



## Human Research Ethics Committee Constitution

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Committee established by Research Committee: Meeting 09/1990 (May 1990)

Previous version of constitution approved by Research Committee: Meeting 01/2024 (6 February 2024) (2024/0000800)

Current version of constitution approved by Research Committee: Meeting 06/2024 (8 October 2024) (2024/0001132)

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (GUHREC) is a University committee, which reports to the Research Committee. The role of The Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee 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. Interpretation

- 2.1. In this constitution, references to academic elements and academic management positions shall be as defined in the [\*Griffith University Governance Framework\*](#).
- 2.2. Any reference to “the Committee” means the Human Research Ethics Committee

### 3. Mandate

- 3.1. The Committee is a standing committee established by Research Committee and reports directly to, and is accountable to Research Committee.
- 3.2. The Committee contributes to risk and governance oversight and supports the Academic Committee and University in meeting the requirements of the following Domains and Standards within the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* (HESF 2021):
- (a) Domain 4 Research and research training
    - Standard 4.1 – Research
    - Standard 4.2 – Research Training
  - (b) Domain 5 Institutional Quality Assurance
    - Standard 5.1 – Course Approval and Accreditation
    - Standard 5.2 – Academic and Research Integrity
    - Standard 5.3 – Monitoring, Review and Improvement
  - (c) Domain 6 Governance and Accountability
    - Standard 6.3 – Governance and Accountability

### 4. Functions

- 4.1. The Committee will:



- (a) advise 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).
- (b) develop guidelines and resources, which satisfy ethical standards articulated by the current edition of the National Statement, against which research projects can be judged.
- (c) advise on appropriate policy settings and proportional review processes for research involving minimal, low risk, and greater than low risk of harm; and criteria for research which is exempt from ethical review.
- (d) examine proposed research activities involving greater than low risk of harm for their consistency with these guidelines.
- (e) establish review panels for the conduct of reviews via the Expedited Ethical Review Level 2 pathway.
- (f) monitor the conduct of approved research projects until their completion to ensure ongoing compliance with approval conditions.
- (g) advise 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.
- (h) reject or require modification to the protocol of any research proposal which does not meet national ethical standards for research.
- (i) advise 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.
- (j) provide annual reports to the Research Committee.
- (k) assist in the preparation of documents demonstrating compliance and other reports to external agencies.
- (l) facilitate and support a culture of research excellence, through involvement in the University's communication, education, and training strategies.
- (m) provide 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.

## **5. Authority**

- 5.1. As provided for in the Academic Committee Constitution, the Council has delegated certain of its powers to the Committee in accordance with section 11(1)(b) of the Griffith University Act 1988 (Qld).
- 5.2. The Committee may exercise such powers as the Council may delegate to the Committee from time to time, as set out in the University's register of delegations.
- 5.3. Griffith University has established the GUHREC to advise the institution on human research ethics matters, to assist researchers in the design and conduct of high-quality ethical research, and to facilitate the University's compliance with the various regulatory frameworks which relate to the governance of human research ethics issues.
- 5.4. Griffith University's human research ethics arrangements comply with the current version of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. The constitution and functioning of this



committee is in accordance with the provisions of the National Statement. The Committee also plays a valuable advisory role regarding the institution's approach to the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research

- 5.5. In addition to the National Statement, the drafting of this document was informed by the framing of relevant leading international guidelines and commentaries (such as the Institute Review Board Guidebook produced by the Office for Human Research Protection and the World Health Organisation Operational Guidelines for Ethics Committees that Review Biomedical Research).
- 5.6. The GUHREC has no delegated authority in relation to budgetary or management issues, but does advise the University on matters which may have budgetary implications.
- 5.7. The GUHREC also has an important role in reviewing applications for ethical clearance via the full ethical review pathway and is a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) registered HREC (Registration number EC00162).

## **6. Committee Composition**

- 6.1. The Committee is composed of:
  - (a) The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) or nominee as Chair ex officio;
  - (b) two people who bring a broader community or consumer perspective and who have no paid affiliation with the institution;
  - (c) 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;
  - (d) 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;
  - (e) 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;
  - (f) one or more members of the academic staff; who may also fulfil another membership criteria
  - (g) a research data specialist;
  - (h) at least one or more members who have knowledge of research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples or are familiar with relevant research related cultural knowledge;
  - (i) 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.
- 6.2. The core membership structure of a GUHREC is outlined by the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. This structure should include at least one third of members who are external to the Institution, diversity in membership, including gender diversity, and access to the expertise necessary to enable a proper review of the research that is considered.
- 6.3. The diverse nature of research conducted within the University necessitates a membership structure that combines an appropriate breadth of expertise and ensures a wide engagement with the elements of the University.
- 6.4. Where a member ceases to fulfil the criteria of their position (e.g. a nominee of an element ceases to be a staff member of that element), their membership immediately lapses.



