



**AUSTRALIS
BUSINESS
SCHOOL**

Research and Ethics Committee (REC) Terms of Reference and Operating Procedures

Australis Related/Referenced Documents

- *Code of Conduct*
- *Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedure*
- *Governance Charter and Delegations Framework*
- *Research Ethics and Integrity Policy and Procedure*

Related Legislation and External References

- Higher Education Standards Framework (*Threshold Standards*) 2021
- *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Act 2021*
- ASX Corporate Governance Council Corporate Governance Principles and Recommendations
- *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency 2011(TEQSA) – Guidance Note: Corporate Governance*
- *Corporations Act 2001*
- Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD)
- Governance Institute
- Universities Australia (July 2011) Voluntary Code of Best Practice for the Governance of Australian Universities
- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)
- National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2023
- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018

Version Control

Version	Date	Reviewed/approved by	Key notes/changes
2.6	10/11/25	Board of Directors (BoD)	This document is an extract (with updates) from the <i>Governance Charter and Delegations Framework</i> approved at the 10/11/25 BoD meeting
2.7	15/01/26	Academic Board (AB)	Reviewed and approved at the 15/01/26 AB meeting

Document Review

To be reviewed every five (5) years from the date of final approval and as required.

Contents

1. Overview	4
2. Functions and Responsibilities.....	4
3. Reporting Requirements	5
4. Membership and Remuneration.....	5
5. REC members are normally not paid. Some REC members may be paid a sitting fee (varying from \$100 to \$300) which covers preparation undertaken prior to the meeting, attendance at the meeting, and any actions discussed/agreed during the meeting. Meetings	6
6. Quorum	6
7. The Chair	6
8. Secretariat	6
9. Conflict of Interest	6
10. Evaluation and Review	6
11. Appendix 1 – REC Members.....	7
12. Appendix 2 – REC Operating Procedures.....	8

1. Overview

The Research and Ethics Committee (REC) has delegated authority from the Academic Board (AB) to oversee ethical standards in research conducted by students and staff of Australis. The REC ensures compliance with institutional policies, external ethical frameworks, and relevant legislation, particularly in research ethics, intellectual property, and responsible research conduct.

The REC will be registered with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) before commencing its first ethics review of research proposals.

2. Functions and Responsibilities

The REC has the following responsibilities:

- a) Review and approve all research proposals involving human subjects, ensuring compliance with Australis' institutional ethical standards, the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2023*, the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018*, and relevant legal and external regulations.
- b) REC is the final determinant of the risk level or accept the research proposal based on the risk level assigned by the supervisor and research student.
- c) Ensure that all research conducted at Australis is consistent with the standards outlined in the *Threshold Standards 2021*, particularly those related to ethics, integrity, and responsible research practices.
- d) Identify and address potential ethical risks related to research activities, including risks to the physical, psychological, or community welfare, and develop appropriate strategies for risk mitigation.
- e) Ensure that all research involving human participants is conducted with 'voluntary consent' and 'voluntary participation', ensuring that participants engage freely and without coercion, in alignment with ethical research practices.
- f) Oversee adherence to guidelines on intellectual property, authorship, and the prevention of plagiarism or misconduct specifically in research projects. Ensure that all research output upholds the highest standards of research integrity.
- g) Manage allegations of research misconduct within research projects, ensuring that breaches are investigated, recorded, and rectified in accordance with institutional policies. Report serious breaches to the AB.
- h) Develop, implement, and periodically review Australis' *Research Ethics and Integrity Policy and Procedure* and associated guidelines to ensure they align with national and international standards for ethical research and integrity.
- i) Oversee ethical standards in research collaborations with external parties, including third-party research training and partnerships, ensuring compliance with Australis' ethical requirements and external regulatory frameworks.
- j) Maintain comprehensive records of all approved research projects and instances of research misconduct, along with corrective action plans, ensuring transparency and accountability.

- i. Provide regular updates and an annual report to the AB on the ethical conduct of research within Australis, including summaries of approved projects, breaches of research integrity, and actions taken.
- ii. Facilitate ongoing training and education in research ethics for Australis staff and students, promoting a strong culture of ethical research and ensuring all researchers understand their ethical responsibilities under the *Threshold Standards 2021*, the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2023)*, the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)*, and related guidelines.
- iii. Ensure that research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is conducted with appropriate cultural sensitivity, respect for cultural knowledge, and a focus on safeguarding community welfare.
- iv. Ensure that Australis is registered with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2023* before Australis delivers any research level courses.

