

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE



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1 ESTABLISHMENT

The Human Research Ethics Committee is a sub-committee of the Research Committee and will provide reports, recommendations, referrals and/or advice to the Research Committee.

2 FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This Committee is responsible for ensuring compliance with the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) when CQUniversity is conducting research with or about people, or their data or tissue.

This Committee's functions and responsibilities are to:

- 2.1 Approve ethical clearance, and monitor research projects, relevant to the use of humans, or their data or tissue, to ensure conformance to the University's policy documents, [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) and other legislative requirements.
- 2.2 Maintain a register of approved research proposals, on an annual basis, and provide written authorisation for the commencement of such projects and activities.
- 2.3 Recommend to the Research Committee policy documents to monitor the use of human subjects in research.
- 2.4 Submit a written report on the Committee's activities at least annually to the Research Committee.
- 2.5 Provide the following information to the [National Health and Medical Research Council](#), in accordance with the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#):
 - information from its records, as requested, and

- annually report information relevant to its procedures.

3 RESERVED AUTHORITIES

This Committee reserves the authority to:

- approve ethical clearance, and monitor research projects, for applications which have not been exempted from ethical review or deemed as low risk, and
- approve requests for major modifications to approved projects.

The Vice-President (Research) reserves the authority to:

- suspend or discontinue approved projects, and
- investigate and manage concerns about a project breaching the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#).

4 DELEGATED AUTHORITIES

This Committee has delegated the following authority to the Committee Chair:

- approve applications for exemption from ethical review in accordance with sections 5.1.15 to 5.1.18 of the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#)
- approve ethical clearance, and monitor research projects, for applications deemed as low risk, in accordance with sections 5.1.10 to 5.1.14 of the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#)
- approve requests for minor modifications to approved projects. Minor modifications may include extensions to the end date, inclusion of additional research team members or minor changes to documentation where there is no material change to the approved project protocols. and
- carry out random unannounced inspections of approved projects, particularly in response to complaints or concerns by participants or members of the general public, and
- investigate and determine appropriate action when there has been a report that a project is not being conducted in accordance with the approved conditions, there is a potential breach of non-compliance with the National Statement, the welfare and rights of the participants are not, or will not, be protected, or there has been adverse occurrences or unforeseen events by:
 - consulting with any other members of the Committee and any other parties to seek advice and assistance in addressing matters arising from the report
 - withdrawing ethical approval for a project either while investigating a complaint, or entirely, and advising the principal researcher/s, supervisor (if applicable), the Vice-President (Research), Secretary, Dean School of Graduate Research and any other formal parties to the project to this effect in writing
 - recommending to the Vice-President (Research) that the project be suspended, terminated or other necessary steps be taken
 - restoring ethical approval for the project if satisfied that appropriate action has been undertaken and advising the principal researcher/s, supervisor (if applicable) the Vice-President (Research), Secretary, Dean School of Graduate Research and any other formal parties to the research project to this effect in writing, if satisfied that appropriate action has been taken to ensure no further adverse occurrence or event of similar kind, or
 - referring the matter in accordance with the:
 - [Student Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure](#)
 - [Student Conduct Policy and Procedure](#)
 - [Research Higher Degree Integrity Policy and Procedure](#)
 - [Code of Conduct for Research](#).

This Committee has delegated the following authority to the Committee Secretary:

- approve requests for minor modifications to approved projects where the only modifications are to extend the end date of the proposed project.

Any decisions made by the Chair or Secretary will be reported to and reviewed by the whole Committee for formal ratification at its next scheduled meeting.

5 MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF OFFICE

This Committee will comprise:

Ex-officio members:

- Deputy Vice-President (Indigenous Engagement)

Appointed members:

- a chairperson
- two people who bring a broader community or consumer perspective and who have no paid affiliation with the institution
- a person with knowledge of, and current experience in, the professional care, counselling or treatment of people (e.g. a nurse or allied health professional)
- 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
- 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
- two people with current research experience that is relevant to research proposals to be considered at the meetings they attend. These two members may be selected, according to need, from an established pool of inducted members with relevant expertise.

New members will, on their appointment, receive relevant induction information and briefings to assist them to meet their Committee responsibilities.

Terms of office

Ex-officio members will serve for the duration of their appointment. Ex-officio members may send a proxy when unable to attend meetings or nominate a standing nominee.

The Chair will be appointed by the Vice-President (Research) and will serve for a term of three years.

Appointed members will serve for a term of three years. At the end of the term of office, expressions of interest will be called for the position. Incumbent members may reapply for the position. Where more applications are received than places available, the Chair will conduct interviews to recommend appointees to the Vice-President (Research).

Leave of absence

Where a member is aware that they will be absent from the University and unable to attend Committee meetings for an extended period, the member may apply to the Chair for leave of absence for the period. When calculating membership and quorum, the membership will be reduced by the number of members on approved leave of absence at the time of the meeting.

Member responsibilities

Members of this Committee are responsible for deciding whether, in their judgement, an application meets the requirements of the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) and other relevant guidelines, and is ethically acceptable. To fulfil that responsibility, members should:

- undertake any induction training or process provided by the University
- become and remain familiar with the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#), and consult other guidelines and information relevant to the review of specific research proposals

- prepare for and attend scheduled meetings or, if unavailable, provide opinions on the ethical acceptability of applications before meetings to the Secretary to ensure they are recorded and considered at the meeting, or apply for a leave of absence, and
- attend continuing education or training programs in research ethics at least every three years, or more frequently.

