

# Human Research Ethics

## Human Research Ethics Committee Constitution

HREC Doc 06:23



Approved by the Council:

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) was established by the Academic Senate (resolution 142/90) at its 11/90 meeting, as a successor to the Research Ethics Committee.
- 1.2 The HREC was re-established by the Council (resolution C213/96) at its 4/96 meeting as a Committee of the Council.
- 1.3 The Council resolved:
  - (i) *that the HREC be re-established as a Committee of the Council, directly responsible to the Vice-Chancellor; and*
  - (ii) *that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Innovation be the Vice-Chancellor's delegate as the officer of the University responsible for ensuring compliance by the HREC with statutory requirements and University policies and procedures; and to whom the HREC report on a routine basis.*
- 1.4 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) will act as the University officer responsible for the approval of policies, procedures and guidelines concerning the conduct of human research that are endorsed by the HREC (Council resolution C13:078). The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) will actively participate in the development of such documents through input and debate.

### 2.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 2.1 As a recipient of Australian Government research funding, the University must ensure that any human research conducted under its auspices is:
  - (a) designed and conducted in accordance with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*; and
  - (b) ethically reviewed and monitored in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*.
- 2.2 The HREC is primarily responsible for the review of applications for ethics approval for human research to be conducted at, or under the auspices of, the University, where the *National Statement* deems that review by a full HREC is required.
- 2.3 The HREC is also responsible for:
  - (a) the provision of advice to the University on related matters;
  - (b) the provision and/or oversight of training and further education in human research ethics to both researchers and those involved in ethical review processes; and
  - (c) supporting the ongoing development, implementation and assessment of institutional processes for non-HREC review of human research activities which have been assessed as involving lower risk (e.g., College Human Ethics Review Panels).

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- 2.4 The HREC performs its responsibilities within the terms of reference as set out in the *National Statement*, issued jointly by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the Australian Research Council (ARC) and Universities Australia, and relevant state and commonwealth legislation, policies and codes. The HREC is required to:
- 2.4.1 consider the ethical implications of the proposed human research which falls under its review, as defined by the *National Statement*, and determine whether or not it is ethically acceptable;
  - 2.4.2 provide for the monitoring of research projects until completion so that the HREC may be satisfied that they continue to conform to the approved protocol;
  - 2.4.3 provide for a confidential mechanism for receiving complaints or reports on the conduct of research projects;
  - 2.4.4 ensure the maintenance of records of all proposed human research projects; and
  - 2.4.5 establish and maintain communication with the Australian Health Ethics Committee (AHEC), a principal Committee of the NHMRC, provide access, upon request, to information in the HREC's records to the AHEC and/or NHMRC, and provide information to the University to enable it to report annually to the NHMRC on compliance with the *National Statement*.
- 2.5 Researchers not affiliated with the University, but who propose to conduct research specifically in the University, are required to obtain confirmation that appropriate ethical approval is in place, prior to commencing the research. In all other cases, ordinarily the University's ethical review processes will not be available to non-affiliated researchers who do not have access to an institution or organisation with a human research ethics committee constituted in accordance with the *National Statement*. However, they may make application to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) to have their research examined through one of the University's ethical review processes.
- 2.6 The HREC supports the recommendation in the *National Statement* that institutions adopt processes that eliminate the unnecessary duplication of ethical review. The University's *Collaborative Research Procedure* outlines the conditions under which the University may recognise an ethical approval granted through an external process, as well as circumstances in which ethical clearance through one of the University's authorised ethical review processes is not required.

### 3.0 MEMBERSHIP

- 3.1 The HREC shall comprise:
- 3.1.1 At least eight (8) members as required by the *National Statement*, selected in consultation with the HREC, comprising:

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- 3.1.1.1 a chairperson, with suitable experience, including previous membership of an HREC, whose other responsibilities will not impair the HREC's capacity to carry out its obligations under the *National Statement*;
  - 3.1.1.2 at least two people who bring a broader community or consumer perspective and who have no paid affiliation with the institution;
  - 3.1.1.3 at least one person with knowledge of, and current experience in, the professional care or treatment of people; for example, a nurse, counsellor or allied health professional;
  - 3.1.1.4 at least one person who performs a pastoral care role in a community including, but not limited to, an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander elder or community leader, a chaplain or a minister of religion or other religious leader;
  - 3.1.1.5 at least one qualified lawyer, who may or may not be currently practicing and, where possible, is not engaged to advise the University on research-related or any other matters; and
  - 3.1.1.6 at least two people with current research experience that is relevant to research proposals to be considered at the meetings they attend.
- 3.1.2 A Deputy Chair or Deputy Chairs, elected by the Committee from its members who shall:
- 3.1.2.1 chair meetings of the HREC in the absence of the Chair;
  - 3.1.2.2 provide assistance to the Chair in the completion of the HREC's business;
  - 3.1.2.3 take a leading role in reviewing and approving submissions eligible for expedited review.
- 3.1.3 At least 11 members, selected in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, with experience in relevant research areas, which may include, but are not limited to:
- 3.1.3.1 Humanities and Social Sciences;
  - 3.1.3.2 Creative Industries;
  - 3.1.3.3 Business and Law;
  - 3.1.3.4 Education;
  - 3.1.3.5 Engineering and built environment;
  - 3.1.3.6 Psychological Sciences;
  - 3.1.3.7 Biomedical Sciences and Pharmacy;
  - 3.1.3.8 Health Sciences;
  - 3.1.3.9 Medicine & Public Health;
  - 3.1.3.10 Nursing & Midwifery; and
  - 3.1.3.11 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

