



ICHAS

Section 2 (b) – Terms of Reference for Decision Making Structures

Subject:	Terms of Reference for the Ethics Committee		
Date Approved by Board of Directors:			July 2021
Policy Version	1/2021	Date due for Revision	July 2024

Purpose (including Scope of Functioning/ Key Responsibilities and Accountabilities) The Human Research Ethics Committee of the College has delegated responsibility for considering and monitoring the ethical implications of research within the College, carried out by students, faculty or staff.

As a matter of principle, there is consensus that any research involving human participants should be reviewed and considered by an appropriately constituted research ethics committee, which has the necessary competence to advise upon and make recommendations in relation to research involving humans.

The HREC must ensure that a participant's inclusion in a research study complies with principles set out by the Irish National Council on Bioethics (2004). Broadly speaking the HREC must as far as is practicable ensure that research proposals/protocols presented to it for review demonstrate evidence of how the research will adhere to the principles of:

- justice
- beneficence
- respect
- risk and benefit analysis
- participant's informed consent.

Membership

Membership will reflect the guidelines on HREC membership as set out by Irish National Council on Bioethics (2004). Members of the College's HREC are appointed on the basis of their specific expertise not in a representative capacity. All appointments are for 3 years and may be renewable. Members shall, on appointment receive a guarantee that the College accepts legal responsibility for decisions and advice from the committee and that the College indemnifies its members accordingly. No members adjudicate on proposals in which they have an interest as researchers or supervisors.

Membership of the Committee shall draw upon members with the following range of expertise:

- a Chairperson (either internal or external to the college) • A Vice chairperson
- Member(s) with knowledge of and current experience in the areas of research which are regularly considered by the HREC
- Member(s) with knowledge of and current experience in the professional care, counselling or treatment of people
- Member(s) with training in ethics (e.g. Ethicist, philosopher, theologian)
- Member(s) with a qualification in law
- Member(s) with training in statistics/data analysis
- Lay member(s)
- Additional members may be appointed from time to time.

If a member is unable to participate an alternative member of the Committee will be coopted.

Members of the HREC of ICHAS must be persons who:

- Have a demonstrable commitment to safeguarding human rights in research
- Are committed to the furtherance of ethical research practice and research excellence.
- Agree to have his/her name, profession and affiliation published.
- Treat as confidential all applications, meeting deliberations, information on research participants/volunteers and related matters.
- Commit to attending at least two-thirds of all scheduled HREC meetings annually.
- Agree to take part in education and ongoing training appropriate to his or her role as a HREC member as necessary.

Role and Responsibilities

The College's HREC is responsible for:

- Developing, monitoring & refining the College's Policy on the Conduct of Ethical Research
- Reviewing staff and students' Human Research Ethics proposals/protocols (where submitted for consideration).
- The HREC will not normally review research proposals, projects or coursework in terms of their research merit or integrity. This should normally be subject to peer review within the College's academic structures. However, where the research integrity is deemed to have ethical implications, it reserves the right to comment on such proposals/protocols.

Within that context, the HREC:

- Reviews all research proposals/protocols that involve human participants emanating from student coursework.

- Reviews student projects and coursework that involves publication output.
- Reports directly to the Governing Authority, through the Director of Academic Affairs of the College
- Determines and provide advice on whether proposed research projects involving human participants are acceptable on ethical grounds.
- Monitors as far as is practicable, the progress of research projects to ensure continued compliance with approved ethical standards.
- Maintains a register of proposed research projects involving human participants and communicate information on request to appropriate bodies.
- Through its Chairman, undertakes expedited review of 'negligible risk' human research projects.

Role of the Chair of the Ethics Committee

The Chair convenes and manages meetings, provides such documentation and reports as are necessary to members for the proper functioning of the Committee. The Chair also arranges that the HREC will issue a report to the Academic Council and communicates the outcome of its deliberations to the applicant, and other such parties as necessary in a timely manner.

Role & Expectations of Members of the Ethics Committee

The Chairperson and nominated members, acting as the chairperson's advisory group shall communicate regularly between HREC meetings – in person, virtually or via telephone - to consider human research projects that may be subject to expedited review, given the rating of 'negligible risk' arising from the proposed activity involving human participants.

Operating Procedures

- Members are required to be present for meetings on a reasonable basis.
- Where a member of the committee fails to attend three consecutive meetings, without a reasonable explanation, membership shall automatically lapse.
- The person concerned will be advised by the chairperson of the lapse of his/her membership and the Committee will make arrangements for the appointment of a replacement.
- Members of the Committee are required to be familiar with ethical issues and regulations in respect of research.
- The proceedings of the HREC are undertaken with due regard to confidentiality requirements.

Appointment to the Human Research Ethics Committee

Appointments are made by the President on the recommendation of Academic council for a threeyear period, which may be renewed.

Meetings of the Human Research Ethics Committee

Frequency of Meetings: Meetings are convened on a regular basis. The Committee normally meets on a Bi-monthly basis from September to June inclusive in each academic year. Where this schedule is not necessary, a scheduled meeting may be cancelled by the Chair.

Quorum: The quorum for a meeting of the HREC is 40%. A quorum must be met for a meeting to take place.

Powers of Decision Making: All decisions of the HREC is normally by consensus or if necessary, by majority vote. In the event of a tie, the Chairperson has a casting vote. Because the HREC is a decision-making committee of Academic Council, its decisions on Research Ethics applications will be final.

Reporting Relationships: The HREC reports to Academic Council.