Terms of Reference - Human Research Ethics Committee

The University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has responsibility to consider the ethical implications of proposed human research studies conducted under the auspices of the University and determine whether or not they are acceptable on ethical grounds. These responsibilities include monitoring the ethical aspects of all research studies involving human participants undertaken by the staff and students of the University of Western Sydney.

The UWS HREC will:

- develop Human Research Ethics Policy
- review staff human research ethics protocols arising from funded research projects
- review staff human research ethics protocols arising from unfunded research projects that have been reviewed by a Peer Review Committee for research merit and integrity
- review all PhD, Professional Doctorates and Masters (Honours) research protocols that involve human participants
- review (a) high risk coursework projects and undergraduate Honours projects (b) coursework projects that involve publication outputs, after they have been reviewed by a Peer Review Committee for their research merit and integrity
- through its Executive Committee, undertake expedited review of all the above projects where appropriate
- report directly to the Vice-Chancellor, through the Vice-Chancellor’s nominated representative, the Pro Vice-Chancellor – Research.

Guiding Ethical Principles

The Committee is concerned to ensure that a participant’s inclusion in a research study complies with the Principles of Ethical Conduct set down in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, [March 2007]

The primary purpose of the ethical principles and associated guidelines for research involving humans is to promote ethically good human research. Fulfillment of this purpose requires that participants be accorded the respect and protection that is due to them. It also involves the fostering of research that is of benefit to the community.

The Principles of Ethical Conduct examined by the Committee cover the principles of:

* Justice
* Beneficence
* Respect
and the themes

- risk and benefit
- participant’s consent


In line with the National Statement, the Committee will not examine the issue of Research Merit and Integrity of individual projects. This will be undertaken prior to ethical review by peer review processes within Colleges and Divisions and external to UWS.

The Committee will:

- abide by the Values and Principles of Ethical Conduct outlined in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research [March 2007], issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in accordance with the NHMRC Act, 1992 (Cth.) and all other relevant Acts and legislative requirements including the Guidelines Under Section 95 of the Federal Privacy Act 1988 and the NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act, 1998
- determine whether or not proposed research projects involving human participants are acceptable on ethical grounds - no research project may proceed without prior consideration and approval of a written protocol by the Committee
- monitor the progress of research projects to ensure continued compliance with approved ethical standards
- maintain a register of proposed research projects involving human participants and communicate information on request to appropriate national bodies.
- through its Executive Committee, undertake expedited review of ‘low risk’ or ‘negligible risk’ human research projects

Membership of the Committee

Membership of the Committee shall be as follows:

- a Chairperson (either internal or external to the institution)
- three Deputy Chairpersons
- at least one Laywoman (who has no affiliation with the institution)
- at least one Layman (who has no affiliation with the institution)
- a Religious representative or a person who performs a similar role in the community such as an Aboriginal Elder
- a Lawyer
- a Health Researcher
- a Health Professional – care, counselling or treatment
- a Medical Researcher with knowledge of Clinical Trials
- a Biomedical Researcher
- a Psychologist
- an Educationalist
- a Philosopher
- a Sociologist
- additional members may be appointed from time to time.
Members are appointed for their specific expertise not in a representative category. All appointments are for two years and may be renewable. Members shall receive a formal notice of appointment and a guarantee that the institution accepts legal responsibility for decisions and advice from the Panel and indemnifies its members accordingly. No members will adjudicate on proposals in which they have an interest as researcher or supervisor or funder. Membership will reflect the National Statement minimal Membership requirements.

**Executive Committee**

The Membership of the Executive Committee of the Human Research Ethics Committee shall be as follows:

- Chairperson of the HREC
- Three Deputy Chairpersons of the HREC

If a member is unable to participate an alternative member of the Committee will be co-opted.

The Executive Committee shall meet regularly between HREC meetings – in person, or via telephone - to consider human research projects that may be subject to expedited review, given the ‘low risk’ or negligible risk’ arising from the proposed activity involving human participants.

The Executive Committee shall approve all projects deemed to be ‘negligible risk’ and notify HREC of such decisions.

Any project inadvertently classified as negligible risk’ but that the Executive Committee agrees are ‘low risk’ or ‘high risk’ will be forwarded to HREC for full review.