



UK | DUBAI | MALAYSIA

University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Constitution and Purpose

- 1.1 The University Committee for Research and Innovation (UCRI) is responsible on behalf of the Senate for research governance and standards including research ethics and for oversight of the development of the research skills of Staff and Students undertaking research.
- 1.2 UCRI has established the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) as one of its sub-committees to maintain oversight of ethical matters in relation to the University's research and innovation activities.
- 1.3 The Animal Welfare Ethical Review Board (AWERB) has oversight of ethical matter in relation to research involving animal experimentation.

2. Remit

- 2.1 The primary remit of UREC is to have oversight ethical matters in relation to the University's research and innovation activities. This includes the responsibility to:
 - a) to provide institutional-level leadership on ethical matters arising out of research, innovation, and related institutional activities.
 - b) to recommend policies and procedures for the University in respect of research ethics.
 - c) to maintain an oversight of research ethics training across the University.
 - d) to consider and approve (as appropriate) research proposals submitted by Schools – see Section 4a.
 - e) to advise the UCRI on matters related to research ethics.
 - f) to receive reports from School Research Ethics committees/representatives where necessary.
 - g) to have oversight of the application of School policies and procedures.
- 2.2 Research and Innovation includes:
 - a) research activities of academic Staff, Students registered for research degrees, Students undertaking research projects at any level of study, enterprise activities, business engagement and public engagement.
 - b) research may cover sensitive subjects which might include (but is not limited to): race, sexuality, politics, drugs and alcohol, faith/religion/belief systems.
 - c) research involving animals and other living subjects only where this is not regulated by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA).

- d) Research ethics apply principally to research involving human participants involving human participants, data or tissue carried out by Staff or Students whether on the premises of the University or member of the Heriot-Watt Group or at any other location.

The UCRI delegates authority to the UREC to:

2.3

- a) develop and implement the University Research Ethics Policy and associated procedures, including:
- setting standards for School responsibilities in relation to these policies and procedures;
 - ensuring the effective and consistent adoption of the University Research Ethics Policy and associated procedures in Schools and Institutes through regular reports and audits;
 - considering research proposals from Schools that:
 - do not receive unanimous approval or agreement within School/Institute ethical review processes.
 - require consideration at University level.
- b) develop a University-wide approach to research ethics training by:
- ensuring good practice across Schools and Institutes;
 - identifying and encouraging uptake of appropriate professional development provision for Staff and Students in relation to research ethics.
- c) ensure procedures and guidance for the use of security-sensitive research material are implemented for the protection of researchers - this will include guidance for the storage and circulation of this material.
- d) maintain oversight of developments in research ethics policy by:
- monitoring, disseminating and reporting on institutional, national or international developments in research ethics policies from, for example, UKRI, SFC, EU;
 - responding (where appropriate) to research ethics policy developments and requests and / or make recommendations to the UCRI
- e) provide advice on matters referred by the UCRI which are related to the Committee's purpose.
- f) ensure effective communication of its business with other relevant groups.
- g) create short-life working groups (if necessary) to fulfil the responsibilities of the Committee:
- consider reports from short-life working groups.
 - inform the UCRI of the creation, on-going work and disbanding of any working groups.

3. Composition and Membership

3.1 The Committee shall comprise:

- a) the Chair of the Committee
- b) the Vice Chair of the Committee

- c) Deputy Principal (Research and Impact)
- d) a representative of Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB), selected by the chair of that committee
- e) Research Ethics Representatives from Schools (nominated by Director of Research in consultation with Heads of School)
- f) Representative from the Dubai campus
- g) Representative from the Malaysia campus
- h) Research Ethics Representatives from the Global Research Institutes (nominated by Director/CEO)
- i) Representative of Research Engagement Directorate (nominated by Director)

4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 4.1 The Committee will exercise its responsibility, as far as possible, to promote diversity of representation within its membership and the membership of any working group or committee established by the Committee. The Committee will also act to promote equality of opportunity for all colleagues who are involved in carrying out the business of the Committee.

