

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
COMPLAINTS POLICY

APPEALS BY RESEARCHERS AGAINST COMMITTEE DECISIONS

Applicants who wish to appeal against a decision of the Committee may make a formal request in writing to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) to review the basis for the Committee's decision. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor will consider the appeal in consultation with the Chair of the Committee. It should be noted that formal approval for research involving human participants must ultimately come from a duly constituted Human Research Ethics Committee.

MISCONDUCT BY RESEARCHERS AND COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE RESEARCH

The Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has developed a mechanism for responding to complaints about research involving human participants.

Any individual or organisation may initiate complaints about research involving human participants by making a written complaint to the Research Ethics Manager, Research Services Office, who will act as the Complaints Officer. These complaints may address:

- Research being conducted in a way which the complainant believes to be unethical or contrary to existing policy or legislation;
- Research (involving human participants) being conducted without formal HREC approval;
- Research being conducted in a manner contrary to the conditions placed on the research in the letter of approval from the HREC;
- Research being conducted in a manner contrary to an HREC application which has been approved;
- Violation or compromise of confidentiality in recruitment, conduct and publication of research;
- Misuse of data;
- Any other similar matter.

The University's Complaints Policy only covers complaints where the complainant identifies him or herself. Anonymous complaints received by the Complaints Officer will be filed, but will not be investigated.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

On receiving a complaint, the Complaints Officer or the Chair of the HREC may, in light of the information contained in the complaint;

- Inform the researcher and /or the researcher's supervisor of the complaint and seek information in response to the complaint;
- Seek an explanation of the events which have given rise to the complaint;
- Suspend HREC approval while the matter is investigated;
- Request evidence that the researcher is conducting the research in keeping with the terms of the HREC approval;
- Place further conditions on the continued conduct of the research;
- Require that all or some data be brought to the Complaints Officer for secure storage;
- Approach the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) to inform him/her of the complaint;
- Recommend further investigation of the complaint by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
- After full investigation, revoke approval for the research and require that all data that has been collected be brought to the Complaints Officer for secure storage.

Complainants and researchers (and supervisors where the research is student research) will receive a written response to the complaint from the Complaints Officer on behalf of the HREC. Where the nature of the complaint requires further investigation, researchers will receive written information about the process being undertaken.

Researchers who believe that a complaint is unwarranted or that the handling of the complaint is unfair are entitled to lodge a formal complaint or appeal to the Vice-Chancellor.

General

The policies and practices of the HREC will be reviewed regularly by the Committee to ensure that they reflect current community values, legal requirements, NHMRC guidelines, research practice and University policy.