

# Terms of Reference

---

## Adelaide University Lower Risk Research Ethics Committee

### Establishment

By what authority: Adelaide University Research Committee

For what period: Indefinite

### Terms of Reference

*Nature:* Regulatory, decision making and advisory.

*Introduction:* Human research is research conducted with or about people, their data, or their biospecimens. All research involving humans is governed by Australian law and regulations that establish rights for participants and impose general and specific responsibilities on researchers and institutions. It is necessary for all members of the Adelaide University Community to obtain appropriate ethics clearance before commencing any activity involving human research.

The University has established Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) to review research proposals that involve human participants to ensure that they meet ethical standards and guidelines. These guidelines include the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2025) (National Statement). The HRECs review research undertaken by, or in collaboration with Adelaide University.

Lower Risk Research Ethics Committees (LRREC) are responsible for approving and monitoring the ethical aspects of lower risk research conducted by members of the Adelaide University Community, as defined by the National Statement and in accordance with other National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) or relevant guidance.

HREC or LRREC approval is one aspect of the University's governance processes. Researchers must satisfy all other institutional and external compliance

and research governance requirements prior to commencing research.

*Responsibilities:*

The LRRECs review and approve applications for human research with the objective to protect the welfare and rights of participants in research by:

1. applying the ethical principles and values set out in the National Statement, the Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders 2018, the AU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Strategy, as well as other guideline papers published from time to time by the NHMRC or other relevant entities.
2. assessing the ethical implications of proposed research projects with regard to human participants to determine whether they meet ethical standards.
3. cooperating closely with the Australian Health Ethics Committee (AHEC), a principal committee of the NHMRC or other relevant bodies.
4. monitoring approved research projects until completion to assure the Committee that they comply with the approved protocol and any University requirements.
5. maintaining records of all submitted and approved research projects in accordance with the National Statement and legislated or regulatory records retention requirements, ensuring confidentiality and data security, and archiving in accordance with University procedures.
6. maintaining appropriate minutes of meeting, assessment and decision-making in accordance with relevant regulatory requirements.
7. receiving reports of adverse incidents and complaints about the conduct of research, responding to reduce future risks arising and assisting complaint resolution or referral as required with participants, researchers or others involved in the conduct of research projects.
8. receiving and managing complaints about the Committee's reviews of research proposals and assist in resolving them with advice from the University's Research Compliance, Ethics and Integrity (RCEI) team in Research Services.
9. seeking advice and support from the RCEI team relating to applications that may require referral to another Human Research Ethics Committee where appropriate or as may be required,

including, for example, where the University LRREC does not have the expertise, resourcing, or scope to review a particular type of research project, or as otherwise outlined in the [Operating Agreement].

*Reporting line:*

The Committee reports to the HREC and is accountable to the Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Innovation (DVCRI) and the Adelaide University Research Governance Committee (RGC).

The role of the Chair reports to the Chair of the HREC and has a dotted line to the Dean of Research in the Chair's College. The Chair will meet with the Dean of Research annually, as a minimum.

The LRRECs are sub-committees of the HREC and report as required to the University.

*Quorum:*

As per the National Statement, each LRREC meeting should, as far as is practicable, be arranged to enable attendance of all members of the minimum membership categories and other relevant appointed members, while also reflecting diversity, including gender diversity.

Where there is less than full attendance at a meeting, the Chair must be satisfied, before a decision is reached, that the views of those absent who belong to the minimum membership have been received and considered, in accordance with the National Statement. If the quorum is lost during the meeting, decisions may be finalised out of session.

*Conflict of Interest:*

Each member, external expert or any other person consulted by the Committee must declare any conflicts or affiliations as they arise, to ensure appropriate management. Members with a conflict will be excluded from deliberation and decision-making on the relevant research project, as determined by the Chair.

Where a member is involved in a research project submitted to the Committee, then that member shall not take part in the assessment of that research project but may provide information about a research project in which they are involved to the Committee on request from the Chair.

*Operating procedures prescribed/determined itself:*

The LRREC conducts its business in accordance with this Terms of Reference and any [Standard Operating

Procedures], [Operating Arrangement] or other relevant Committee governance documentation as may apply from time to time, and consistent with the requirements of the National Statement.

*Frequency of meetings:*

The LRREC meets regularly as stated on the website or as determined by the Chair.

Meetings may be held either face-to-face, online, or in hybrid format, as appropriate to support participation and operational needs. The Chair may determine that the LRREC undertakes an expedited review process for lower risk research projects that does not then require formal meetings of members to be convened. This expedited review process must adhere to the requirements outlined in relevant SOPs, Operating Arrangements, or other relevant documentation and must at all times adhere to the requirements of the National Statement.

*Sub-committees:*

As sub-committees of the HRECs, LRRECs, and discipline-specific subsidiary committees of the LRRECs, may be established with the approval of the DVCRI or at the direction of the RC.

*Recognition of Prior Approvals and Ongoing Monitoring of Research Projects:*

Adelaide University HRECs and LRRECs recognise ethics approvals granted by the HRECs and lower risk research ethics committees of the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia prior to the disestablishment of the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia (**Prior Ethics Approvals**). Research projects subject to a Prior Ethics Approval will, in general, not require re-review by an Adelaide University HREC or LRREC, provided there are no substantive changes to the approved protocols.

Each Prior Ethics Approval will be deemed to be an ethics approval made by an Adelaide University HREC or LRREC. The responsibilities under these Terms of Reference apply to each previously approved research project as if an Adelaide University HREC or lower risk research ethics committee had granted the approval. The Adelaide University HRECs or LRRECs have authority to suspend or revoke a Prior Ethics Approval as if an Adelaide University HREC or LRREC had granted the approval.

