

Human Research Ethics Committee Peer Review Policy

Section 1 - Background Information

(1) The [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) states the following at paragraph 1.2:

"Where prior peer review has judged that a project has research merit, the question of its research merit is no longer subject to the judgment of those ethically reviewing the research".

(2) It is not the role of the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) to review research projects for technical or scientific merit. However it is important for the HREC to be assured that a project has research merit as, according to the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) (2007), "unless proposed research has merit, and the researchers who are to carry out the research have integrity, the involvement of human participants in the research cannot be ethically justifiable".

Section 2 - Policy Statement

(3) This Policy has been developed to address the need for research projects to be endorsed as having research merit before they are submitted to HREC for ethical review.

Section 3 - Policy Purpose

(4) This Policy sets out peer review requirements consistent with the intentions of the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#).

Section 4 - Aims of the Scheme

(5) The aims of this Policy are to:

- a. encourage ACU staff and students to design rigorous and ethically sound research projects;
- b. encourage Faculties, Centres and Institutes to play an active role in the research design process through peer review; and
- c. ensure that all projects are endorsed by appropriate peer reviewers/peer review panels as having research merit, before being submitted to HREC for ethical review.

Section 5 - Application of Policy

(6) Faculties, Centres and Institutes are to develop their own procedures for peer review of all research projects requiring HREC approval.

(7) HREC will provide Faculties, Centres and Institutes with guidelines to assist in the development of the procedures.

(8) HREC will, in consultation with Faculties, Centres and Institutes, review and approve the procedures to be implemented.

(9) HREC will table approved procedures for the information of the University Research Committee.

Section 6 - Expectations of Faculties, Schools and Centres

(10) Faculties, Centres and Institutes are expected to design and implement procedures for peer review of all research projects that will be submitted to HREC for ethical review. At a minimum, these must include the Centre for Indigenous Education and Research (CIER) in cases of research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants.

(11) Faculty, Centre and Institutes procedures may include:

- a. different processes for projects of different risk levels; and
- b. different processes for staff and student research.

Section 7 - Policy Review

(12) This Policy will be reviewed within five years of its approval. The review of this Policy will be initiated by the Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee (Chair, HREC), through the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise). Any staff member wishing to suggest improvements to the Policy is invited to forward his/her suggestions to the Chair, HREC or Executive Officer of HREC through the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise).

(13) Unless otherwise indicated, this Policy will still apply beyond the review date.

Section 8 - Associated Information

(14) For related legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines and any supporting resources please refer to the Associated Information tab.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	20th December 2023
Review Date	30th April 2024
Approval Authority	
Approval Date	20th December 2023
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Abid Khan Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)
Responsible Manager	Paul Zappia Associate Director, Research Operations
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