

Research Ethics Complaints and Appeals Guidelines

The University may receive complaints about researchers or the conduct of research, or about the conduct of the University's Human or Animal Research Ethics Committees (HREC or ACEC). Complaints may be made by research participants, University staff and students, animal carers, students or third parties. All complaints will be handled professionally and with confidentiality.

Complaints about the University's Human or Animal Research Ethics Committees (HREC or ACEC) review process, outcome or the conduct of the HREC or ACEC

- Complaints against the HREC or ACEC review application process or the Research Ethics Committee can be submitted in writing via email to the [Research Ethics Officer](#). The submission should include details for the grounds of the complaint and the name and contact details of the complainant. Any complaint received will be treated as confidential in order to best protect the complainant, respondent and members of the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- The complaint will be referred to the Chair of the relevant Committee for review. The Chair will investigate the complaint and recommend the appropriate course of action. The Chair or Research Ethics Officer will notify the complainant of the course of action and complaint determination in a timely manner.
- The relevant Committee will endorse the resolution of the complaint at the upcoming HREC or ACEC meeting.
- If a resolution cannot be reached through internal processes or the complaint is against the Chair, the complaint will be referred to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Academic Capability) (DVCRAAC).

Complaints about the conduct of an approved research project

- Complaints or concerns about the ethical conduct of a research project, for example research conducted without ethics approval and/or research that is not consistent with the existing ethics approval, can be directed to the [Research Ethics Officer](#). The submission should include details for the grounds of the complaint and the name and contact details of the complainant. Any complaint received will be treated as confidential in order to best protect the complainant, respondent and members of the Human Research Ethics Committee or Animal Care and Ethics Committee.

- The Research Ethics Officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint or concern and undertake a preliminary investigation regarding the issues raised by the complainant.
- The complaint or concern will be sent to the Chair of the relevant Committee for review. The Chair will investigate the complaint and recommend an appropriate course of action.
- The relevant Committee will endorse the resolution of the complaint at the upcoming HREC or ACEC meeting.
- The Research Ethics Officer will inform the complainant and the respondent, if appropriate, of the outcome.
- If a resolution cannot be reached through these processes, the complaint will be referred to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Academic Capability) (DVCRAAC).
- Where the preliminary investigation finds that the complaint may also represent a breach of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, the Chair or Research Ethics Officer will refer it to the Designated Officer who will take responsibility for handling the allegation in accordance with the SCU Responsible Research Conduct Policy and Procedures.

Complaints regarding allegations of breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research are handled in accordance with the [Southern Cross University Research Responsible Conduct Policy](#) and [Procedures](#) and the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#).

The Chairs of the Southern Cross University Human and Animal Ethics Committees are appointed as research integrity advisors (RIAs). In this role they promote the responsible conduct of research by providing confidential advice to those with concerns or complaints about potential breaches of the Code.

To make a complaint to the relevant Ethics Chair:

Research Ethics Officer
Office of Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Research Capability)
Southern Cross University
PO Box 157
Lismore NSW 2480
T: +61 2 6620 3611
E: ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au (Human Ethics)
E: animaletics.lismore@scu.edu.au (Animal Ethics)

Ethics Complaints Flowchart

