

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE CONSTITUTION

Sub-Committee of the Research Committee

(2024/0000800)

Established by Council: 9/90 (8.5.1990)

(2014/0005080) (Revised)

Constitution last amended: Research Committee 1/2024 meeting

ROLE

- 1 The role of Human Research Ethics Committee (“HREC”) is to ensure that all human research undertaken under the auspices of the University is ethically reviewed and monitored in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.
- 2 The HREC is accountable to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) through the Research Committee on all matters relating to the ethical conduct of human research undertaken under the auspices of the University.
- 3 In undertaking its role the Human Research Ethics Committee contributes to the University meeting the requirements of the following Domains and/or Standards within the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* (HESF 2021):
 - (a) Domain 4 – Research and Research Training
 - (b) Domain Standard 5.2 – Academic and Research Integrity

INTERPRETATION

- 4 In this constitution, references to academic elements and academic management positions shall be as defined in *Structure and Governance of Academic Groups of the University*.

FUNCTIONS

- 5 HREC is responsible for:
 - (i) advising the University on the appropriate ethical standards and whether these standards are met, in the conduct of human research (as defined by the current edition of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research);
 - (ii) developing guidelines, including the Griffith University Research Ethics Manual, which satisfy ethical standards articulated by the current edition of the National Statement, against which research projects can be judged;
 - (iii) advising on appropriate policy settings and proportional review processes for negligible risk exemption criteria, low risk of harm, and greater than low risk of harm;
 - (iv) examining proposed research activities involving greater than low risk of harm for their consistency with these guidelines;
 - (v) establishing panels for the conduct of reviews via the Expedited Ethical Review Level 2 pathway;
 - (vi) examining reports on the conduct of expedited reviews for research activities involving no more than a low risk of harm for their consistency with these guidelines (as described under 6(ii), above);
 - (vii) monitoring the conduct of approved research projects until their completion to ensure ongoing compliance with approval conditions;
 - (viii) advising on the University's guidelines on ethical standards for human research in light of those applied elsewhere in the community, and informed by international best practice;
 - (ix) rejecting or requiring modification to the protocol of any research proposal which does not meet the University's ethical standards for research;
 - (x) advising on the framing and implementation of the University's procedures to monitor approved research, and the processes to identify research that has not been submitted for approval;

- (xi) providing annual reports to the Research Committee;
- (xii) assisting in the preparation of documents demonstrating compliance and other reports to external agencies;
- (xiii) facilitating and supporting a culture of excellent research, through involvement in the University's communication, education and training strategies;
- (xiv) providing advice to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research), as requested, on potential breaches of the University's research ethics arrangements and/or relevant external regulations, codes and guidelines.

MEMBERSHIP

- 6 In line with the 2023 National Statement, the membership of the Committee shall be:
- (i) The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) or nominee as Chair *ex officio*;
 - (ii) two people who bring a broader community or consumer perspective and who have no paid affiliation with the institution;
 - (iii) at least one person with knowledge of, and current experience in, the professional care, counselling or treatment of people; for example, a nurse or allied health professional;
 - (iv) a 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;
 - (vi) a qualified lawyer, who may or may not be currently practicing and, where possible, is not engaged to advise the institution on research-related or any other matters;
 - (vii) one or more members of the academic staff; who may also fulfil another membership criteria
 - (vii) a research data specialist
 - (viii) at least one or more members who have knowledge of research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples or are familiar with relevant cultural knowledge;
 - (ix) at least two nominees drawn from the pool of Research Ethics Advisors who have current research experience that is relevant to the research proposals to be considered at the meetings they attend.
- 8 The members in 7(ii) to 7(vii) will be appointed by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research). The members in 7(ix) will be appointed by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research), in consultation with the Deans and Pro Vice Chancellors, based upon recommendation from the heads of the elements within the groupings.
- 9 The HREC will elect one or more Deputy Chair/s from among its members, to serve for a period of two years. The Deputy Chair/s will have the responsibility of chairing meetings of the Committee and for taking executive action, on those occasions when the Chair is absent from the University or unable to perform the duties of the Chair.

TERMS OF OFFICE

- 10 The members of the Committee shall normally serve for a period of two years up to 31 December of the relevant anniversary year, and shall be eligible for re-appointment.
- 11 Prior to their appointment taking effect (and before subsequent renewal of their membership), all HREC members must sign a Membership Deed, which confirms (among other things) their commitment to abide by:
- (i) This Constitution;

- (ii) The Standard Operating Procedures of the Committee;
- (iii) The terms of the University's Personal Information Privacy Plan; and
- (iv) The requirement to disclose any conflict of interest, for inclusion in the HREC register (*refer section 17 for further details*).