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- 3.1.4 Additional co-opted members may be appointed upon the request of the Committee.
- 3.2 The Chair is appointed by the Vice-Chancellor, on the recommendation of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation).
- 3.3 New members of the HREC, other than the Chair, are appointed by the Vice-Chancellor or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) as the Vice-Chancellor's nominee. The University Council will be advised of changes in the HREC membership.
- 3.4 In making appointments to the Committee, consideration shall be given to the broad knowledge of and commitment to excellence in ethical decision-making demonstrated by candidates for appointment and, in the case of members in category 3.1.3, their expertise and experience in relevant research areas.
- 3.5 No individual may represent more than one of the categories listed in 3.1.1 at any individual meeting, but may fill a different category at a separate meeting, so long as all minimum membership categories are represented at each meeting.
- 3.6 Additional members may be appointed to all categories with the exception of 3.1.1.1, to ensure the HREC remains compliant with the *National Statement* and has sufficient expertise available for the research under review.
- 3.7 Members are appointed as individuals for their knowledge, qualities and experience, and not as representatives of any organisation, group or opinion.
- 3.8 As far as is practicable, it will be ensured that:
  - (a) the HREC membership at each meeting has diversity, including gender diversity; and
  - (b) at least one third of those participating in each meeting are from outside of the institution.
- 3.9 Members are indemnified by the University in the course of *bona fide* conduct of their duties as members of the HREC.
- 3.10 Members not affiliated with the University shall be reimbursed travel and any other costs associated with attending meetings and other HREC-related business. These members are also eligible to claim an honorarium of \$1000 per annum which is available to offset the costs associated with fulfilling their responsibilities as a member of the HREC.

#### 4.0 OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

- 4.1 The Manager, Human Ethics shall attend meetings of the Committee as an officer in attendance and shall have rights of audience and debate.
- 4.2 The Senior Manager, Research Ethics & Integrity may attend meetings of the Committee as an officer in attendance and shall have the rights of audience and debate.

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### 5.0 TERMS OF OFFICE

- 5.1 The term of office shall generally be for two years.
- 5.2 The term of office of the Chair and Deputy Chair(s) shall be coincident with the appointee's term on the HREC itself.
- 5.3 Members may, if qualified and undertaking their responsibilities to a satisfactory level, be considered for re-appointment for subsequent terms of office.
- 5.4 Reappointment of the Chair for a subsequent term of office will require approval of the Vice-Chancellor.
- 5.5 Reappointment of Deputy Chairs and other membership roles for a subsequent term of office will require the approval of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation).

### 6.0 SUB-COMMITTEES

- 6.1 The HREC may establish and maintain such sub-committees as it deems necessary to respond effectively to its responsibilities.
- 6.2 Chairs of sub-committees shall be appointed from members of the HREC.
- 6.3 A sub-committee shall exercise such functions as the HREC delegates and shall report at least annually to the HREC.

### 7.0 DELEGATION

- 7.1 The HREC may delegate authority to act on its behalf and may delegate functions to the Chair, Deputy Chairs or Human Ethics Officers.
- 7.2 Each matter dealt with on behalf of the HREC under delegated authority will be reported to the Committee.

### 8.0 MODE OF OPERATION

- 8.1 The HREC shall meet as frequently as necessary but at least ten times a year.
- 8.2 The HREC may invite applicants or other persons to attend for particular items of business at its meetings, or for such complete meetings, as the HREC may believe appropriate. Applicants may be present to inform the discussion about their research, but not the Committee's deliberations.
- 8.3 As required by the *National Statement*, where there is less than full attendance of members at a meeting of the HREC from the minimum membership categories listed at 3.1.1, the Chair must be satisfied, before a decision is reached, that those members not present have received all papers, have had an opportunity to contribute their views and that these have been recorded and considered.

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- 8.4 The quorum for meetings of the HREC shall be a majority of the number of members in category 3.1.1.
- 8.5 At the beginning of the meeting, those in attendance are to declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest relating to the matters under consideration.
- 8.6 The HREC shall endeavour to reach decisions by general agreement. Where agreement is not unanimous, dissenting votes will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- 8.7 The HREC may invite observers to attend the meetings. Any invited observers will not be involved in deliberations or decision making but are still bound by the same confidentiality and disclosure of interest requirements as HREC members.
- 8.8 The HREC, in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) or their delegate, may suspend and/or withdraw approval for any project which no longer complies with the approved research protocol or where the research ceases to be ethically acceptable.

### 9.0 REPORTING

- 9.1 The HREC shall report to the Council through the Vice-Chancellor at least annually.
- 9.2 The HREC shall report to the Research Committee and Academic Senate at least annually.

### 10.0 SERVICING OF COMMITTEE

- 10.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) shall appoint an administrative officer to the Committee, who shall have the rights of audience and debate.

#### Related Documentation:

- *HREC Procedures*
- [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)
- [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#)

#### Approval History:

*Vice-Chancellor: 17 September 1996 (noted by Council 25 October 1996)*

*Council: 29 October 1999 (Resolution C99:246)*

*Amended by Vice-Chancellor 15 June 2002 (noted by Council 7 March 2003).*

*Council: 30 November 2007*

*Council: 24 May 2013 (Resolution C13:078)*

*Council: 9 October 2015 (Resolution C15:153)*

*Council: 24 November 2023 (Resolution C07:08:02)*