

# University Human Research Ethics Committee Charter

## Section 1 - Purpose

(1) The primary responsibility of the University Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC) is to review and monitor QUT human research to ensure that the research is conducted ethically, with respect, research merit and integrity, justice and beneficence in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Statement). The functions of the Committee support compliance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 (the code) and the [QUT Code for Responsible Conduct of Research](#).

## Section 2 - Accountability

(2) The University Human Research Ethics Committee is a management committee accountable to the Vice-Chancellor and President through the Head of Research Portfolio.

(3) The University Human Research Ethics Committee is registered with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and, on behalf of the University, is responsible for reporting to the NHMRC annually for the purpose of meeting its registration requirements.

## Section 3 - Responsibilities

(4) The University Human Research Ethics Committee will undertake the following:

- a. Compliance with legislation and standards:
  - i. perform the functions of a human research ethics committee in accordance with the current National Statement and Code as issued under the National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992.
- b. Policy, procedures and guidelines:
  - i. contribute to the development of policy, procedures and guidance relating to human research ethics.
- c. Review, approval and monitoring of research projects:
  - i. review research projects involving human participants and/or their data or tissue.
  - ii. approve only those activities which it considers are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the National Statement.
  - iii. monitor the conduct of approved research projects until their completion so as to ensure continued compliance with relevant requirements.
  - iv. withdraw or suspend a project's ethics approval if a project is not or cannot be conducted in accordance with the conditions of approval, or continuation of the project may compromise participants' welfare.
  - v. maintain a record of proposed and approved human research projects/activities.
  - vi. receive reports from non-Human Research Ethics Committee levels of ethics review.
- d. Advice:
  - i. advise QUT staff and students through the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity and Research Ethics

Advisors on human research ethics matters.

- ii. provide advice and recommendations to the University via the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity on human research ethics matters, including complaints and alleged non-compliance.
- iii. advise the Head of Research Portfolio via the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity on issues arising in human research, including procedural matters.

## Section 4 - Membership

(5) The membership of the University Human Research Ethics Committee is constituted in accordance with the requirements of the National Statement. The committee will comprise a minimum of ten members and include:

- a. a Chairperson, with suitable experience including previous membership of a Human Research Ethics Committee, whose other responsibilities will not impair the University Human Research Ethics Committee's capacity to carry out its obligations under the National Statement; and senior academic standing (or equivalent), nominated by the Head of Research Portfolio. The Chair should be knowledgeable in University policy and procedure, standards and community issues.
- b. at least two lay people who bring a broader community or consumer perspective and who have no paid affiliation with the institution nominated by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research).
- c. at least one person with knowledge of, and current experience in, the professional care, counselling or treatment of people nominated by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research); for example a nurse, allied health professional, clinical psychologist, social worker or medical practitioner.
- d. at least one person who performs a pastoral care role in a community, for example, an Aboriginal elder, or a minister of religion, nominated by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research).
- e. at least one lawyer, who may or may not be currently practicing and, where possible, is not engaged to advise the institution, nominated by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research).
- f. at least two people with current research experience that is relevant to research proposals to be considered at the meetings they attend. Members may be selected, according to need, from an established pool of inducted members with relevant expertise in the areas of research that are regularly considered by the Committee (e.g. education, creative industries, justice, law, business, health, science and engineering). These members are nominated by the executive deans of the relevant faculties or by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research).
- g. at least one person who identifies as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, or with sufficient relevant experience, skills and understanding, nominated by the Indigenous Australian Advisory Committee.

(6) No individual may represent more than one of the categories listed above 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.

(7) To enable the University Human Research Ethics Committee to have available the skills and expertise necessary for the research under review and to meet the minimum Human Research Ethics Committee meeting attendance requirements, QUT may engage additional members to form a pool of inductees. These members may represent minimum membership categories (an additional community member, lawyer or researcher) or have experience or expertise relevant to the work of the committee. These members may attend meetings or provide advice in order to:

- a. meet the minimum membership requirements above, and/or
- b. provide experience or expertise relevant to the work of the University Human Research Ethics Committee.

(8) Exact membership numbers are determined by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) upon consultation with the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity. A register of current membership is maintained by the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity.

(9) Committee members are appointed for their expertise and not as representatives of any faculty, group or organisation. As far as possible the composition of the committee should comprise:

- a. a membership with diversity in accordance with clause (39) of [Council Procedure 1 - Committee Operations](#), and
- b. at least one third of the members should be external to the University.

(10) One or more members shall be nominated as Deputy Chair/s of the University Human Research Ethics Committee by the Committee. The Deputy Chair's role includes acting as Chair in the Chair's absence, while applications or other matters involving the Chair are under consideration, or as requested.

(11) Nominated members of the Committee serve a term of office of up to two years. Where a member accepts a position during a term of office, their appointment is for the remainder of the two-year term. The length of a nominated member's term of office is recommended to the nominator by the Chair, on advice from the Secretariat (Director, Office of Research Ethics and Integrity).

## Section 5 - Attendance

(12) Members, including those comprising the pool of inducted members, must attend a sufficient number of meetings (a minimum of four meetings per year) to maintain their expertise and comply with continuing education and training responsibilities in paragraphs 5.2.21 - 5.2.24 of the National Statement. Members are encouraged to attend as many monthly meetings as possible in order to maintain experience and to enhance ethical deliberation of the Committee.

