



LOW RISK ETHICS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

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1. ROLE

The Low Risk Ethics Committee is a sub-committee of the Academic Board, within the framework of the academic governance at Morling College, and within overarching higher education regulations. The role of the Low Risk Ethics Committee (LREC) is to determine the risk of human research ethics research proposals, to refer proposals where the risk is greater than 'low' to the relevant Human Research Ethics Committee, and to review and monitor proposals where the risk is low or negligible. The Committee is to ensure that any human participant research proposals meet relevant regulations and scholarly standards; that those conducting the research are adequately experienced, qualified and supervised and understand the need to assess risks to their own safety and that of participants.

2. DEFINITIONS

Key Term - Acronym	Definition
ACT	Australian College of Theology
BAT	Faculty of Bible and Theology; for the purposes of this policy only students enrolled via ACT
CCSC	Faculty of Counselling, Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care
Education	Faculty of Education
HDR	Higher Degree Research
HEP	Higher Education Provider

HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee, constituted in accordance with the National Statement, which assesses human research proposals where the risk is greater than 'low', or as otherwise required by the National Statement.
Human research	Research that involves humans through such means as surveys, interviews, personal documents and information, observation and testing
Low risk	Where the only foreseeable risk of harm is discomfort.
LREC	Low Risk Ethics Committee
MC	Morling College
National Statement	National Statement on Ethical Conduct of Human Research issued by the NHMRC
Negligible risk	Where there is no foreseeable risk of harm or discomfort; and where any foreseeable risk is no more than inconvenience.
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
Research Proposal	Outline of proposed research

3. CONTEXT STATEMENT

- 3.1 Morling College is a registered Higher Education Provider (PRV12034) of accredited courses in Education, Counselling and Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care. MC also offers courses in Theology (AQF 5-10), accredited through a third-party arrangement with the Australian College of Theology (ACT). Consequently, MC's policies will incorporate the appropriate academic requirements for each area according to the relevant governance regime.
- 3.2 The Low Risk Ethics Committee (LREC) is responsible for the governance of low-risk and negligible-risk human research projects where they are not otherwise designated by the National Statement as requiring approval by a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). It covers such projects undertaken by:
- staff in the Faculty of Bible and Theology (see 3.3 for exception)
 - students in the Faculty of Bible and Theology enrolled in courses via the ACT
 - students and staff in the Faculty of Education and
 - students and staff in the Faculty of Counselling, Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care.

This Committee is bound by the ACT College Ethics Committee Rules in relation to the Faculty of Bible and Theology (BAT) staff projects and student projects in courses enrolled via the ACT. Where there is an apparent or actual variance between the ACT rules and these Terms of Reference, the ACT rules will have precedence for BAT proposals.

- 3.3 Proposals from BAT requiring HREC approval are to be referred to the ACT Human Research Ethics Committee.
- 3.4 Proposals from Education, Counselling or Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care

requiring HREC approval are to be referred to the Human Research Ethics Committee designated by the MC Academic Board under 4.2, at no cost to the researcher/s.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 Determine whether the research proposal ought to be approved by the LREC or by the designated HREC in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.
- 4.2 For projects deemed to require HREC approval, refer applications to the relevant HREC. For projects in Bible and Theology this is the ACT HREC. For projects in Education; Counselling, Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care, this is the National-Statement-compliant HREC designated by the MC Academic Board.
- 4.3 Evaluate and provide written approval for those low-risk and negligible-risk applications for ethical clearance that comply with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, relevant legislation, codes of practice and Morling College published policies and codes.
- 4.4 Provide guidance and peer review to applicants for ethical clearance in the use of appropriate ethical procedures by providing guidance for completing ethics applications and communicating the outcome of those applications, the reasons for rejecting certain procedures.
- 4.5 Monitor research it has approved.

5. MEMBERSHIP

- 5.1 MC Director of Research (Chair)
- 5.2 Representative from the Faculty of Counselling, Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care
- 5.3 Representative from the Faculty of Education
- 5.4 Representative from the Faculty of Bible and Theology
- 5.5 A person external to Morling College
- 5.6 Secretary
- 5.7 Membership of the committee will be made public.