3. Reporting Requirements

The REC reports directly to the AB and is responsible for submitting regular reports on research ethics matters, including updates on approved research projects, breaches of research integrity, and recommendations for policy improvements.

4. Membership and Remuneration

The REC membership shall be in alignment with Chapter 5.1 of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2023)*. Refer to Appendix 1 for details of REC members and Appendix 2 for REC operating procedures. In summary, the REC membership shall consist of and is not limited to:

- Chair
- Research-active academic staff (at least two members)
- Members with expertise in ethics, legal matters, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research as required
- Other Academic and Community Members with relevant expertise and as required by the committee

The Academic Board (AB) will approve the core members of the REC to align with Australis' committee appointment process.

The REC itself has the authority to approve additional members with relevant expertise as needed, ensuring flexibility in maintaining appropriate expertise within the committee.

REC members are normally not paid. Some REC members may be paid a sitting fee (varying from \$100 to \$300) which covers preparation undertaken prior to the meeting, attendance at the meeting, and any actions discussed/agreed during the meeting.

5. Meetings

The REC will meet at least four (4) times per year, or as required. The Chair may call additional meetings if required, depending on the workload or specific issues that arise. Meetings may be held face-to-face, via teleconference, or videoconference, ensuring flexibility for participation. For further operating procedures, refer to Appendix 2.

6. Quorum

A quorum for a meeting will consist of fifty per cent (50%) of the membership plus one. The quorum must at all times include at least one representative of each of the operations of Australis. Where a loss of quorum is identified, the meeting may be adjourned until a time the Chair determines. Decisions will ordinarily be made by consensus; if consensus cannot be reached, a vote of 50% + 1 will decide.

7. The Chair

At the first meeting of the term, the REC members shall appoint a Deputy Chair, who will preside over meetings in the Chair's absence. If both the Chair and Deputy Chair are absent, a member elected by a majority of the members present shall preside.

8. Secretariat

The Secretary is appointed by the Chair and is responsible for secretariat support.

Agendas and associated documentation will be distributed five (5) working days before the meeting. Members will be notified by email of the location and availability of material. Members are encouraged to bring laptops, tablets or similar to meetings and view the agenda online during the meeting.

Minutes must be prepared from each meeting. The Chair will review the draft minutes and action sheet of each meeting, after which the Secretary will circulate the documents to all committee members and include them in the agenda papers for the next meeting.

9. Conflict of Interest

REC members are required to declare to the Chair any real, perceived or potential conflict of interest they may have with any item on the meeting agenda. If the Chair or Committee deems the member to have a conflict of interest in a matter before the REC, the member will be excused from committee discussion and deliberation on that matter.

10. Evaluation and Review

The REC will conduct an annual self-assessment to evaluate its performance against its Terms of Reference (ToR). The Committee will report on its effectiveness to the AB and propose any necessary changes to the ToR. The AB may approve amendments to the ToR as required.

11. Appendix 1 – REC Members

Position	Name	Reference to <i>National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2023)</i>
Chair	Professor Yvonne Haigh	5.1.30 (a)
Member and HDR Director	Professor David Morrison	5.1.30 (f)
Member and Dean	Associate Professor Seedwell Sithole	5.1.30 (f)
Member	Dr Daniel Paez	5.1.30 (e)
Member	Professor Mohit Sidana	5.1.30 (b)
Member	Ms Jo Longman	5.1.30 (b)
Member	Professor Debra Dunstan	5.1.30 (c)
Member	Professor Darren Cronshaw	5.1.30 (d)
Secretary	Dr Michelle Lac	

