



## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### D2.1 HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

#### 1 Purpose

The ACPE Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) is a committee of the College that has responsibility for the review of all research involving human participation that is conducted under the auspices of the College (e.g. for a College Honours degree, a grant administered by the College). The research may include commercial research and consultancy work if the researcher(s) will be using ACPE equipment or resources, or will be covered by ACPE's indemnity/insurance for the work.

Some research involving humans may be exempt from ethical review if it is designated 'negligible risk' in accordance with the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007* [updated March 2014], "where there is no foreseeable risk of harm or discomfort, and any foreseeable risk is no more than inconvenience.<sup>1</sup>" Generally, small-scale research conducted in units that teach research methodology and its application may be afforded 'negligible risk' designations by unit coordinators.

#### 2 Functions

- 2.1 To review the ethical implications of all proposed research projects which involve or impact upon humans and approve only those projects which conform to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (updated March 2014)*.
- 2.2 To withhold approval for projects where the conduct foreshadowed in the research proposals is unlawful.
- 2.3 To maintain a record of all research received and reviewed, with decisions and conditions.
- 2.4 To monitor the progress of research projects through progress and completion reports so as to be satisfied that projects continue to conform with approved ethical standards and to withdraw approval where it has been determined that projects are not ethically acceptable and/or breach national standards and guidelines.
- 2.5 To approve in-principle as negligible risk small-scale capstone research assessment tasks in units that teach research methodology and its application and to monitor the projects conducted in such units.
- 2.6 To administer processes for receiving and handling complaints or concerns about the conduct of an approved research or teaching project.
- 2.7 To administer a process for handling any breach of ethical guidelines.

<sup>1</sup> National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council & Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee, (2007, updated March 2014). *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007*, p.15. Retrieved on December 18, 2014 from <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e72>

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- 2.8 To have the discretion to accept the findings of other fully constituted Australian HRECs.
  - 2.9 To provide advice on an ad hoc basis to researchers on the ethical aspects of their research proposals and projects.
  - 2.10 To provide advice to the Dean/Head of College on ethical and legal aspects of complaints against researchers or research projects.

### **3 Powers**

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The HREC is an independent decision making body and its decisions are not subject to ratification by any officer of the College, the Academic Board or the College Board. However, decisions of the HREC can be appealed to the Academic Board. In such instances, the decision of the Academic Board will be final.

### **4 Membership**

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The minimum membership is nine (9), and as far as possible, there should be equal numbers of men and women.

The minimum membership of the committee is:

- i. A Chair, with suitable experience, drawn from the senior academic leadership of the College.
- ii. At least two lay people, one man and one woman, who have no affiliation with the College and do not currently engage in medical, scientific, legal or academic work.
- iii. At least one lawyer, where possible one who is not employed to advise the College.
- iv. At least one person with knowledge of, and current experience in, the professional care, counselling or treatment of people.
- v. At least one person who performs a pastoral role in the community.
- vi. One student, elected by the Student Leadership Group.
- vii. At least two members of academic staff with current research experience that is relevant to research proposals to be considered at the meetings they attend.

A Deputy Chair will be elected by the committee.

Where possible, the membership should include at least one person of indigenous background.

The Chair has the authority to co-opt additional members on a needs basis for the purpose of specialist advice.

Secretarial administration of the HREC is undertaken by the Executive Assistant to the Dean/Head of College or nominee. Tasks undertaken by the Committee Secretary include, but are not limited to, agenda preparation, data entry and record-keeping.

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## **5 Quorum**

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The quorum for meetings of the Committees shall be six (6) members

As required by the National Statement, where there is less than full attendance at a meeting, the Chair must be satisfied, before a decision is reached, that the minimum membership listed above have received all papers and have had an opportunity to contribute their views and that these have been recorded and considered.

## **6 Terms of Appointment**

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Each member, except for the Chair and the student representative, will be appointed for a two-year term and may nominate to extend the appointment for a further two years. The maximum term of membership is six years.