Member qualities

- 5.8 Thorough understanding of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research
- 5.9 Relevant experience and/or expertise
- 5.10 Undertake appropriate induction and ongoing training (See 11 below)
- 5.11 Where possible there should be equal numbers of men and women
- 5.12 Members are to subscribe to MC's [Statement of Beliefs](#), the beliefs of the [Scripture Union of New South Wales](#), or an alternative approved by the

6. TERM OF OFFICE

- 6.1 The term of office for the external member is 5 years
- 6.2 Membership may be extended for a further two consecutive 5-year periods

7. MEETINGS

- 7.1 Meetings are to be scheduled to provide timely processing of applications
- 7.2 A quorum for the meetings will 50% of membership
- 7.3 If unable to attend, the Chair will nominate a member to chair the meeting

8. RECORDS

- 8.1 The Committee with maintain a record of all proposal received and reviewed, including at least:
 - the name of the applicant
 - title of the project
 - correspondence between the applicant and the Committee
 - the Committee's decision, including any terms and conditions of approval
 - a copy of each research proposal and application for ethical approval, including information sheets, consent forms or relevant correspondence, in the form in which they were approved.
 - the proposed start and completion date for the project
 - reporting requirements e.g. annual progress and final reports
- 8.2 Records are to be maintained in such a way that facilitates reporting to ACT and to the MC Academic Board.

9. REPORTING

- 9.1 Reporting in relation to the proposals from Education, Counselling Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care is to the MC Academic Board. A summary report is to submitted to the AB annually, and/or on request.
- 9.2 In addition, in relation to Bible and Theology proposals, a report is to be submitted to the Executive Officer of the ACT HREC within two (2) business days of any decisions, using the appropriate form, and attaching all necessary documentation:
 - Approved: a copy of the approved protocol and a summary rationale detailing why it was deemed low risk, and who was in the committee that approved the protocol.
 - Withdrawn: a summary report to the HREC.

- Modified and resubmitted and approved: a report based on the relevant process of the outcomes outlined above when the decision is made on the resubmitted protocol.

10. MONITORING RESEARCH

- 10.1 Researchers are to submit to the Committee annual progress reports during the project (if the duration is more than one year) and a final report at the completion of the project.
- 10.2 Researchers are required to report any adverse events or unexpected outcomes immediately to the Committee and in the case of BAT projects, also to the ACT HREC.

11. INDUCTION AND TRAINING

- 11.1 The Committee will undergo an initial induction prior to commencement.
- 11.2 New members will be inducted prior to taking up duties.
- 11.3 Ongoing training is to be undertaken by members, ideally, on an annual basis.

12. AUDIT

- 12.1 The ACT HREC will regularly audit the Committee in relation to BAT applications.
- 12.2 The HREC designated by the Academic Board will regularly audit the Committee in relation to applications from Education: Counselling and Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care

13. HANDLING COMPLAINTS

- 13.1 Morling College requires the following paragraph must be included in the consent form or on any questionnaire if written consent is not being sought.

“This research project has been approved by the Morling College Low-Risk Ethics Committee (LREC). If you have any complaint concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted it may be given to the researcher, or if an independent person is preferred, to the Director of Research, Morling College, 122 Herring Road, Macquarie Park, NSW, 2113, or telephone (02) 9878 0201 or fax (02) 9878 2175 or email research.ethics@morling.edu.au”
- 13.2 In the event that a complaint is received, it may be resolved by the Director of Research if it is a minor or standard complaint. However, substantive complaints are to be referred to the ACT HREC for BAT projects, and to the Academic Board for projects in Education, Counselling or Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care.
- 13.3 Where complaints raise the possibility of ‘research misconduct’ they will be handled in accordance with the relevant Academic Misconduct Policy.

- 13.4 Where complaints about researchers allege serious misconduct that falls outside the definition of Academic Misconduct the relevant policies for dealing with other forms of misconduct will apply.
- 13.5 Where complaints are received about the conduct of the LREC itself in reviewing research proposals, the relevant student or staff grievance policy and procedure will apply.

14. MANAGING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 14.1 The LREC will be notified of conflicts of interest where:
- the institution has a conflict of interest in relation to the research
 - researchers have a conflict of interest
 - members of the LREC have any actual or potential conflict of interest in the research to be reviewed including
 - (a) personal involvement or participation in the research;
 - (b) financial or other interest or affiliation; or
 - (c) involvement in competing research
- 14.2 The Chair will consult with the committee on the most appropriate way to address the conflict.

15. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 15.1 Applications for ethical clearance are to be treated confidentially and stored appropriately.
- 15.2 The Chair will determine whether confidentiality agreements are to be signed.

16. RELATED DOCUMENTS AND LEGISLATION

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, NHMRC, 2007 (Updated 2018)

Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015, Standard 4 Research and Research Training

17. REFERENCES

Avondale Research Committee Terms of Reference

ACT College Ethics Committee Rules

18. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Changes made
2.01	Policy Coordinator	April 2023	April 2023	Header table updated to current version, including

				addition of keywords. Reference to UDiv removed.
2	Academic Board	11 Sept 2019	11 Sept 2019	Renamed Low-Risk Ethics Committee TOR. Extensive revisions to incorporate applications from BAT and CCSC, and to comply with ACT rules and the National Statement.
1	Academic Board	December 2015	December 2015	Human Research Ethics Policy: Education Faculty .

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