Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

Frequently Asked Questions

Information for applicants (Deputy Members)

What is the DHW HREC?

The South Australian Department for Health and Wellbeing’s (DHW) Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) is one of four in the South Australian public health sector and provides ethical assessment of research proposals conducted by SA Health or external researchers seeking access to SA Health participants (data, staff or clients).

The HREC conducts itself in accordance with the NHMRC *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* and the DHW HREC *Terms of Reference and Operational Guidelines*.

Will I receive training?

You will receive an induction pack with relevant information to get you started.

Throughout your tenure, you will be given the opportunity to attend conferences and workshops relevant to the work and responsibilities of the HREC. Reasonable expenses for these activities will be covered by DHW.

Will I be paid?

Members of the HRECs are not remunerated (with the exception of the Chair and community lay members) but may reimburse legitimate expenses incurred in attending meetings (i.e. parking/transport – refer below).

What is the duration of membership?

Members and deputy members are appointed for a term of two (2) years at a time.

When are the meetings held?

Meetings are scheduled monthly on a Thursday from 4pm to 6pm at DHW, located at the CitiCentre Building, 11 Hindmarsh Square, Adelaide.

You will initially attend three (3) meetings to ensure you a familiar with how the committee functions. Thereafter you will only attend as a deputy in place of the full member as required.

You will however be required to participate in sub-committee reviews which usually occur via email. Generally, at least one sub-committee review is allocated per month.

How do I receive the papers?

The papers will be stored online using a free software program ‘Drop Box’. You will need to have access to a PC, laptop or tablet device to access the papers through Drop Box and be comfortable using electronic devices for this purpose.

You can bring your device with you to the meeting to allow you to access all the documents as they are being discussed.
What if I don’t have a PC, laptop or tablet?
If required, the DHW can provide you with a loan Apple iPad to access papers and to bring to meetings. The iPad will be owned by SA Health, and will need to be returned at the end of your membership.

Any iPad provided by DHW must be used in accordance with the SA Health iPad Management Policy Directive.

What is the commitment required?
Full HREC meetings run for approximately two (2) hours per month, with a requirement of an additional two (2) hours pre-reading.

HREC sub-committee groups work together to review low or negligible risk applications out of session. The sub-committees generally correspond via email but may occasionally be required to meet face-to-face.

Do I need to speak at the HREC meeting?
For the full HREC meeting, you may sometimes be asked to be the lead reviewer for a new project application, or project amendment.

If you have been assigned as a lead reviewer, you will be asked to provide a brief verbal report at the meeting including a summary of the project, and inform the committee of any issues you have identified. The HREC has guidelines to assist you with your review.

Regardless of whether you are assigned as a lead reviewer, it is expected you would have reviewed all of the papers for the meeting, and you are encouraged to comment on all applications.

What if I can’t make a HREC meeting?
Teleconferencing is available if you will have difficulty physically attending a meeting. It is preferred that you attend in person wherever possible.

The HREC operates on strict quorum requirements in accordance with the NHMRC National Statement. If you are unable to attend as proxy, adequate notice must be given so that Executive Officer can ensure that the quorum requirement is met.

Are travel expenses covered?
If you prefer to use your own transport, a pre-paid park may be requested. A minimum of two (2) days’ notice is required when requesting a pre-booked park. Requests are to be made to the Executive Officer.

You can also access the building using nearby public transport. Public transport fares to and from the meeting will be covered.

What is the sub-committee commitment?
You may be asked to review one to two low or negligible risk ethics applications, or project amendments per month, outside of the full HREC meetings.

If you have been assigned as a reviewer on a sub-committee, you will be emailed the documentation via Drop Box, and be asked to review the application, along with other sub-committee members, and provide comments within one (1) week of receiving the documents.
For more information

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