The student representative will be appointed for a one-year term and may nominate to extend the appointment for a further year.

Membership may lapse if a member fails to attend two consecutive meetings or send comment without apology.

## **7 Remuneration**

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External members of the Committee who are not affiliated with the College are paid a meeting fee as determined by the Head of College. This fee is at the discretion of the parties and is intended to cover reimbursement of travel, parking and extraneous costs associated with attending meetings and other business associated with their membership of the Committees. There is otherwise no remuneration to members.

## **8 Frequency of Meetings**

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The HREC will meet on a needs basis but will normally meet a minimum of twice per year.

## **9 Conduct of Business**

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### **9.1 Decisions**

The HREC considers each application and amendment and gives a final decision of:

- i. Approved;
- ii. Approval pending researcher's response to HREC comments. There are two levels to this decision:
  - Back to Chair – The committee grants the Chair power to approve the application if researcher response to committee concerns is adequate.
  - Back to Committee – The researchers must respond to the HREC's concerns and the application must be considered again by the full HREC meeting.
- iii. Not Approved

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The HREC endeavours to reach decisions by general agreement.

## 9.2 **Conditions of Approval**

The Committees shall, as a condition of approval of each proposal, require that project supervisors immediately report to the Committee anything which might warrant review of ethical approval of the proposal, including serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants, proposed variations to the approved proposal, and any unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

The Committee has the discretion to suspend or withdraw approval for any project which no longer complies with the approved research protocol or where the research ceases to be ethically acceptable.

## 9.3 **Negligible risk designations in research methodology units**

The HREC provides approval for small-scale capstone research assessment tasks in units that teach research methodology and its application as negligible risk.

The HREC monitors the projects conducted in such units on an annual basis through reports from unit coordinators in which research projects are listed.

## 9.4 **Record-keeping**

The Committee Secretary will prepare and maintain written records of the HREC's activities, including agendas and minutes of all meetings.

The Committee Secretary will prepare and maintain a file for each application, including copies of the relevant correspondence between the applicant and the HREC.

The Committee will receive at least one progress report and a completion report from the Principal Supervisor of each candidate.

Records will be securely held for sufficient time to allow for future reference. The minimum period for retention is five years from the date of completion of the project.

## 9.5 **Reporting**

The HREC may, from time to time, bring to the attention of the Dean/Head of College and/or Academic Board issues of significant concern on which guidance or policy is required.

The College HREC terms of Reference will be posted on the College website.

## 9.6 **Complaints**

Any concern or complaint should be directed to the Chair of the HREC who will investigate or delegate the investigation of the complaint to another member of the HREC. However, the Chair will respond to the complainant within five (5) working days of the receipt of the complaint. Research should be suspended pending the outcomes of the complaint.

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Complaints must be written and provide detailed descriptions of the grounds for complaint. The Chair will convene a meeting of the HREC to consider the evidence and any call upon the complainant to provide additional information. Following due consideration, the –final decision of the HREC, including reasons for that decision, will be communicated to the complainant in writing as:

- i. Upheld, or
- ii. Not upheld.

Any other persons who have a direct interest in the complaint shall be informed of the Committee’s decision in writing.

Decisions of the College HREC may be appealed to the Academic Board in accordance with Section 3 of this document.

## 10 Policy Administration

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### 10.1 Approval and Review

<b>POLICY NUMBER D2.1: Human Research Ethics Committee</b>			
<b>Information Officer</b>	Associate Dean (Programs and Quality)		
<b>Initial Approval Date</b>	30 June 2009		
<b>Version Number</b>	2.0	<b>Approval Date</b>	April 2015
<b>Commencement Date</b>	April 2015		
<b>Next Review Date</b>	April 2016		
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Dean and Head of College, ACPE		
<b>Approved By</b>	Dr Brian Nook, Dean and Head of College, ACPE		