12. Appendix 2 – REC Operating Procedures

Operating Procedure with reference to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NSECHR)	Reference to NSECHR
<p>Meeting procedures for REC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As far as is practicable, each REC meeting should be arranged to enable attendance of all members of the minimum membership categories (see 5.1.30) and other relevant appointed members (see 5.1.33 to 5.1.39, as relevant), either in person or via available technology, for example videoconference. • Meeting papers should be provided sufficiently in advance of the meeting to enable members to be fully informed for the meeting. Decisions by the REC about whether a research proposal meets the requirements of the NSECHR should be informed by an exchange of opinions from all members of the REC participating in the meeting. Ideally, this exchange should take place at a meeting with all those members physically present or participating using available technology. • Where there is less than full attendance of members from the minimum membership categories at a meeting, the chairperson must be satisfied that the views of the members who are not present have been received and considered by all members of the REC participating in the meeting, before a decision is made. • The REC may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) invite researcher/s, and researchers may request, to be present for discussion of, but not deliberations about, their proposed research. Participation of researchers in REC meetings is at the discretion of the REC Chair; (b) seek advice from external experts to help in considering a research proposal. Such experts are bound by the same confidentiality requirements as the REC members. Any interests they may have should be disclosed and any conflicts of interest identified and managed appropriately (see Chapter 5.6); (c) invite observers to attend meetings. Any invited observers should not be involved in deliberations or decision making but are still bound by the same confidentiality and disclosure of interests requirements as REC members. 	<p>5.2.3</p> <p>5.2.4</p> <p>5.2.5</p> <p>5.2.6</p>
<p>Make decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The REC may approve, request modification of, reject or withdraw approval of a research proposal. If rejecting or withdrawing approval of a research proposal, a review body should provide the rationale for its decision, including citing the provisions of the NSECHR or relevant institutional policy that underpin its decision, if relevant. 	<p>5.2.7</p> <p>5.2.8</p>

Operating Procedure with reference to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NSECHR)	Reference to NSECHR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The REC should try to reach decisions by general agreement or consensus. Voting is neither required nor prohibited. Some decisions may not be unanimous and a dissent should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. Where requested by a dissenting member, the reasons for the dissent should also be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. 	
<p>Delegation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The REC may delegate some of its responsibilities to its chairperson, one or more of its members, a sub-committee or its administrative officers. Actions taken by these delegates are not equivalent to decisions by the REC and some of these actions should be ratified by an REC. Examples of the legitimate delegation of roles include, but are not limited to, expedited review of projects, approval of amendments or monitoring responsibilities. 	<p>5.2.9 5.2.10</p>
<p>Communication with researchers and sponsors of research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good ethics review requires open communication between review bodies and researchers, and a shared commitment to a constructive review process. The REC will facilitate this shared commitment including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) providing a clear process that sets out how researchers may contact review bodies and their support staff; and (b) promoting awareness of and training about the requirements of the NSECHR among researchers. The REC should encourage communication with researchers, and should consider holding face to-face meetings to resolve issues about research proposals that may be difficult to resolve through other means. The REC must clearly and promptly communicate its decision on a research proposal to the researcher/s: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) where a proposal is approved or rejected, or where approval is withdrawn, communication must be in writing (which may include electronic formats) and should include an explicit statement that the proposal meets or did not meet the requirements of the NSECHR. (b) where modifications are requested, communication may be written or, where appropriate, informal; however, a record should be kept of any informal communication and guidance on to whom the researcher's response should be directed should be clearly communicated. Communication between a review body and a research sponsor is not prohibited, but should be restricted so that it does not inappropriately influence the review of any relevant research proposals. This principle 	<p>5.2.11 5.2.12 5.2.13 5.2.14</p>

Operating Procedure with reference to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NSECHR)	Reference to NSECHR
also applies when the institution is the sponsor in order to minimise conflicts of interest.	
<p>Documentation and record keeping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All documents and other material used in recruiting potential research participants to one or more specific research projects, including advertisements, letters of invitation and participant information sheets and consent forms, must be approved by the review body. If general promotional material (e.g. posters or websites encouraging participation in clinical trial research) is not related exclusively to a specific project, then ethics review is not required; however, consideration of these materials by the institution may be necessary. • Documents intended for use in the conduct of a research project, including but not limited to protocols or project descriptions, participant information sheets and consent forms, questionnaires, surveys, scripts and project-specific recruitment materials must be approved by the review body. The need for approval of data collection tools such as case report forms is project-specific and should be negotiated with the review body. • Documentation submitted in support of any amendment to a research project must be approved by the review body directly or by delegation, if authorised. • Forms used to apply for ethics review, while necessary for review of the project, do not need to be approved as project documents by the review body or listed on a certificate of approval, unless there is no protocol or project description supporting the application. • The REC must maintain a complete record of all research proposals received and reviewed, including, but not limited to the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) name/s of the institution/s for which the approval is applicable; (b) project identification number/s; (c) title of the project; (d) name of the principal researcher/s, as listed on the research proposal at institutions for which the approval is applicable; (e) correspondence between the review body and the researcher about the review/s; (f) advice of approval or rejection of the proposal and any amendments to the project; (g) terms and conditions, if any, of the approval of any proposal or amendment; (h) duration of the approval; (i) proposed date of completion of the project; (j) name of any other review body whose opinion was considered; (k) mechanisms to be used to monitor the conduct of the research; and (l) record of assessments required by the Commonwealth, State or 	<p>5.2.15</p> <p>5.2.16</p> <p>5.2.17</p> <p>5.2.18</p> <p>5.2.19</p> <p>5.2.20</p>

