



Terms of Reference of Research Ethics Committee
Department of Nursing and Health Care Studies Institute of Technology, Tralee

Purpose

The Committee's main obligation is to ensure, as far as is reasonable, that proposed research has considered issues regarding the protection of research participants and other stakeholders. These include the researcher(s), society, the Department of Nursing and Health Care Studies and future potential research participants.

Scope

The scope of the committee is:

1. To review research to be carried out by students of the Department as part of education being undertaken within the Department,
2. To review research being carried out by members of the Department as part of their Departmental duties,
3. To review research to be carried out on staff or students of the Department,

It should be noted that the Committee does not grant access to potential research environments or participants.

Committee membership and meetings

1. Composition of the Committee aims to reflect diversity within the academic institution and includes representative from the service side. The Research Ethics Committee shall have a minimum membership of Ten. Membership includes:
 - a. Head of Department
 - b. Three members of the department teaching staff
 - c. One member of the institute teaching staff from outside the department
 - d. Representative from the Nursing, Health and Social Care Research Unit
 - e. Director of Kerry / Bantry Centre for Nurse Education
 - f. Director of Nursing
 - g. Clinical practice representative currently engaged in clinical practice
 - h. Head of Department nominee with expertise and experience in Healthcare Research Ethics.

Note: Outside expertise will be sought in the event it is deemed appropriate for the workings of the Committee.

2. Members are appointed for a 2-year term and are eligible for reappointment.
3. Any member, or previous member, who has served on the committee for a period of one academic year, is eligible for the position of Chair excluding the HOD. The chairperson is appointed for a 2-year term and is eligible for reappointment.
4. Meetings are convened on a regular basis. The Committee will meet on a monthly basis from September to June inclusive in each academic year, unless circumstances require a change to this schedule. If there are no issues to discuss a scheduled meeting may be cancelled.

5. The quorum for a meeting of the Research Ethics Committee shall be 40%. A meeting of the Research Ethics Committee may not take place in the absence of a quorum.
6. Members of the Research Ethics Committee who are aware of their unavailability to attend a specific meeting should notify the chair at the earliest opportunity following receipt of notification of the meeting. In this way a meeting for which it is known that a quorum will not be available may be postponed without inconvenience to those members who are able to attend. The membership of an individual, who fails to attend three consecutive meetings, without volunteering in writing a reasonable explanation, shall automatically lapse. Such member shall be informed by the chairperson of the lapse of his/her membership and the Committee shall make arrangements for the appointment of a replacement member.
7. Members of the Committee undertake to make themselves conversant with ethical issues and regulations in respect of research.
8. Members shall at all times respect the confidentiality of the proceedings of the Research Ethics Committee.

Functions

1. The Committee will promote a responsible research ethics culture within the Department of Nursing and Health care studies and, where appropriate, within the wider institute/health care service provider partnership.
2. The Committee will maintain an effective process for the consideration of ethical research proposals. This process will ensure timely, transparent and defensible procedures for:
 - a. Receiving applications,
 - b. Reviewing applications:
 - i. For expedited consideration by the Chairperson and Head of Department,
 - ii. For committee consideration,
 - c. Making decisions regarding the suitability of the proposal for approval and
 - d. Providing feedback to applicants.
3. The Committee will maintain accurate records of ongoing committee activity and provide an annual report.
4. The committee will review their Terms of Reference on an annual basis.

Addendum 1: Operational matters

1. The Head of Department, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Research Ethics Committee, reviews potential research activity within the Department to determine if it raises concerns of an ethical nature and subsequent referral to the Research Ethics Committee. This does not include local evaluation process. Department staff have a right to evaluate their own areas of teaching responsibility. Approval, in this instance, is only required if the findings are to be made available outside of the department in the form of publications, conference papers etc.
2. Any conflict of interest, regarding proposals for review, must be declared at the outset of the meeting. The committee will then decide on the appropriate level of involvement of the member in the decision making process. This may include non-participation in discussion or voting, or absence from the meeting while that research proposal is being considered.

Note: It is usual practice that if the member is a named researcher in the proposal that the member would not be present while the proposal is under consideration.

3. Proposals will be reviewed in accordance with the Committee Review Checklist and current best practice.
4. The following decisions may be made:
 - a. Full approval,
 - b. Approval with recommendations,
 - c. Conditional approval subject to ratification by chairperson,
 - d. Approval not granted but invited to resubmit or
 - e. Rejection
5. Applicants will be notified of the Committee's decision within five working days of the meeting. Communication will be channelled via the named applicant *only*, unless another researcher has been designated as contact person in the application form.
6. Ethical Approval is granted subject to the researcher(s) informing the Committee of:
 - a. any potential difficulties that may arise in relation to ethical issues in a prompt manner,
 - b. any change to the research that may give rise to issues of ethical concern.
 - c. where there are potential difficulties or where substantive changes may give rise to concerns, re-approval from the Ethics Committee may be required
7. The researcher(s) may be required to make themselves available to the Research Ethics Committee in order to explain the proposal and to answer questions of the Research Ethics Committee.