- 6.5. Much of the membership of the Committee is appointed by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) or by the Research Committee on the recommendation of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).
- 6.6. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) may determine the method by which their recommendation for nominations are made – which could include calling for expressions of interest, followed by whatever selection method the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) deems appropriate. The final selection of a recommended nominee will be at the discretion of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and will be based upon issues such as expertise, representation, potential contribution, and relevant University policy.
- 6.7. A recommendation in relation to the filling of casual vacancies will be made by the GUHREC, and a final determination made by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).
- 6.8. Each member of the GUHREC signs an Agreement to Accept the Terms of Reference and Constitution of the Committee confirming that they will not disclose any confidential information to third parties. This agreement means that, outside of a meeting, members should only discuss matters relating to the Committee's deliberations if they are discharging an official responsibility or role (e.g. a Research Ethics Advisor [REA] discussing with a Head of School a pattern of problems with applications submitted from their area) or if disclosure is required in relation to official University business). Members must never compromise intellectual property, commercial-in-confidence, or confidentiality.
- 6.9. The University provides an honorarium payment to external members who attend meetings. An honorarium payment amount which is determined by the Office for Research and reviewed annually will be made to members within 14 calendar days of each meeting attended. Members who are academic staff at the University will not receive an honorarium; however, membership should be recognised as contributing to the service component of an academic appointment.

## **7. Term of Appointment**

- 7.1 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 reappointment.
- 7.2 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:
  - (a) This Constitution
  - (b) The Standard Operating Procedures of the Committee
  - (c) The terms of the University's Personal Information Privacy Statement; and
  - (d) The requirement to disclose any conflict of interest.

## **8. Rights of Audience and Debate**

- 8.1 The following persons shall have rights of audience and debate:
  - (a) Director, Office for Research or nominee
  - (b) Secretary to the Committee



## **9. Operating Principles and Procedures**

- 9.1 The Committee will operate and meetings will be conducted in accordance with the Council Committees Procedure (*Standing Orders*) except where the constitution states otherwise.

## **10. Obtaining Advice**

- 10.1 The Committee will have the power to seek advice from any member of the University community or external expert where particular expertise or insights are required and to direct enquiries to any element of the University.

## **11. Secretariat Services**

- 11.1 The Director, Office for Research, will appoint a Secretary to the Committee who will have rights of audience and debate. The Secretary will normally be the Policy Officer, Research Ethics and Integrity. Other members of the Research Ethics team may also attend meetings and support the work of the Policy Officer.

- 11.2 The research team will:

- (a) receive and forward correspondence to Executive members, as appropriate, (such as the GU Expedited Ethical Review Checklist, applications for ethical clearance, applications for minor changes to ethical clearances / projects, etc);
- (b) conduct the initial administrative review of projects that already have been approved by another GUHREC, under the Prior review pathway;
- (c) conduct the administrative review of projects exempted from ethical review by the University's minimal risk framework, and provide feedback to the researchers, report to the GUHREC, or identify matters that require further ethical review;
- (d) provide commentary and advice to assist in the consideration of matters before the GUHREC, Expedited Ethical Review Panel, and Executive of the GUHREC;
- (e) receive progress reports and determine what, if any, further action is required;
- (f) process applications for extensions of ethical clearance within a five-year limit;
- (g) maintain the University's register of ethical clearances;
- (h) assist in the preparation of internal and external reports, submissions, and other corporate documents;
- (i) provide advice to other officers of the Office for Research and the Deputy Vice- Chancellor Research on the governance of human research ethics, regulatory requirements, and compliance issues;
- (j) support the work of the Research Ethics Advisors (REAs);
- (k) provide advice and assistance directly to researchers and supervisors, where appropriate;
- (l) initiate and progress the business and work of the Committee;
- (m) directly handle requests for textual or administrative changes to active ethical clearances; and
- (n) draft such reports, policies, and documents as requested by the Chair or the Committee.
- (o) The other officers of the Research Ethics Team are not members of the Committee.

## **12. Meetings**

- 12.1 A meeting schedule for GUHREC is determined at the end of the preceding year. Generally, the GUHREC will meet 11 times a year.



- 12.2 There are standard agenda items, and proformas to assist the GUHREC in the consideration of the following matters:
- (a) Reporting the actions taken on conditional ethical clearances and seeking the Committee's endorsement, amendment, or modification of these actions
  - (b) Reporting the decisions of the Expedited Ethical Review E2 Panel and seeking the Committee's ratification, amendment, or modification of the Panel's decisions.
  - (c) Preparing applications for full ethical review.
  - (d) Reporting the decisions of the Chair and the Office for Research on requests for modifications to existing ethical clearances and seeking the Committee's ratification, amendment, or modification of the Chair's decisions.
  - (e) Presenting for action any progress reports which are deemed to require the attention of the Committee.
- 13. Reporting**
- 13.1 The GUHREC reports and makes recommendations to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).
- 13.2 The Committee also provides an annual report to Council via the Research Committee, and to the NHMRC.
- 14. Sub-Committees**
- 14.1 The Committee may establish sub-committees or working parties on an ad hoc nature from time to time.
- 15. Evaluation of Performance**
- 15.1 The Committee will evaluate its own performance annually under the coordination of the Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee. Training needs will be monitored by the Chair.
- 15.2 Griffith University is committed to the training and ongoing development of the members of the GUHREC. All new members are provided with orientation and training to the Committee. The University will provide or support and fund the attendance of members at training, developmental, and networking opportunities. New members of the GUHREC are provided with a resource kit of materials for their reference.
- 16. Review of Constitution**
- 16.1 The Committee will review this constitution biennially. Any proposed changes to the constitution will be recommended by the Committee to the Research Committee for approval.