terms of Reference.

The DGB shall review the effectiveness of its meetings and its Terms of Reference annually.