Governance

UWA HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HREC) - CONSTITUTION

This committee operates in accordance with the UWA Principles for the Operation of Committees and UWA Rules for the Operation of Committees.

Members are expected to uphold the values of The University of Western Australia and act in accordance with the University Committee Members' Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct (the Code), including maintaining confidentiality, exercising sound judgement, and contributing to a fair, respectful, ethical, and professional environment when participating in University activities. The Code applies to members engaged in University business, including volunteers, adjuncts, and advisory board members, and reflects our shared commitment to excellence, integrity, and fairness.

Constitution

1. Committee of the Vice-Chancellor

(1) The HREC is a Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee that is responsible to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

2. Statement of Purpose and Functions

(1) The HREC is established by UWA in accordance with Chapter 5.1 of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2025 (National Statement).

(2) The University is committed to ensuring that human research is reviewed and monitored in accordance with the National Statement.

(3) The University has established procedures for the review, approval, and monitoring of human research in accordance with the requirements of the National Statement and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 (Australian Code).

(4) To support this commitment UWA has a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) which is convened by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).

(5) For the purposes of this constitution, human research is broadly defined as any investigation undertaken to gain knowledge and understanding or to train researchers. This includes research conducted with or about people, their data, and/or their biospecimens.

(6) Research is categorized by risk level:

(a) Higher risk research: Research that poses more than minimal risk of harm to participants, as defined in the National Statement

(b) Lower risk research: Research posing minimal risk, which may be reviewed through expedited pathways

(7) The functions of the HREC are to:

(a) review applications for ethics approval for human research involving UWA staff and students and deemed to be higher risk according to the National Statement;

(b) consider the ethical implications of proposed research involving humans as participants in the research, and to decide with respect to those applications whether they satisfy the requirements of the National Statement and accepted ethical standards and codes;

(c) participate in the monitoring of approved human research projects, including the consideration of amendments to higher risk projects;

(d) receive reports of incidents and complaints about the conduct of research, and assist in resolution as required with participants, researchers, or others on the conduct of projects;

(e) provide advice to the Office of Research on matters pertaining to human research ethics;

(f) provide advice and expertise to the University on strategic matters pertaining to human research ethics.

3. Membership

(1) HREC Membership is appointed by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

(2) Membership of the committee must satisfy the requirements of the National Statement sections 5.1.30 – 5.1.36. The minimum membership is:

(a) Chairperson, with suitable experience, whose other responsibilities will not impair the HREC's capacity to carry out its obligations under the National Statement.

(b) Two people who bring a broader community or consumer perspective and who have no paid affiliation with the institution;

(c) A 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, chaplain, minister of religion or other religious leader.

(e) A lawyer, who may or may not be currently practising and, where possible, one who is not engaged to advise the institution on research-related or any other matters.

(f) Two people with current research experience that is relevant to research proposals to be considered at the meetings they attend.

(g) From time to time an HREC may co-opt a person with specific expertise for a specified period.

(3) At least one-third of HREC members will be external of the university.

(4) Each member fulfills only one membership category per meeting, though the same person may serve in different capacities at different meetings, provided all required categories are represented.

(5) As far as practicable, membership at each meeting will include diversity, including gender diversity.

(6) The term of office for all members is three years. At the end of a term of office, members may be eligible for reappointment for no more than two additional terms.

4. Methods of operation

(1) The HREC is to meet fortnightly for 11 months of the year, either in person, through an online meeting platform, or in a format incorporating both options.

(2) Discussions and decisions made by HREC during a meeting must be recorded.

(3) All higher risk applications require full committee review at a scheduled HREC meeting.

(4) Member comments are entered into the Research Online Application Portal (ROAP) prior to the meeting.

(5) In considering research projects, members should deliberate on the values and principles of the National Statement, exercise their judgement, and appreciate the context of the research proposed. Decisions should be reached by general agreement; they need not be unanimous.

(6) When requiring modifications before approval, the HREC may delegate the review of revised applications to the Chair or their nominee. The committee ratifies all delegated decisions at its next meeting.

(7) Members may not review and approve their own research. In such cases, the member should declare a conflict of interest and be excused from review of that application.

(8) In discharging its responsibilities, the HREC may seek the advice of experts as it chooses.

(9) Fees are not applicable for ethics review of UWA research.

(10) If applicants for ethical review do not have an affiliation with UWA, and/or funding is not administered through UWA, a fee will be charged. This fee is set by the Director of the Office of Research and will be reviewed periodically.

(11) HREC reserves the right to decline the review of ethics applications that does not involve UWA staff or students and/or UWA resources.

(12) HREC activity will be reported quarterly to the University's Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)

(13) The HREC may review projects involving quality assurance (QA) when required. The Ethical Considerations in Quality Assurance and Evaluation Activities, March 2014 guide will be used to determine when a QA activity requires ethics review.

5. Exemption from Liability for Committee Members

(1) UWA provides indemnity for the Chair, members of the HREC, and any of its delegates for any liabilities arising from a member exercising his or her duties in good faith.

6. Member Responsibilities

(1) Upon accepting appointment to the HREC, members agree to:

(a) Maintain familiarity and serve in accordance with the relevant codes and guidelines, including but not limited, to the National Statement.

(b) Review meeting papers and lodge application review comments in ROAP prior to committee meetings. Meeting papers are circulated to members 13 days prior to each meeting.

(c) Attend meetings approximately once monthly (or as scheduled) for their duration or, in the case of inability to attend, give advance notice of absence to the Research Ethics and Compliance (REC) Office.

(d) Provide advance notice to the REC Office as early as possible if planning to resign from the committee.

(e) Attend information sessions and other training seminars provided by the University, as required.

(f) Disclose any actual, perceived, and potential conflicts of interest that may affect their unbiased conduct.

(g) Protect the confidentiality of the content of applications and the deliberations of the HREC.

(2) Attendance requirement: Members must attend at least two-thirds of scheduled meetings annually. Failure to meet this requirement may result in termination of membership.

7. University obligations

(1) UWA agrees to:

(a) Provide members with access to the relevant University IT systems, including ROAP, and timely access to meeting papers within this platform.

(b) Provide appropriate resources and support to members to enable them to fulfill their roles.

(c) Provide accurate and timely advice to members on all matters relating to human research ethics and committee governance and processes.

(d) Facilitate education and training for members and conduct inductions for members prior to their first meeting and at least once per year.

(e) Remunerate members who are external to the University with an honorarium payment per meeting attended. This honorarium is set by the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research and will be reviewed periodically.

(f) The University will regularly monitor and review its compliance with the National Statement by:

(i) conducting an annual review of the operation of the HREC; and

(ii) ensuring the constitution of the HREC is reviewed by the Office every three years, or as required due to legislative change.