Operating Procedure with reference to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NSECHR)	Reference to NSECHR
<p>Territory legislation or guidelines relating to privacy of personal or health information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The REC must retain a copy of all applications for ethics review, including approved project documentation and any relevant correspondence. Records must be maintained in accordance with the requirements of relevant Commonwealth and state or territory legislation and guidelines 	
<p>REC member responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each member is responsible for deciding whether, in their judgement, a research proposal meets the requirements of the NSECHR and other relevant guidelines and is ethically acceptable. To fulfil that responsibility, each member should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) undertake any induction training or process provided by the institution or review body; (b) become and remain familiar with the NSECHR, and consult other guidelines and information relevant to the review of specific research proposals; (c) prepare for and attend scheduled meetings of the review body or, if unavailable, provide opinions on the ethical acceptability of research proposals before meetings, subject to institutional policies on absences; and (d) attend continuing education or training programs in research ethics at least every three years, or more frequently if provided by the institution or review body. Members must be aware of and respect any institutional protocols or policies related to confidentiality in the performance of their role(s). These may be relevant to interactions with other members of the review body, with administrators or with researchers, or to review of research proposals or any discussion occurring at a meeting, online or elsewhere about matters within the remit of the review body. Members of any review body must disclose any interests that may constitute an actual or potential conflict of interest, including any financial or other interest or affiliation that bears on any research coming before the review body (see Chapter 5.6). This disclosure may be to the chairperson (before the meeting) or before discussion at the meeting of the relevant agenda item, as appropriate. 	<p>5.2.21</p> <p>5.2.22</p> <p>5.2.23</p> <p>5.2.24</p>
<p>Suspension of research or withdrawal of approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where the REC has reason to believe that continuance of a research project will compromise participants' welfare or if the conditions of ethics approval for the project (including reporting requirements) are not being adhered to, it should immediately seek to establish whether ethics approval and/or authorisation for the project should be 	<p>5.4.14</p> <p>5.4.15</p> <p>5.4.16</p> <p>5.4.17</p> <p>5.4.18</p> <p>5.4.19</p>

Operating Procedure with reference to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NSECHR)	Reference to NSECHR
<p>suspended or withdrawn. This process should ensure that researchers and others involved in the project are treated fairly and with respect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It may be unethical for a researcher to continue the research if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) there are or have been substantial deviations from a trial protocol or project description; (b) adverse effects of unexpected type, severity, or frequency are encountered; or (c) as the research progresses, its continuation would disadvantage some of the participants as determined by the researchers or others monitoring the research. • If the REC considers that suspension of research is necessary, the instruction to stop will come from the HDR Director representing the management of Australis. • Where ethics approval for a research project is suspended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the researcher, HDR Director and, where possible, the participants should be informed of the suspension; (b) the HDR Director must ensure that the researcher promptly suspends the research and makes arrangements to meet the needs of participants, such as ensuring that appropriate counselling support or the provision of standard care continues; and (c) the research may not be resumed unless <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the research is modified to provide sufficient protection for participants or address the concerns that led to the suspension; or (ii) the researcher establishes to the satisfaction of the REC that continuation of the research will not compromise participants' welfare; and (iii) the REC authorises the continuation of the research • The REC may require researchers to amend research procedures to protect participants. If the REC determines that such changes cannot achieve that end, the REC may decline to grant an extension to project approval or decide to withdraw approval for the research. • Where ethics approval for a research project is withdrawn: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the researcher, the institution/s and, where possible, the participants should be informed of the withdrawal; (b) the researcher must promptly halt the research, make arrangements to meet the needs of participants and notify the institution that these steps have been taken; and (c) continuation of the research project is subject to re-application and re-approval by the reviewing body. 	
<p>Attendance of people other than members at meetings</p> <p>Australis will ensure that the REC have access to the expertise necessary to enable it to properly review the research that it considers. This may</p>	5.1.38

Operating Procedure with reference to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NSECHR)	Reference to NSECHR
<p>necessitate going outside of the REC’s membership for review of individual research projects. Areas of expertise that may be necessary include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) individuals with specialised scientific or scholarly expertise (including research methods); (b) individuals with specialised technical expertise, such as statisticians or data security, storage and safety specialists; (c) individuals with expertise related to participant groups, including participant advocates; and (d) individuals with expertise related to research contexts, such as clinical or community care. 	