## Membership

### *Size:*

The minimum membership required is determined by Colleges on consideration of relevant factors in addressing the compliant and appropriate ethical review in the College. For example, and without limitation, a College (or Colleges, where a LRREC services more than one College) may consider factors such as volume of applications, risk, expertise available in the College(s), or whether an expedited review pathway is used. Any membership requirements otherwise specified in the National Statement must be adhered to in contemplation of the above.

A pool of appointed members may be maintained to meet any minimum category requirements, and requirements of the relevant College(s), and to provide relevant experience or expertise to the work of the Committee, as outlined in the National Statement.

The College(s) is expected to retain documented rationale and approval of the membership composition for its LRRECs. This approval and documentation must be provided to the DVCRI, Provost, or RCEI on request.

For clarity, the membership contemplated in this section does not include Research Ethics Advisors unless otherwise specified by the College.

### *Membership:*

The composition of the Committee is prescribed as per the local requirements of the College and any requirements of the National Statement. In addition to the minimum prescribed membership, the Committee may include at least one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member.

Where this is not feasible, any research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or communities will be referred to the HREC or a specialised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HREC (AHREC) for review, such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Human Research Ethics Committee or the AHREC.

An individual may fill more than one category at separate meetings, providing that the minimum membership categories are represented at each meeting. No individual may represent more than one of the categories at any individual meeting. Members are eligible to attend any of the University's LRRECs.

As far as possible, each LRREC meeting should be arranged to enable at least one member in each category to attend.

The LRREC may invite or co-opt any person with requisite expertise to attend, to participate in, or to both attend and participate in any of its meetings. Such persons shall not be eligible to vote. The Committee may also call upon experts for specialist advice, as determined by the Chair.

Where a College determines it requires external volunteer members on its Committee, those external volunteer members are entitled to an honorarium for each meeting attended. The honorarium is offered in recognition of the time given by volunteer members in attending meetings and for possible out-of-pocket expenses incurred in the course of attending meetings. Appointment of volunteers must satisfy all relevant requirements of Adelaide University in relation to volunteers. These aspects are expected to be managed by the College(s), with documentation provided to RCEI on request.

*Research Ethics Advisors:*

Research Ethics Advisors (REAs) are nominated through the Chair and College and are appointed by the DVCRI on recommendation from the RCEI team. Nominations are made to fill vacancies as required.

REAs are responsible for the promotion of ethical review across the College in which the REA is based. A REA assists in the promotion of ethical review through educating and communicating the principles of ethically conducted research at the local (College) level, including by:

- Providing advice for certain human research applications;
- Providing discipline-relevant advice about research ethics at the local level;
- Providing advice to those applying for ethics approval;
- Contributing to the deliberations of the Low Risk HRECs (including attending meetings, as relevant) about ethical issues in relation to their local area; and
- Facilitating dissemination of information and communications about the AU HREC, LRREC, and related matters at the local level.

*Appointment and Term of Office:* Members are appointed for a maximum initial period of three years. Subsequent reappointment will occur

subject to Committee requirements. Members are nominated through the College(s) and Chair and are appointed by the DVCRI (or delegate) on recommendation from the Director, RCEI (or delegate). Nominations are made to fill vacancies as required.

In circumstances where membership requires review, including where it may require conclusion before the end of the appointed term, the DVCRI (or delegate) will determine the action (if any) in relation to the membership. The DVCRI (or delegate) may consider any information they determine as relevant, including recommendations from the Chair or College. The decision, including whether to withdraw or conclude membership, rests with, and is at the discretion of, the DVCRI (or delegate).

Details regarding lapses, termination, resignation, or extended leave from the Committee are outlined in the [Procedure]. This includes expectations for attendance, training, conduct, and notice periods.

The REAs are nominated through the College and LRREC Chair and are appointed by the DVCRI (or delegate) on recommendation from the Director, RCEI (or delegate).

The Deputy Chair is nominated through the College and LRREC Chair and is appointed by the DVCRI (or delegate) on recommendation from the Director, RCEI (or delegate). In the case of a dual College Committee, the Deputy Chair must come from the College that the Chair is not from.

The Chair is nominated by the College(s) and is appointed by the DVCRI (or delegate) on the recommendation from the Director, RCEI (or delegate).

*Training:*

In accordance with the National Statement, all members are required to:

- undertake any induction training;
- become and remain familiar with the National Statement;
- attend continuing education or training programs in research ethics at least every three years, or as may be otherwise determined.

*Proxies:* If a member is unable to attend, the meeting must still meet the minimum quorum requirements with appointed members, not substitutes. To support a quorum, an alternate may be drawn from the pool of appointed members. This is a separate arrangement and not considered a proxy.

*Administration:* Responsibility for day to day administration and management of the Committee and its functions rests in the College(s) of the relevant Committee. The RCEI team will provide institutional level strategic and operational support as outlined in the [Operating Arrangement].

The [Committee Executive Officers] provide administrative and project lifecycle support to the LRRECs and their subsidiary committees, act as the first point of contact for enquiries related to low risk human research, and communicate on behalf of the LRREC with Applicants, the RCEI team, and other stakeholders.

**Contact person and phone/email**

**CM REF**

**Review of Terms of Reference**

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed after the first 12 months of Adelaide University's operation.

Note on structures, positions and position titles:

At the time of writing, the organisational structure, positions, committees, or any other unknown item etc. for Adelaide University have not been confirmed. Accordingly, square brackets [ ] temporarily enclose such information in this procedure until confirmed.