



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

CHARTER OF THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (REC)

1. NAME

The name of the committee is the Faculty Research Ethics Committee and hereafter referred to as the REC.

2. STATUS

The REC is an independent committee in terms of research ethics decision-making, however in terms of institutional lines of authority, the REC reports to Faculty Board and to the Senate Research Ethics Committee.

3. MISSION AND GOALS

The REC protects the interests of research participants and researchers. This is done through a process of independent, critical review and ethical clearance of research performed within the Faculty/College/School, and research submitted for ethical clearance by researchers external to the Faculty/College/School where applicable. The REC also provides research ethics advice and guidance to researchers and other members of the Faculty/College/School or other Faculties/Colleges/Schools.

4. COMPOSITION

The REC comprises the following members:

- 4.1. Chairperson – nominated from the REC membership. To be eligible for nomination as Chairperson, a REC member must have completed at least one full term (see 8.3 below) or at least two years if a full term is three years and should preferably have completed one full term as a Vice-Chairperson of the REC if section 8 of the charter allows this.
- 4.2. Vice-Chairperson (there may be more than one Vice-Chairperson) – nominated from the REC membership. To be eligible for nomination as Vice-Chairperson, a REC member must have completed at least one full term as a member (see 8.3 below), or at least two years if a full term is three years.

- 4.3. Vice-Dean (Research and Innovation) (*ex-officio*)
- 4.4. Members – from Departments and research entities in the Faculty. The REC should comprise of at least 9 members excluding the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson(s).
- 4.5. Members with specialised expertise, if required.
- 4.6. Research ethics training is required in order to become a member of the REC. Prior to the completion of research ethics training, any staff member from a department or research entity who intends becoming a REC member may be an observer. Observers do not participate in REC decision-making. Research ethics training should be updated at least every three years.
- 4.7. Secretariat – may be comprised of one or more administrative staff at Department or Faculty level.
- 4.8. All REC members and observers must sign a confidentiality agreement on initiation of committee duties or prior to a REC meeting (if their involvement is limited or *ad hoc*).

5. FUNCTIONS

The functions of the REC are:

- 5.1. To facilitate the ethical review of research in the Faculty/College/School, both qualification and non-qualification research.
- 5.2. To facilitate post-approval ethical monitoring of research in the Faculty/College/School, as and when required.
- 5.3. To efficiently manage administrative processes related to research ethics application submission, review and dissemination of review decisions and approvals, monitoring and reporting.
- 5.4. To ensure confidentiality of all REC matters pertaining to research ethics application review and approval, monitoring and reporting, and to safeguard REC data and documents in order to ensure business continuity.
- 5.5. To develop policies, procedures, guides and related material for ethics review, monitoring and reporting, and ethical conduct in research when required and to make these easily accessible.

6. SCOPE OF AUTHORITY

The Faculty Board delegates scope of authority to the REC as it deems fit. The Senate Research Ethics Committee exercises research ethics oversight of the REC.

7. MEETING PROCEDURE AND REPORTING

- 7.1. Meeting Dates
 - 7.1.1. The REC meets as frequently as required in order to efficiently carry out ethical review of research ethics applications without delaying the progress of any research.

- 7.1.2. Meeting dates are determined at the beginning of each year and circulated to all REC members and more widely within the Faculty/College/School.
- 7.1.3. Special meetings – meetings other than routine meetings for the purpose of ethical review decisions – may be scheduled if a need is identified for such meetings.
- 7.1.4. The REC Chairperson determines a date for any special meeting and notifies all REC members of the meeting at least one calendar week in advance of the meeting date.
- 7.2. Meeting Attendance
 - 7.2.1. Meeting attendance for REC members is compulsory. Members not able to attend a meeting should notify and communicate their apologies to the Secretariat.
 - 7.2.2. Members not present at a REC meeting who have been requested to complete one or more research ethics application reviews must ensure that these completed reviews are forwarded to the Secretariat before the REC meeting.
 - 7.2.3. REC members not attending meetings who have taken leave are not expected to complete research ethics application reviews.
 - 7.2.4. REC members not following the procedure in Section 7.2.1 will be recorded in the minutes as absent from the meeting in question.
 - 7.2.5. Members absent from at least three consecutive REC meetings without sufficient cause will be removed from the Committee. In general, members who are unable to attend an REC meeting are still expected to submit review forms for their allocated proposals unless they can provide strong reasons why they are unable to do so (e.g. ill health, travel commitments that would preclude completing their review timeously etc.).
- 7.3. Meeting Agendas
 - 7.3.1. Meeting agendas are compiled by the Secretariat, in consultation with the Chairperson.
 - 7.3.2. Any REC member may request an item to be added to any REC agenda, however this must be done in consultation with the Chairperson or a ViceChairperson. Such requests must be in writing.
 - 7.3.3. With the exception of research ethics applications for consideration, all other items must be clearly identified in the agenda as being items for (i) noting or discussion, or (ii) proposed motions.
 - 7.3.4. Urgent items may be added to a meeting agenda when called for at the beginning of the meeting, however this is at the discretion of the Chairperson.
- 7.4. A quorum is constituted by a majority (> 50%) of members.
- 7.5. Any REC meeting that is not quorate may not make any decisions. The Chairperson may decide to (i) attempt to follow up with absent REC members who may be able to join the meeting within a short time frame