RESIGNATION OR TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

- 12 A Member may resign from the HREC at any time by advising the Chairperson in writing (or in the case of the Chairperson, the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)). If possible at least two months' notice should be given.
- 13 The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) may terminate a Member's membership if the Member:
- (i) fails to attend three consecutive meetings without the prior approval of the Committee Chairperson (or in the case of the Chairperson, the prior approval of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research));
 - (ii) ceases to fulfil the criteria for their membership category; or
 - (iii) fails to comply with the terms of their Membership Deed.
- 14 The Chairperson or Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) will advise the HREC Secretary of the resignation or termination, and a new Member will be sought.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- 15 Consistent with the Committee's commitment to confidentiality, Members must not discuss matters relating to the Committee's deliberations outside the Committee, unless:
- (i) they are discharging a delegated or official responsibility of their membership (e.g. A Research Ethics Advisor discussing with a head of an element a pattern of problems with applications submitted from that element); or
 - (ii) disclosure is required in relation to official University business.
- 16 Members must also make themselves aware of the University's conflict of interest policy, and must disclose any actual, potential or perceived ongoing conflict of interest in accordance with section 18 and 19 of this Constitution.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 17 A Committee Member (or other attendee at the HREC meeting) who has an interest or a perceived interest in a matter under discussion must declare the interest immediately upon becoming aware of it. Examples include (but are not limited to) membership of the research team, supervision of a member of the research team, family relationship with a member of the research team, or pecuniary interest in a project.
- 18 The HREC secretary will maintain a record of any conflicts of interest declared at Committee meetings.
- 19 Ongoing interests (e.g. an employment relationship or membership of an external organisation) will be recorded in the register and do not need to be re-declared at each meeting.
- 20 The Committee will decide (on a majority basis) whether the interest declared constitutes a conflict of interest.
- 21 Minutes of Committee meetings must contain records of all declared interests and conflicts of interest relevant to specific matters under consideration at that meeting, and of any measures taken to address the conflicts of interest.
- 22 Where the Committee determines that a declared interest constitutes a conflict of interest, Members or other attendees with that conflict of interest in relation to a matter under consideration must withdraw from the meeting while that matter is being

discussed. Once any Members so conflicted have withdrawn, the number of remaining Members must still constitute a quorum if a decision is required.

DECISIONS BY THE COMMITTEE

- 23 Members have debate and voting rights for all matters before the Committee unless a conflict of interest exists (see sections 17 – 22 above regarding conflict of interest).
- 24 Decisions by the HREC about whether a research proposal meets the requirements of the National Statement must be informed by an exchange of opinions from at least one Member from each of the membership categories listed in 7(i) – (v). This exchange should, ideally, take place during a HREC meeting with all those members present however where a quorum has not been reached at a meeting, the Chairperson should be satisfied, before a decision is reached, that the views of those absent who are required to reach quorum have been received and considered (as per 5.2.31 and 5.2.32 of the National Statement).
- 25 The HREC will endeavour to reach decisions by general agreement where ever possible however this need not involve unanimity (as per 5.2.33 of the National Statement).
- 26 Each Member is responsible for deciding whether, in their own judgement, a proposal submitted to the HREC meets the requirements of the National Statement and is ethically acceptable (as per 5.2.2 of the National Statement). To fulfil this responsibility members should:
 - (i) become familiar with the National Statement, and consult other guidelines relevant to the review of specific research proposals;
 - (ii) prepare for and attend scheduled meetings of the review body or, if unavailable, provide opinions on the ethical acceptability of research proposals before meetings; and
 - (iii) attend continuing education or training programs in research ethics at least every three years.

INVITATION TO ATTEND

- 27 The Chairperson shall have the authority to invite, from time to time, other persons to attend particular meetings or provide written reviews who, by reason of their special expertise or experience, can assist the Committee's deliberations on any particular matter or matters.
- 28 Observers may attend Committee meetings at the Chairperson's discretion or invitation. HREC Members should be advised before a meeting if an observer will be in attendance. Such persons may have an interest in research ethics and the review process but are not Committee Members.
- 29 Observers and advisors must sign a confidentiality agreement before papers are shared and/or the meeting commences.

CHAIRPERSON

- 29 The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) shall appoint a person (who shall hold a senior academic position) to the role of Chairperson of the Committee, for a two year term. For the avoidance of doubt, the Chairperson may be chosen from among the Members referred to in section 7.

SECRETARY

- 30 The Director, Office for Research, will appoint a Secretary to the Committee who shall have rights of audience and debate.
- 31 The HREC may also be supported by Office for Research staff involved in the ethical review of research.

SUB-COMMITTEES

- 32 The Committee may establish standing sub-committees or working parties of an *ad hoc* nature from time to time.

MEETINGS

- 33 The Committee will meet as required and normally monthly from February to December.

WORK PLAN

- 34 The Committee will provide an annual Work Plan to Research Committee for review and endorsement prior to the Plan's scheduled commencement.

REPORTING

- 35 The Committee will report its activities to Research Committee. The Committee will provide an Annual Report to Research Committee.