UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
TERMS OF REFERENCE

The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) is a Vice-Chancellor’s advisory committee that reports to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).

1. Objectives:
   1.1. The UTS HREC exists to consider the ethical implications of proposed human research projects in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) (National Statement).
   1.2. UTS recognises and supports the following values and principles of the National Statement
       - Research merit and integrity
       - Justice
       - Beneficence
       - Respect

2. Functions:
   2.1. Protect the mental and physical welfare, rights, dignity and safety of human research participants, their data and/or human tissue.
   2.2. Promote compliance with the National Statement, the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) (The Code) applicable, State and Commonwealth requirements; and all applicable legislation.
   2.3. Protect the reputation of UTS as a place of ethical research by providing independent, competent, timely review and monitoring of human research projects with respect to their ethical and scientific acceptability for as long as the projects are active.
   2.4. Protect the privacy and confidentiality of research participants by ensuring that researchers appropriately manage the security, storage and disposal of confidential data and biological samples collected during the conduct of research involving humans in accordance with UTS policy and guidelines.
   2.5. Review proposals for human research projects with the intent to identify potential risk and/or harm to the UTS staff members and/or students undertaking the research.
3. **Scope of responsibility:**

3.1. Develop and provide input on UTS policies and guidelines for human research ethics.
3.2. Receive, review and monitor proposals for human research projects to determine whether they meet all relevant ethical standards.
3.3. Provide education and training for UTS staff members and/or students undertaking research.
3.4. Provide advice to the University, through the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), on strategies to promote awareness of the ethical conduct of human research and on ethical issues including the ethical aspects of complaints against researchers or research projects and teaching protocols.

4. **Composition:**

a) a chairperson, with suitable experience, whose other responsibilities will not impair the HREC’s capacity to carry out its obligations under this National Statement;

b) at least two lay people, one man and one woman, who have no affiliation with the institution and do not currently engage in medical, scientific, legal or academic work;

c) at least one 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) at least one person who performs a pastoral care role in a community, for example, an Aboriginal elder, a minister of religion;

e) at least one lawyer, where possible one who is not engaged to advise the institution; and

f) at least 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.

Other categories of membership:

- Faculty of Business
- Faculty Arts and Social Science
- Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building
- Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology
- Faculty of Health
- Faculty of Law
- Faculty of Science (with experience in statistics)
- Ex Officio member – Deputy-Vice-Chancellor (Research) represented by the Dean of the Graduate Research School
5. **Membership:**

5.1. The Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, and all members will be appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), and will receive a letter of appointment including the date of appointment, length of appointment, and responsibilities as an HREC member.

5.2. Members are required to sign a declaration of interest and confidentiality statement undertaking:

- That all matters of which he/she becomes aware during the course of his/her work on the HREC will be kept confidential; and
- That any conflicts of interest, which exist or may arise during his/her tenure on the HREC, will be declared;

5.3. Members are appointed for an initial period of one year. Thereafter, members may be appointed for a two year term, and may then be re-appointed for a consecutive 3 year term. All appointments are renewable at the discretion of the HREC Executive and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).

5.4. Members are required to attend at least 80% of the meetings held during each year of their appointment and to provide written comments on the majority of the ethics applications being reviewed.

5.5. Lay members and non-institutional members will be reimbursed for their travel costs.

5.6. A formal induction session and support will be provided to all new members in accordance with the requirements of the National Statement.

5.7. During their membership on the HREC, members will be provided with opportunities to attend training and professional development relevant to their work on the committee.

6. **Meetings:**

6.1. A meeting shall be held in quorum when a minimum of seven (7) members including the Chair and at least three (3) external members are present.

6.2. The Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and the Ethics Secretariat shall form an Executive. The Executive is responsible for conducting the business of the HREC between meetings.

7. **Expedited Review Committee (ERC):**

7.1. A subcommittee called the Expedited Review Committee (ERC) will review amendment applications, ratifications of external ethics approval, transfer of research from another institution, applications for noting, program approval applications, evaluation of teaching and learning activities, and any urgent matters.

