

La Trobe University  
Academic Board  
Research and Graduate Studies Committee  
**UNIVERSITY HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE**

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Establishment**

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La Trobe University has established the University Human Ethics Committee (UHEC) as a registered Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The UHEC is responsible for the ethical review and monitoring of human research conducted by La Trobe staff and students, in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) (National Statement).

The UHEC answers to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice President (Research) who is the *ex officio* license holder for La Trobe University with NHMRC and relevant statutory authorities. The UHEC reports to the Academic Board through the Research and Graduate Studies Committee of which the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice President (Research) is the Chair. Policy development and administrative support for human research is provided by the Ethics and Integrity Unit in consultation with the UHEC. The UHEC reports regularly to the Research and Graduate Studies Committee and other bodies as outlined below.

### **Terms of Reference**

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The role of the UHEC is to:

1. Ensure that the human research conducted by La Trobe University staff and students respects and protects the rights of participants and also the rights of the researchers.
2. Ensure that the design and conduct of any human research conforms to the National Statement and other associated legislations and guidelines.
3. Ensure research is designed in accordance with the values and principles of ethical conduct outlined in the National Statement.
4. Facilitate ethical research through efficient and effective review processes, in accordance with the National Statement.
5. Provide oversight of the College Human Ethics Sub-Committees (CHESCs) and ratify approvals of projects involving low and negligible risk reviewed by the CHESCs.
6. Approve, request amendment of, or reject above-low risk research proposals ensuring all decisions are communicated to researchers in writing and in a timely manner.
7. Provide continuing education and guidance for La Trobe University staff and students conducting human research.
8. Investigate potential conflicts of interest and complaints regarding the ethical conduct of human research by members of the University.
9. Maintain appropriate records of all human research proposals reviewed and approved at La Trobe.
10. Protect the University's reputation as a place of ethical research and integrity by promoting compliance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the National Statement.

## Composition and Membership

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The composition of the La Trobe UHEC is determined by the National Statement (5.1.29 – 5.1.33).

The La Trobe UHEC must have a minimum membership of eight people, with at least one third of the members from outside the University and an equal number of males and females. The UHEC must include persons appointed to each of the following categories:

**UHEC Chair** who has suitable experience, whose other responsibilities will not impair the UHEC's capacity to carry out its obligations under the National Statement.

**UHEC Deputy Chair** who has suitable experience, whose other responsibilities will not impair the UHEC's capacity to carry out its obligations under the National Statement.

**Lay Woman** who has no affiliation with the institution and does not currently engage in medical, scientific, legal or academic work.

**Lay Man** who has no affiliation with the institution and does not currently engage in medical, scientific, legal or academic work.

**Health Professional** with knowledge of, and current experience in, the professional care, counselling or treatment of people; for example, a nurse or allied health professional;

**Pastoral Carer** who performs a pastoral care role in the community, for example, an Aboriginal elder or a minister of religion;

**Lawyer** who is not engaged to advise the University;

**Content Specialists** (at least two) with current research experience that is relevant to research proposals to be considered for review.

No member can be appointed in more than one category.

The UHEC may consult or seek advice from an expert(s) to assist in the review of a research proposal, subject to the disclosure and management of any conflict of interest and to the provision of the same undertaking of confidentiality as required from UHEC members.

### Term of appointment

All members shall be appointed for a period of three years, and remain eligible for reappointment for subsequent term/s as applicable.

## Reporting

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The UHEC is to send the minutes to the Research and Graduate Studies Committee after each meeting for noting.

The UHEC is also required to:

- submit an annual report to the Research and Graduate Studies Committee which includes details of the operations of the UHEC and college sub-committees.
- report annually to the NHMRC, through the Australian Health Ethics Committee (AHEC), on its activity and compliance with the National Statement.
- report to the Health Services Commissioner (Victoria) on an annual basis about the collection, use or disclosure of health information as described in Health Records Act 2001 (Vic).

## Meetings

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The UHEC meets six times through the year. Meeting dates will be published on the Human Ethics website at the beginning of each year.

### Quorum

The minimum membership for a University Human Ethics Committee is eight; therefore it is preferable that eight members attend meetings including a Chairperson, one Lay Man, one Lay Woman, one Health Professional, one Pastoral Carer, one Lawyer and two Content Specialists. If members cannot attend, they are asked to submit out of session comments to ensure all categories are represented.

**Secretariat**

Administrative support is provided by the Senior Human Ethics Officer, Ethics and Integrity Unit, Research Office.

**Sub-committees**

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La Trobe has established a non- UHEC level of ethical review, through the use of two sub-committees, to oversee the review of human research that involves low to negligible risk.

**List of sub-committees**

College Human Ethics Sub-Committee – ASSC (CHESC ASSC)

College Human Ethics Sub-Committee – SHE (CHESC SHE)

**Contact person and phone / email**

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Senior Human Ethics Officer

Ethics and Integrity

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