(typically 15 - 20 minutes) so that a quorum may be achieved, and the meeting may proceed or (ii) cancel the meeting and communicate a new meeting date.

- 7.6. Members are required to declare any possible conflict of interest at any meeting and may be excused from decision-making related to specific items in a meeting by the Chairperson if the conflict of interest is considered material, and subject to the meeting remaining quorate in the absence of such members from the discussion.
- 7.7. Committee decisions are made by consensus if possible. If this is not possible for any decision, the decision will be finalised by means of a vote in which case a majority vote (50% +1) carries.
- 7.8. Committee Voting
 - 7.8.1. Each REC member (excluding members of the secretariat, observers and ex-officio members) has a single vote. The Chairperson does not vote, except in the case of a tie (see 7.8.3 below).
 - 7.8.2. Any motion requiring a vote will carry with a simple majority.
 - 7.8.3. In the event of a tie, the Chairperson will cast the deciding vote.
- 7.9. A member of the Secretariat is required to administer meetings in accordance with the Rules for Effective Meetings.
- 7.10. Meeting Minutes
 - 7.10.1. Meeting minutes are compiled by the Secretariat and reviewed by the Chairperson.
 - 7.10.2. At every REC meeting, minutes of the previous meeting must be proposed for approval by the meeting after giving REC members an opportunity to identify anything in the minutes requiring correction. The names of REC members proposing and seconding approval of the previous meeting's minutes must be recorded in the minutes.
 - 7.10.3. Meeting minutes must clearly identify (i) members present, members who have given apologies and those absent from the meeting, (ii) conflicts of interest, (iii) additions to the agenda, (iv) noted items, (v) discussed items, (vi) resolutions and the result of each research ethics application review (for each individual reviewer).
- 7.11. Nomination and Voting: Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson
 - 7.11.1. When required, and as determined by the Dean or Vice-Dean (Research) a call for nominations for Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson of the REC must be distributed to all REC members by the Secretariat at least two weeks prior to an REC meeting.
 - 7.11.2. Nominations for Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the REC must be made in writing by another REC member at least two days prior to an REC meeting and there must be written evidence of acceptance by the nominee. Nominations must be sent to the Secretariat.
 - 7.11.3. In the case of a single nomination for Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson, the REC must decide by consensus whether the nominated member is

suitable for the nominated position. The nominated member must recuse themselves during these deliberations.

7.11.4. If there is consensus that the nominated member is suitable for the nominated position, the nominated member will be duly appointed to the position.

7.11.5. In the case of more than one nomination, the REC must decide by consensus whether the nominated members are all suitable for the nominated position. The nominated members must recuse themselves during these deliberations.

7.11.6. If there is consensus that all nominated members are suitable for the nominated position, REC members with voting rights will vote to decide which of the nominated members should be appointed.

7.11.7. Voting for the REC Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson takes place at a duly constituted REC meeting, and when nominations for these positions have been received, in line with 7.8 above.

7.11.8. The nominated REC member achieving a simple majority is duly appointed to the position.

8. LIFESPAN AND DISSOLUTION OF THE REC

Recommended terms of office of members of the REC are as follows:

8.1. The Chairperson is appointed for a minimum term of two years and may be re-appointed for a further one consecutive term.

8.2. Each Vice-Chairperson is appointed for a minimum term of two years and may be re-appointed for a further one consecutive term.

8.3. REC members are appointed for a minimum term of two years and may be re-appointed for a further one consecutive term.

8.4. The above (8.1-8.3) are a guide and the Faculty may define terms of office as required by context and need. In such cases, there must be alignment between the length of terms of office, requirements for specific REC positions (e.g., Chairperson) and maximum allowable consecutive terms.

8.5. The REC may be dissolved by the Senate Research Ethics Committee.

Approved: Senate Research Ethics Committee: 27 February 2023