Human Ethics Advisory Groups (HEAGs)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

PURPOSE

HEAGs are a committee of peers based in the faculties. They are responsible to DUHREC for the ethical review of low risk human research projects under the terms of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007, updated 2018) (the National Statement).

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

1. The HEAGs provide ethical review and/or monitoring for any low risk human research ethics proposal involving research conducted by Deakin staff or students, including those that may be conducted at another site and/or involve research collaborators external to the University.

COMPOSITION OF THE HEAGs

2. Membership of HEAGs may vary between the faculties. At a minimum the HEAG will include:
   a. A Chair, who is a member of DUHREC, appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and
   b. At least two reviewers drawn from the academic staff of the faculty.

3. HEAG reviewers are appointed by the Chair of the HEAG in consultation with the reviewer’s Head of School. The usual term of appointment is one year, and members are eligible for reappointment.

4. The HEAG Secretary will be appointed by the Faculty in which the HEAG is based.

FUNCTIONS

5. To assess ethics applications for proposed human research projects within the University deemed low risk by the principal investigator/s and determine whether they meet the National Statement criteria for low risk research (National Statement 2.1.6).

6. Where the projects meet the criteria for low risk research, to consider the ethical implications of the projects, and to determine whether they comply with the National Statement and other relevant legislation and guidelines and are ethically acceptable.

7. Where the projects do not meet the National Statement criteria for low risk research, to refer them to DUHREC for review.

8. To monitor the progress of HEAG-approved research projects.

9. To refer potential breaches, adverse incidents, events or reactions relating to HEAG-approved research projects to DUHREC for management.

10. To provide quarterly reports to DUHREC as required.

11. To provide accurate records in a timely fashion as requested by the DUHREC Executive to facilitate the scheduled audits of the HEAG described in paragraph 33 of the DUHREC Terms of Reference.
12. To promote understanding of Human Research Ethics within the faculty, the importance of acknowledging accepted community standards, and the legislation and guidelines in relation to human research.

**HEAG DECISIONS**

13. The Chair or Deputy Chair of the HEAG is responsible for assessing whether each research proposal submitted for review meets the criteria for low risk research (National Statement 2.1.6 and the Human Research Ethics Procedure).

14. Where the Chair or Deputy Chair determines that the proposal meets the criteria for low risk research, at least two members of the HEAG will be assigned to review it.

15. HEAG members assigned to review proposals are responsible for deciding whether, in their judgement, the proposal meets the criteria for low risk review (National Statement 2.1.6 and the Human Research Ethics Procedure) and the requirements of the National Statement, is compliant with any other relevant guidelines and legislation, and is ethically acceptable.

16. To fulfil their responsibilities each member should become familiar with the National Statement and consult other guidelines or legislation relevant to the review of specific research proposals.

17. Each HEAG member will determine whether to recommend:
   a. A proposal be approved
   b. Amendments or clarifications are requested
   c. Resubmission of a new research proposal is required (where extensive amendments are required) or
   d. Referral to DUHREC on the grounds the proposal does not meet the criteria for low risk research.

18. Where reviewer recommendations about a research proposal differs, the HEAG Chair or Deputy Chair will be the final decision maker.

19. Decisions of a HEAG must be clearly communicated to researchers as promptly as possible and include reasons for its decision and where relevant, reference to the National Statement.

**HEAG MEETINGS**

20. HEAGs operate on a rolling review basis with proposals considered by circulation.

21. HEAGs will have at least one meeting per year for the purpose of addressing emerging issues and providing continuing education and training for reviewers.

22. The HEAGs may seek the assistance of non-HEAG members to provide training, as necessary.

**HEAG RECORD KEEPING**

23. HEAGs will comply with the National Statement requirements for record keeping (5.2.25-5.2.29).

24. The proceedings of HEAG meetings will be minuted. Minutes will be circulated to all members for their reference and may be requested as part of the scheduled audit process.
REQUIREMENTS OF MEMBERSHIP

25. Members must declare any perceived, potential, or actual conflicts of interest that relate to the review of an ethics application. Where an actual conflict exists, the application will be reallocated to another member of the HEAG for review. Where a perceived, or potential conflict of interest exists, the reviewer may be allowed to continue their review at the discretion of the HEAG Chair or Deputy Chair.

26. Members must maintain the confidentiality of all HEAG proceedings.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER RESEARCH REVIEW PROCESSES

27. DUHREC has oversight of the ethics review process of HEAGs. The DUHREC Executive is responsible for auditing the operations of the HEAG every five years to ensure that only low risk research is being reviewed by the HEAG (see National Statement 5.1.17) and that work of the HEAGs is otherwise compliant with the requirements of the National Statement.

Effective Date: 2 March 2021