(13) The Human Research Ethics Coordinator is an attendee, as defined in clause 36 of [Council Procedure 1 - Committee Operations](#), who can listen and contribute to discussion but is not eligible to vote.

(14) The University Human Research Ethics Committee may invite people with specific expertise from outside the Committee membership to provide advice as required.

(15) The Committee may invite observers or visitors to attend a meeting with the permission of the Chair in accordance with [Council Procedure 1 - Committee Operations](#).

## Section 6 - Meeting Frequency

(16) The University Human Research Ethics Committee normally meets monthly, from February - December, or as required. The frequency of meetings is approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research). Additional meetings may be held at the discretion of the Chair if urgent matters require review in advance of the next scheduled meeting.

## Section 7 - Reporting and Communication

(17) The University Human Research Ethics Committee reports to:

- a. QUT Council, Risk and Audit Committee, University Research Committee and University Academic Board annually through the Head of Research Portfolio. Reports to Council should address numbers and types of activities considered for approval and the outcomes, any administrative or other difficulties experienced, actions that have supported the educational and training needs of Committee members and researchers, and any matters that may affect the University's ability to maintain compliance with the National Statement.

b. The National Health and Medical Research Council.

(18) The University Human Research Ethics Committee may refer matters to the University Animal Ethics Committee, the University Biosafety Committee, University Health, Safety and Environment Committee, faculty/division health, safety and environment committees and the Director, Office of Research Ethics and Integrity as necessary.

## Section 8 - Procedures

(19) The University Human Research Ethics Committee is established in accordance with the National Statement, the [University Committee Governance Policy](#) and [Council Procedure 1 - Committee Operations](#).

(20) To comply with the operational requirements of the National Statement, the University Human Research Ethics Committee has approved [Standard Operating Procedures](#) (QUT staff and student access only).

(21) The University Human Research Ethics Committee is regulated by [Council Procedure 1 - Committee Operations](#), with the exception of clause (38) (the holding of multiple positions by a single member) and clause (49) (quorum), to ensure consistency with requirements of the National Statement.

(22) At least one member from each category prescribed in paragraph 5.1.30 of the National Statement should attend the Committee meeting to meet a quorum. In circumstances where there is less than full attendance of the minimum membership at a meeting, the committee may consider applications as long as:

- a. absent members critical to meeting the minimum membership have received a copy of the application(s) and
- b. the Chair is satisfied, before a decision is reached, that they have had adequate opportunity to comment.

### Consideration of Non-QUT Research

(23) The University Human Research Ethics Committee normally considers applications only from QUT staff and students. The Committee may consider submissions from external applicants (including individuals with honorary QUT titles – [Distinguished and Honorary Titles Policy](#)) wishing to conduct an activity at a QUT site or involving use of QUT resources, expertise or infrastructure. The Committee does not review projects where there is no QUT involvement. An external applicant applying for QUT ethics review must do so in the capacity of a co-investigator or co-supervisor only, unless otherwise agreed. A QUT staff member must be nominated as the project Chief Investigator and accept ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the project. Consideration will be made in accordance with this charter and at the discretion of the Chair. For projects involving QUT honorary titleholders ([Distinguished and Honorary Titles Policy](#)) that may require review under other QUT ethics review pathways refer to the Committee's [Standard Operating Procedures](#).

### Complaints

(24) Complaints relating to human research or the University Human Research Ethics Committee's review process should be directed to the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity.

(25) The Manager, Office Research Ethics and Integrity or delegate is responsible for the initial review of complaints and will refer complaints to the relevant party as appropriate.

(26) Any complaints or concerns about the University Human Research Ethics Committee review or decision processes are directed to the Chair of the Committee. If the complaint relates directly to the conduct of the Chair the matter will be referred to the Director, Office of Research Ethics and Integrity.

(27) The Committee's [Standard Operating Procedures](#) (QUT staff and student access only) provide further details regarding the complaints process.

## **Non-compliance**

(28) Suspected non-compliance with the National Statement in connection with a research project or activity should be referred to the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity in accordance with the Committee's [Standard Operating Procedures](#) (QUT staff and student access only).

(29) Matters referred will be investigated to determine the nature and extent of the alleged non-compliance. Procedures will reflect the principles of fairness and be conducted in a manner to ensure protection of participants' wellbeing and privacy. The University Human Research Ethics Committee and other relevant parties will be informed of the outcome of any investigations.

## **Section 9 - Secretariat**

(30) A nominee of the Vice-President (Administration) and University Registrar is secretary, on recommendation of the Head of Research Portfolio. The Office of Research Ethics and Integrity provides administrative support to the University Human Research Ethics Committee and coordination of meetings.

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Current
<b>Effective Date</b>	22nd March 2024
<b>Review Date</b>	1st December 2025
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Vice-Chancellor and President
<b>Approval Date</b>	19th March 2024
<b>Expiry Date</b>	To Be Advised
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Anne Walsh Director, Office of Research Ethics and Integrity
<b>Author</b>	Anne Walsh Director, Office of Research Ethics and Integrity
<b>Enquiries Contact</b>	Anne Walsh Director, Office of Research Ethics and Integrity <hr/> Academic Division