Southern Cross University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

Terms of Reference

HREC role and scope of responsibility for ethical review

Southern Cross University has established a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) responsible for reviewing the ethical acceptability of research, and ensuring compliance with regulatory and legislative requirements and University policies relating to human research.

All human research projects conducted on behalf of the institution, by affiliated or non-affiliated researchers, require approval from the University’s HREC before the research can commence.

The HREC is a Committee of the Vice-Chancellor, but comes directly under the auspices of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research). The principal point of reference for the HREC is the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (The Statement).

The HREC is to ensure that all research is ethically acceptable and reflects the principles of Research Merit and Integrity; Justice; Beneficence; Non – Maleficence and Respect outlined in the Statement.

The HREC:

- Reviews all research that involves more than low risk.
- Monitors approved research annually and upon completion
- Communicates with researchers and is readily accessible to researchers
- Meets face to face with researchers regarding issues to avoid misunderstanding
- Makes a decision on ethical acceptability of proposals and communicates those to researchers
- For research involving low or negligible risk, the institution has established an expedited review process involving the Chair, who reviews on behalf of the HREC, requiring ratification at full HREC

HREC relationship to other processes of research review

The HREC can give advice to researchers on the principles of ethical review as outlined in the Statement only. Review of research proposals regarding all other aspects must take place before submission to HREC.

Mechanisms of reporting

Researchers are required to submit reports

- Annually and upon completion of a project as outlined in the Statement Clause 5.5.5.
- If adverse events occur
- If changes to the original research proposal occur

HREC submits Annual Reports to the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), including information on HREC processes and approved research for the reporting year.

Institutional accountability

The Vice Chancellor has full responsibility for all research conducted under the institution. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) and the Director of the Office of Research oversee compliance of the HREC. The Ethics Manager administers all processes relating to Human Research and together with the Chair of the HREC executes the institutional responsibilities as outlined in the Statement Chapter 5.1. They report to the Director of the Office of Research and the DVC(R) and advise them in matters involving higher risk as well as complaints and adverse events that cannot be resolved at their level.

Categories of minimum membership, Quorum and Frequency of Meetings

Minimum membership is outlined in the Statement Paragraph 5.1.30 and also constitutes a quorum meeting. The SCU HREC is guided by these principles and currently schedules eight meetings per year.