



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 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 auspice 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 ethical aspects of all proposals by Southern Cross University (SCU) staff and students involving research on human beings which directly affects the participants in the research.
- 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.
- The institution has established an expedited review process involving the HREC Chair, or by a nominated Committee member, who reviews low risk research applications and activities.
- Applications that may be reviewed, considered and, where appropriate, approved by the HREC Chair, or by a nominated Committee member, or the Chair's delegate (as approved by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)), requiring ratification at full HREC, include the following:
 - Research applications involving low or negligible risk,
 - Requests for recognition of ethical approval by another HREC;
 - Requests for modification to approved research proposals;
 - Annual reports, Requests for extension of ethical approval, Completion Reports
 - Requests for advice or queries from researchers and/or students
 - Complaints;

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- Adverse Incidents and Events.

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.

The 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 auspice of the institution. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) (DVCR) and Executive Officer of the Office of the DVCR oversee compliance of the HREC. The Research Ethics Officer 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 ODVCR Executive Officer and the DVCR 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.

- A Chair with suitable experience;
- At least two lay people, one man and one woman, who have no affiliation with the University and do not currently engage in medical, scientific, legal or academic work;
- At least one person with knowledge of, and current experience in, the professional care, counselling or treatment of people;
- At least one person who performs a pastoral care role in a community;
- At least one lawyer, where possible one who is not engaged to advise the University;
- At least two people with current research experience relevant to research proposals considered by the SCU HREC.

The SCU HREC schedules eight meetings per year.

Any member of the SCU HREC who has an interest, financial or otherwise, in a proposal or other agenda item considered by the SCU HREC, should, as soon as practicable, declare such interest.

University staff members must commit to attending 75% of HREC meetings, unless they have notified the Ethics Office that they will be on annual or long-service leave or away on special leave.

Experts and Observers

- The SCU HREC may invite people with specific expertise to provide advice as required.
- The DVCR may invite researchers, in an observer role, as trainees with the intention of learning and transitioning to HREC membership when a vacancy becomes available.

Non-affiliated research

SCU HREC will only review submissions from affiliated Southern Cross University staff and students. If a research proposal has been approved by another organisation or University ethics committee and also involves Southern Cross University researchers, then a Minimisation of Duplication Application is submitted to Southern Cross University as a formality and to receive a Southern Cross University Approval Number.

Remuneration for members

Committee members who are not University staff are appointed on a voluntary basis and may be reimbursed for legitimate expenses incurred in attending HREC meetings.

Modification history

Date:	Approved by:	Details:
March 2021	HREC Chair and DVCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor amendments to roles and reporting, as per Transform SCU. • Major revision of “Categories of minimum membership, Quorum and Frequency of Meetings”. • Inclusion of Non-affiliated Research; Remuneration of members and Modification history.
September 2021	HREC Chair and DVCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revising scope of expedited review process, including all activities to be reviewed by HREC Chair under the expedited process. • Inclusion of nominated Committee member or Chair’s delegate to review these activities.