Members must be aware of, and respect, University policy documents related to confidentiality in the performance of their role/s. These may be relevant to interactions with other members of the committee, administrators or researchers, or when reviewing or discussing applications or matters at a meeting, online or elsewhere.

6 RIGHTS OF AUDIENCE AND DEBATE

This Committee may extend rights of audience and debate on either a standing or ad hoc basis.

Attendees with rights of audience and debate may participate in meetings but have no voting rights.

Employees and external stakeholders may request the opportunity to address the Committee. The Chair will consider and determine these requests.

7 OBSERVERS

Observers, including researchers and supervisors, are welcome with the Chair's prior permission and provided they advise the Secretary in advance.

Observers are entitled to see and hear the proceedings of the meeting but have no voting rights and no right to speak at meetings, unless invited to do so by the Chair. Observers must leave the meeting when requested by the Chair, or if any matters are to be considered in closed session.

8 CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR

The Chair will be appointed by the Vice-President (Research). The Deputy Chair will be a nominee from the Committee members, invited by the Chair.

The Chair must:

- ensure that this Committee operates in accordance with the principles and requirements of the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#), relevant University policy documents, and agreed Committee procedures
- ensure that applications are considered by the Committee and the outcomes conveyed to researchers in a timely manner
- advise University management regarding the level of resourcing required by the Committee
- represent the Committee in any negotiations with management, and
- ensure Committee records are maintained and made available for review by the University and authorised external reviewers.

This Committee has delegated authorities to the Chair. Refer to the [Delegated Authorities](#) section for further information.

The Chair will nominate an alternate Chair from the committee members if the Chair and Deputy Chair are unable to attend a scheduled meeting.

9 SECRETARY

The Vice-President (Research) will nominate the Secretary.

10 CASUAL VACANCY

A casual vacancy will be filled using the method of appointment of the departing committee member.

11 REMOVAL OF A MEMBER FROM OFFICE

This Committee may terminate a person's membership for misconduct by a vote of two-thirds of those present at a committee meeting called in accordance with these terms of reference, and for which due notice of the motion to terminate the person's membership has been given.

Where a member or their nominee does not attend three consecutive meetings without adequate cause, that person's membership may be terminated. A person whose membership has been terminated may apply to this Committee to have their membership reinstated.

12 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Members must declare to the Chair any real, perceived or potential conflict of interest they may have with any item on the agenda.

If the Chair or Committee deems a member to have a conflict of interest in a matter before this Committee, the member will be excused from committee discussions and deliberations on that matter.

Further details on identifying and dealing with a conflict of interest are provided in the [Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedure](#).

13 MEETINGS

Committee meetings may be held face-to face, by telephone, videoconference, or other electronic means. This Committee will meet as scheduled.

Committee decisions may be made at a duly called and constituted meeting, or by a resolution in writing (flying minute) and electronically approved by all members.

Committee members will fully prepare for each meeting, read the documentation in advance, and make every reasonable effort to attend each meeting.

Where there is less than full attendance at a meeting, the Chair must be satisfied before a decision is reached, that all members have received the papers and have had an opportunity to contribute their views and that these have been recorded and considered.

14 ACCESS TO RESOURCES

To assist external members in maintaining their knowledge on ethical issues, access to the CQUniversity library facilities is available on request. Attendance at training and other professional development opportunities is encouraged and supported by the University. The University also indemnifies external members for their committee activities.

External committee members will be provided with access to any resources they reasonably require to fulfil their duties as a committee member.

15 AGENDAS AND MINUTES

Agenda papers will be distributed at least five working days before the meeting, to an address nominated by each member. Agenda documents will primarily be available for download from a secured website, with paper copies available to members with limited computer access.

Members may request, through the Chair or Secretary, that an item be placed on the agenda for any meeting. Only with the Chair's permission will late papers or the tabling of papers be accepted. All papers must be submitted to the Secretary by the specified submission deadline.

The Secretary is responsible for all committee records (including applications, final reports, agenda papers, minutes and other committee related documents). Committee records are subject to the Queensland [Public Records Act 2002](#) and must be retained by the Secretary in accordance with the University's [Records Management Policy and Procedure](#).

Minutes will be prepared from each meeting. The Chair will review the draft minutes and action sheet of each meeting, after which the Secretary will circulate the documents to all members and include them in the agenda papers for the next meeting.

Committee records will remain confidential to the Committee, the Secretary and Research Committee except as required by law, and where specified extracts from reports or documents are authorised by the Committee to be conveyed to:

- an applicant seeking ethical approval
- the Records and Privacy Team where a formal request for information has been received from a research funding body
- an expert adviser to the Human Research Ethics Committee, or
- the Vice-President (Research) in the event of a complaint concerning a research project or irreconcilable difference with the Committee.

Committee decisions are reported to Research Committee, along with any recommendations to the Research Committee from the Committee arising from applications or the Committee's decisions.

16 EVALUATION AND REVIEW

To ensure the Committee is fulfilling its duties, it will undertake an annual self-assessment of its performance against these terms of reference and provide that information to the Research Committee, along with any information the Research Committee may request to facilitate its review of the Committee's performance and its membership.

17 RELATED DOCUMENTS

[Human Research Ethics Procedure](#)

[National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#)

18 FEEDBACK

Feedback about this document can be emailed to policy@cqu.edu.au.

19 APPROVAL AND REVIEW DETAILS

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Delegated Approval Authority	Research Committee
Advisory Committee	Human Research Ethics Committee
Required Consultation	N/A
Administrator	Vice-President (Research)
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