

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (REC)

Terms of Reference

Introduction

DCU is committed to ensuring the highest standards of integrity in all aspects of our research, as outlined in the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland. Compliance with the best ethical standards is a key component in achieving this.

The Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee (REC) was formally established in 2003. The REC reports to the Research Committee of the University and is supported by Research Support in the Office of the Vice-President for Research and Innovation.

The Research Ethics Committee operates in accordance with relevant national, international, and EU legislation; with the DCU Code of Good Research Practice and with the terms and conditions of research sponsors. In addition, the Committee has developed a number of Standard Operating Procedures that guide its activities and which provide further detail to researchers on the operation of the REC.

Further information on the Research Ethics Committee, including the Standard Operating Procedures, submission guidelines, relevant application forms for the ethical review of research projects and other ethics resource documents can be found in the Good Research Practice section of the [Research Support](#) webpages.

For the sake of clarity, the Research Ethics Committee is relevant to all DCU researchers, research collaborators, postgraduate students and students undertaking research projects. The term researcher is used throughout this document to mean any category of person undertaking research under the aegis of Dublin City University.

It is a condition of employment and study in DCU that research involving human participants or animal subjects must only be conducted in accordance with university policies and procedures, and according to acceptable ethical standards.

Responsibility for conducting ethical review is as follows:

- The Research Ethics Committee reviews all proposals for DCU research masters, PhD's and academic/research staff.
- All DCU undergraduate and taught masters proposals are reviewed at local level, under procedures which have been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee.

Primary Aims

The Research Ethics Committee has a number of primary aims:

1. To protect the rights and welfare of human participants and animal subjects in research studies or trials conducted by or involving DCU researchers.
2. To facilitate the conduct of ethically sound, legally compliant research at DCU in accordance with national, international and EU legislation.

3. To advise the Research Committee on the further development of ethical policies and procedures at DCU.

Functions and Responsibilities

The REC meets formally at least every two months to:

1. Prepare advisory documents for the further development of ethical policies and procedures as required, for approval by the Research Committee.
2. Develop appropriate Standard Operating Procedures for research ethics management, to include 'Rules of the Research Ethics Committee' for the operation of the REC.
3. Promote and communicate research ethics policies and procedures to DCU researchers, where possible, through electronic delivery of information via the DCU website.
4. Support institutional compliance with relevant legislation and with institutional requirements under the terms of externally sponsored research contracts.
5. Advise on appropriate training programmes for DCU researchers on issues of ethical compliance and good research practice.
6. Oversee the framework for local review of proposed undergraduate and taught masters research projects, including procedure review and approval, and annual review of activity reports from local review panels.
7. Establish, as required, sub-groups to provide advice to the REC on ethical issues. (e.g. the REC engage with the Bio Resource Advisory Group (BRAG) whose Chairperson is an REC Member).
8. Seek legal and / or other specialist expert advice with the prior approval of the Research Committee and to minimise the potential for claims of negligence in research conducted by DCU researchers.
9. Liaise with other similar bodies, such as other University, Hospital or National Research Ethics Committees, as is required for the implementation of the functions and responsibilities of the DCU Research Ethics Committee.
10. Maintain adequate records of all meetings and activities and to publish these on the DCU website as appropriate.
11. Provide an annual report to the Research Committee on its activities in the intervening period. Also, undertake analysis and evaluation of its activities as required and / or as requested by the Research Committee.
12. Participate as required in Inquiry or Investigation Committees in the event of a request made by the Chief Operating Officer during implementation of the Policy for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct.

REC Membership

REC Members will be recruited by the Research Ethics Committee, who look to ensure an appropriate balance of representation and expertise to effectively carry out the functions of the REC. REC members will usually serve for a term of at least three years. All appointments will be brought before Research Committee for approval. Research Committee may also approve serving or previous REC members for a second term of a further three years. In exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the Vice-President for Research and Innovation, the term of membership may be extended further. REC membership will not usually exceed 16 members, in addition to administrative support from the Research Support Office assigned by the Vice-President for Research and Innovation, the Chairperson, the Secretary and other temporary co-optees. Members of the REC will participate in REC sub-groups. Additional members may also be co-opted as necessary to sub-group membership.

The REC will be composed of a minimum of eleven members, whose expertise and representation may be combined, but must include:

- At least two internal peer researchers, with experience and / or professional expertise in conducting ethical reviews of research proposals for human participants and animal subjects.
- At least one peer researcher from the humanities, social sciences, education and related areas.
- At least one member with statistical expertise (note that other types of methodological expertise are a key factor when recruiting members)
- At least one member with clinical expertise
- At least two external members, with experience or professional expertise in performing ethical review of research proposals, clinical trial compliance issues and / or with relevant legal expertise.
- At least one member with legal expertise.
- At least one postgraduate researcher member.
- At least one external, layperson member.
- One nominee from the Research Support Office at DCU, assigned by the Vice-President for Research and Innovation will perform the Secretariat functions of the Committee. Additional administrative support may also be incorporated.
- One member will perform the role of Chair of Committee.
- One member will perform the role of Vice-Chair of Committee.

General Principles

Generally, the REC will seek to achieve a reasonable balance between expertise in legal issues, ethics management and review, research involving humans, research involving animals and research in different disciplines. In selecting the REC membership, the Research Ethics Committee will apply national regulations and good practice principles for the membership of Research Ethics Committees.

The REC will adopt procedures that aim to minimise the potential for conflicts of interest with and between members. In addition, the principles of efficiency, confidentiality and



transparency in decision-making will be upheld in the operation of the REC and through periodic evaluation.

The functions of the REC will not include responsibilities that supersede the responsibilities of researchers in the ethical conduct of research. The REC will not be responsible for supervising the research programmes undertaken by DCU employees or their research partners.

Administration

A nominee from the Research Support Office based at the Office of the Vice-President for Research and Innovation is responsible for facilitating the work of the Research Ethics Committee in conjunction with the REC Secretary. Additional administrative support may also be incorporated to assist with the workload of the Committee.

The DCU REC will operate in accordance with REC Standard Operating Procedures accessible to DCU staff and the public on the DCU website. A suite of relevant resource documentation, including procedures relating to the granting of ethical approval for research projects, application forms and other policies will also be made available in the Good Research Practice section of the DCU research support webpages.

Contact Information

Please review other documents and information made available on the <https://www4.dcu.ie/researchsupport/researchethics.shtml> webpage. If your query is not answered there, please contact the Office of the Vice-President for Research and Innovation Ph. 7008000, or e-mail rec@dcu.ie