7.2. The Membership of the ERC will be as follows: Chairperson of the HREC, Deputy Chairperson of the HREC, and the Human Research Ethics Manager.
7.3. The decisions of the ERC will be noted on the Agenda at the next meeting of the HREC.

8. Review of nil/negligible risk research applications:

8.1. Research involving nil or negligible risk ‘where there is no foreseeable risk of harm or discomfort; and any foreseeable risk is no more than inconvenience’ (National Statement section 2.1.7) will be assessed via the risk assessment in Research Master.

8.2. Nil/negligible risk applications will be noted on the Agenda at the next meeting of the ERC.

9. Faculty review of low risk research applications:

9.1. Research involving low risk ‘where the only foreseeable risk is one of discomfort’ (National Statement section 2.1.6) will be assessed via the risk assessment in Research Master.

9.2. The ethics review and approval process for low risk research is undertaken at the Faculty level in accordance with the National Statement (section 5.1.18 to 5.1.21).

9.3. Low risk applications will be noted on the Agenda at the next meeting of the ERC.

10. Declaration of interest

10.1. An HREC member must declare to the HREC any conflicts of interest they have in relation to an application for ethical and scientific review or any other matter for consideration at the meeting. Conflict of interest includes financial interests, personal, professional or institutional benefits or advantages that depend significantly on research outcomes.

10.2. An HREC member with a conflict of interest who is present at the meeting may be asked to withdraw from the meeting (by leaving the room) or may remain in the room at the HREC’s discretion.

10.3. The HREC member with a conflict of interest will not participate in the discussions and will not be entitled to vote in the decision with respect to the matter.

10.4. The minutes will record the declaration of interest and the decision of the HREC on the procedures to be followed.

11. Confidentiality

11.1. HREC meetings are held in private. The agenda and minutes of meetings, applications, supporting documentation and correspondence are all treated confidentially.

12. Record keeping and reporting:

12.1. The Ethics Secretariat will maintain a record of all research proposals received and reviewed in accordance with the National Statement (section 5.2.24).
12.2. The Ethics Secretariat will prepare and maintain official records of the HREC’s activities, including agendas and minutes of all HREC meetings.

12.3. Files will be kept securely and confidentially in accordance with the requirements of the State Records Act 1998 (NSW) and the UTS Records Management Vice-Chancellor’s Directive.

12.4. Records shall be retained for a minimum of 15 years after action completed, then destroyed.

12.5. The HREC will provide annual reports to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) as required.

12.6. HREC Terms of Reference will be available on the UTS Research Ethics & Integrity website.

13. Complaints:

13.1. Any concern or complaint about the ethical conduct of a research project should be directed to the Research Ethics Manager.

13.2. Concerns or complaints from internal and external stakeholders received by email, telephone or in a face-to-face conversation are recorded in writing by the Research Ethics Manager and kept in a separate file to which only they will have access.

13.3. The Research Ethics Manager undertakes a preliminary investigation regarding the issues raised by the complainant.

13.4. The HREC Chair is notified about the complaint and the results of the preliminary investigation and if necessary provides advice about the appropriate resolution of the concern or complaint.

13.5. Complaints relating to the ethical approval of a research project will be notified to the UTS HREC.

13.6. The Chair and the HREC should endorse the resolution of the complaint.

13.7. The complaint and its proposed or actual resolution are notified to the Director, Research and Innovation Office, the HREC (at its next meeting) and the Faculty Associate Dean (Research).

13.8. The Research Ethics Manager informs the complainant and the researcher to whom the complaint has been made of the outcome.

13.9. In exceptional cases, the HREC Chair, Deputy Chair or Research Ethics Manager may place an immediate suspension on a project upon receipt of a complaint. The researcher will be notified immediately if this occurs.

13.10. Concerns or complaints about the UTS HREC’s review process and/or the decision of the HREC should be directed to the Director, Research and Innovation Office, who will investigate the complaint.