

La Trobe University
Research and Graduate Studies Committee
University Human Ethics Committee

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The University Human Ethics Committee (UHEC; formerly HEC) was established in May 1978 (Academic Board minute 131.10). The composition was amended in October 1986 [AB minute 217.3(a)] and the Terms of Reference in June 1989 (AB minute 246.2.9). The UHEC was made a Committee of Council, reporting through the RGSC, in October 1997 (C minute 310.9).

In November 1988 the Academic Board approved the establishment of Faculty Human Ethics Committees (FHECs; formerly School Human Research Ethics Committees – SHRECs) responsible to the UHEC.

The UHEC was made a sub-committee of the Research and Graduate Studies Committee (RGSC) in April 1991 (AB minute 165.3.1). The composition and Terms of Reference were amended by the RGSC in October 1991 (RGSC minute 5.3.1.2) and December 1991 (RGSC minute: 7.4.1). Further amendments were approved in October 1993 (RGSC minute 24.4.2) and endorsed by the Academic Board at its meeting on 9 March 1994. The Terms of Reference were again amended by the RGSC in April 1997 (RGSC minute 54.4.2), September 1998 (RGSC minute 63.4.2.1), March 1999 (RGSC minute 72.5.3.2), and .

Membership Composition and Terms of Office:

Membership composition conforms to the requirements outlined in the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). There should be equal numbers of men and women, and at least one third of the members should be from outside the University. Member categories are:

- A Chair appointed by the Research and Graduate Studies Committee - 3 years
- B Faculty Representative, Chair of Faculty Human Ethics Committee - 3 years
- C Laywoman not associated with the University - 1 year renewable
- D Layman not associated with the University - 1 year renewable
- E Nurse or Allied Health Professional- 1 year renewable
- F Pastoral Care Person – 1 year renewable
- G Lawyer (not associated with the University) – 1 year renewable
- H Co-opted member with specific area of expertise – 1 year renewable

At the first meeting of every year, the Committee will select one of its members to act in the position of Deputy Chair for the duration of the year. The Deputy Chair will assume the responsibilities of the Chair in his / her absence for a period of not more than three (3) months, after which time the Secretary must inform the Executive Secretary of the RGSC of the Chair's prolonged absence, and secure from the RGSC the appointment of an Acting Chair for the duration of the Chair's absence. Category C to H terms of office shall ordinarily be for one calendar year, renewable unless otherwise recommended by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research). Membership of the UHEC shall be approved by the RGSC.

Terms of Reference:

1. Monitor all Faculty Human Ethics Committees (FHECs) with regard to their Terms of Reference, composition of membership and, where appropriate, to ensure that these sub-committees are properly constituted. All FHECs shall report to the University Human Ethics Committee (UHEC) for University purposes.
2. Ensure that all research, including contract research and teaching practicals, conducted in or by the University involving human participants conforms to generally accepted ethical and scientific principles and any legal requirements as outlined in the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

3. Establish procedures for the evaluation and certification of all proposals for the conduct of research involving human participants by members of the University in accordance to the National Statement, including proposals classified as 'negligible risk' which do not require approval according to University guidelines and provided that the procedures fulfill the obligations of the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) Sections 5.1.10 to 5.1.17.
4. Establish procedures for the evaluation, certification and monitoring of all proposals for the conduct of research involving human participants by researchers not affiliated with the University where research is conducted on University grounds or involves University staff or students.
5. Ensure that all UHEC / FHEC members receive updates on policies and regulations and that they are familiar with the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).
6. Advise members of the University on ethical issues relating to research with human participants.
7. Approve in writing and prior to commencement only those research proposals involving human participants which conform to the University's accepted policies such as the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).
8. Monitor all approved projects to ensure that they conform with approved ethical standards. The UHEC may withdraw approval for a project which it considers as having failed to conform with approved ethical standards in accordance with University guidelines and Section 5.5 of the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).
9. Investigate complaints regarding the ethical conduct of research by members of the University in accordance with University guidelines and Section 5.6 of the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).
10. Assist higher degree candidates to meet the requirement that all research involving human participants be reviewed.
11. Establish and maintain effective communication and liaison with others within and outside the University who are also concerned with the ethical conduct of human research.
12. Advise and report to the Academic Board through the Research and Graduate Studies Committee at least once each year.

Reporting:

1. FHECs shall refer all matters relating to policy and changes to procedures and application / progress forms to the UHEC for endorsement before being forwarded to the RGSC for approval.
2. The UHEC shall report on a regular basis on all matters relating to policy and amendments to procedures and application / progress forms to the RGSC.
3. The UHEC shall provide copies of its approved minutes to the RGSC (via the Executive Secretary) within two weeks after each meeting.
4. The UHEC shall report annually to the March meeting of the RGSC on:
 - a. a review of the Composition and Terms of Reference of the UHEC and FHECs;
 - b. its compliance with the quality assurance mechanisms approved by the RGSC.

Secretariat – Administrative Officer (Research), Research and Graduate Studies Office