Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (DUHREC)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

PURPOSE

DUHREC is responsible to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (DVCR) for the ethics review of 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. DUHREC will provide ethics review and/or monitoring for all human research project proposals conducted by Deakin University staff and students as described in the Human Research Ethics Procedure, including those that may be conducted at another site and involve research collaborators external to the University.

COMPOSITION OF DUHREC

2. DUHREC consists of two panels, one based at Waurn Ponds, the other at Burwood. Both panels are fully constituted HRECs as required by the National Statement. Minimum membership of each panel is set out in paragraph 5.1.30 of the National Statement. Each panel of DUHREC minimally includes:
   
   a. a Chair or Deputy Chair, who should be from different faculties, or at least not from the same Academic Unit.
   b. at least two lay people of differing genders who have no affiliation with the University 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
   d. at least one person who performs a pastoral care role in a community
   e. at least one lawyer
   f. at least two people with current research experience that is relevant to research proposals to be considered at the meetings they attend.

3. At least one human research ethics adviser will have a standing invitation to DUHREC with right of audience and debate.

4. Where possible, each panel will include at least one researcher from each faculty, or with expertise in the areas of research undertaken in the faculty.

5. The Chairs of each of the faculty HEAGs will be members of DUHREC and sit on the panel of their choice.

6. Where the panel does not include a member who is an Indigenous person, a reviewer/s with relevant experience will be appointed to review research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or issues on an ad hoc basis.

7. Additional members may be co-opted by the Committee from time to time for particular purposes and specified periods.
8. Where there is less than full attendance of the minimum membership at a meeting, the Chair will confirm at the beginning of the meeting, that the views of those absent who belong to the minimum membership have been received and considered.

9. The DUHREC secretary will be a member of the Human Research Ethics Office.

FUNCTIONS

10. To consider the ethical implications of proposed human research projects, and to determine whether the projects comply with the National Statement and other relevant guidelines and legislation and are ethically acceptable.

11. To monitor the progress of approved human research projects.

12. To manage adverse incidents, events, or reactions arising from approved human research projects in accordance with the Human Research Ethics Procedure.

13. To manage allegations of research code breaches related to human research in accordance with the Human Ethics Breach Process.

14. To provide reports as required by the NHMRC, the Health Complaints Commissioner or other duly appointed authorities.

15. To report at least annually to the DVC Research & Research Training Committee on DUHREC activities.

16. To provide oversight, leadership, and support to the Human Ethics Advisory Groups (HEAGs).

HREC DECISIONS

17. Each member of DUHREC is responsible for deciding whether, in their judgement, a proposal submitted to DUHREC meets the requirements of the National Statement and is ethically acceptable. To fulfil that responsibility each member should:
   a. become familiar with the National Statement, and consult other guidelines and legislation relevant to the review of specific research proposals
   b. prepare for and attend scheduled meetings of the review body or, if unavailable, provide opinions on the ethical acceptability of research proposals before meetings

18. Decisions should be made on the basis of consensus and on a thorough, fair and inclusive process of discussion and deliberation by DUHREC members. Where consensus cannot be reached after reasonable efforts to resolve differences, DUHREC may proceed with a majority decision.

19. DUHREC may decide to:
   a. Approve a research proposal
   b. Request amendments or clarifications
   c. Request the resubmission of a new research proposal where required amendments are extensive or
   d. Reject a research proposal

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

DUHREC RECORD KEEPING

21. DUHREC will comply with the National Statement requirements for record keeping (5.2.25-5.2.29).
22. Discussions and decisions of DUHREC meetings will be minuted. Minutes will be confirmed at the next meeting of the applicable DUHREC panel and will be noted by the alternative panel.

DUHREC EXECUTIVE

23. DUHREC may establish an Executive Committee that consists of at least the DUHREC Chair or Deputy Chair, supported by a human research ethics adviser. The DUHREC Chair or Deputy Chair may invite or delegate responsibility to others with relevant experience, including DUHREC members.

24. The DUHREC Executive Committee may be delegated to assess and address matters out of session including:
   a. Assessment of adverse incidents, events or reaction in accordance with the Human Research Ethics Procedure
   b. Review allegations of research code breaches in accordance with the terms of the Human Ethics Breach Process,
   c. Provide guidance and assist with ethical decision making regarding the handling of complaints related to human research conducted by Deakin staff or students as outlined in the Complaints Handling process,
   d. Assess and as appropriate, exempt from ethics review, the secondary use of pre-existing, non-identifiable human data that was collected without prior ethics approval from an Australian HREC, or appropriately constituted Australian low risk review body.
   e. Approval of modifications and transfers of projects to Deakin.

25. All decisions of the DUHREC Executive Committee will be ratified by DUHREC at the next committee meeting.

REQUIREMENTS OF MEMBERSHIP

26. The DUHREC Chair and Deputy Chair are appointed by the DVCR or nominee following an expression of interest process relating to a position description.

27. Members are appointed by the DVCR or nominee and will be interviewed by the DUHREC Chair or Deputy Chair, supported where possible by a human research ethics adviser. The usual term of appointment is two years, and members are eligible for reappointment for a maximum of three terms, or longer at the discretion of the DVCR.

28. Members must declare any perceived, potential, or actual conflicts of interest at the start of each committee meeting. For DUHREC decision making, members with a conflict of interest must withdraw from the meeting on matters that relate to an actual conflict of interest and may be required to withdraw on matters that relate to a perceived or potential conflict at the discretion of the Chair or Deputy Chair.

29. Members must agree in writing to maintain the confidentiality of all DUHREC proceedings.

30. All members are required to attend continuing education or training programs in human research ethics at least every three years (National Statement 5.2.3).
31. Members may be asked to leave DUHREC by the DVCR on the recommendation of the Chair or Deputy Chair. Members may resign from DUHREC by notifying the Human Research Ethics Office in writing.

**REMUNERATION OF MEMBERS**

32. Members who are external to the University will be provided with an annual honorarium in recognition of their service.

**RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER RESEARCH REVIEW PROCESSES**

33. DUHREC will have oversight of the ethics review process of HEAGs. The DUHREC Executive Committee is responsible for auditing the operations of the HEAGs at least every five years, or sooner if required. Audits will determine whether:

   a. Only low risk research is being reviewed by the HEAG (see National Statement 5.1.17) and
   a. The work of the HEAGs is otherwise compliant with the requirements of the National Statement and may result in directives or recommended actions.

34. DUHREC will have oversight of negligible risk research that is exempted from ethics review. The DUHREC Executive Committee is responsible for auditing the exemption process at least every five years, or sooner if required, to ensure that research is being exempted only in accordance with the criteria set out in paragraphs 5.1.22 and 5.1.23 of the National Statement.

35. DUHREC will only review projects involving participant exposure to ionising radiation after approval has been granted by the Deakin Radiation Safety Officer.

   Effective Date: 2 March 2021.