5. Quorum

- 5.1 The quorum necessary to transact business is three members, who are members of staff, representing at least three Schools and at least one Member of the UCRI.
- 5.2 Members who are participating in a meeting by means of audio-visual conferencing or other means enabling them to communicate with all members present at the meeting simultaneously shall be deemed to be present at the meeting and to count towards the quorum.

6. Chair

- 6.1 The Chair of the Committee, as nominated by the Deputy Principal (Research and Impact) shall be the Associate Professor (EPS)
- 6.2 The Vice-Chair of the UREC, is drawn from amongst the Committee Members and approved by the Deputy Principal (Research and Impact).
- 6.3 In the absence of the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Committee, members shall elect from among the members of the Committee/ who are present at the meeting a person to act as Chair for the meeting or until such time that the Chair of the Committee arrives.

7. Frequency of Meetings

- 7.1 The Committee usually meets at least two times a year.

- 7.2 Additional meetings may be held in order to meet business requirements at the request of the Chair of the Committee.

8. Attendance at Meetings

- 8.1 The following officers are expected to be in attendance at meetings:
- a) Clerk
 - b) University Secretary
 - c) Research Computing Support Manager
- 8.2 Other officers and members of the University community may be asked to attend when appropriate, with the agreement of the Chair.
- 8.4 Changes to arrangements, such as cancellation, rescheduling or additional meetings will be notified to members by the Clerk as soon as possible, and normally within not less than five working days of the scheduled meeting date.

9. Reserved Business

- 9.1 There may be occasions when the Committee's business is designated reserved (confidential).
- 9.2 The record of matters which the Chair and the Committee are satisfied should be dealt with on a reserved basis will be identified within the minutes.
- 9.3 The Committee maintains a record of attendance at each of its meetings and reports this information in accordance with the Attendance Policy for Senators and Committee Members.

10. Conflict of Interest

- 10.1 Where it is identified that a member of the Committee has a conflict of interest with respect to a matter, the Chair may request that the member in question withdraw from participation in relevant business. Depending on the nature of the business, this may allow for participation in discussions without taking part in decision making or may require complete non-participation and/or withdrawal from that part of the meeting.
- 10.2 All instances of identified conflicts of interest shall be recorded in the minutes.

11. Reporting Procedures

- 11.1 The Committee will submit a report after each meeting to the University Committee for Research Innovation (UCRI), summarising activities, discussions and decisions.
- 11.2 The Chair will report to any matters which the Committee considers ought to be brought to the attention of the Senate and University Executive and on any matters requiring the approval of the Senate and University Executive. These will be highlighted in the Committee's report.
- 11.3 The Committee's records (agenda, papers, minutes) are included in the University's Freedom of Information Publication Scheme. Information will be readily accessible on request to members of the public under the

terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act (FOI(S)A) with the exception of information which is deemed to be covered by a specific exemption under the Act.

- 11.4 Minutes and reports of the Committee will denote those areas of reported business which are deemed to fall within the designation of information which is 'exempt' under the FOI(S)A.

12. Forward Planning

- 12.1 The Committee will maintain a forward agenda plan of its business.
- 12.2 The Committee will review its Terms of Reference and submit recommendations on these to UCRI annually for approval.
- 12.3 The Committee will set its meeting dates one year in advance, aligned to the schedule of meetings of the Senate.
- 12.4 As part of its annual year-end self-assessment, the Committee reviews its performance in fulfilling its remit and considers possible modifications to its Terms of Reference. This also gives it opportunity to review the Composition (including the gender balance of its membership, and the opportunity to receive contributions from the University's different campuses) and to submit recommendations as appropriate to the Senate.

13. Supporting Information

Groups feeding into the Committee

- 13.1 The Animal Welfare Ethical Review Board (AWERB)

Effectiveness and lifespan

- 13.2 **For Senate Committees:**

This is an established Committee of the Senate and its lifespan is ongoing.

An annual year end self-assessment is conducted, with a formal review of effectiveness every five years.

Actions that may be taken by the Committee

- 13.3
- Note, Receive, Consider, Endorse, Approve, Recommend, Reject.

Minuting style

- 13.4 Traditional/formal minutes in accordance with internal University guidance.

Resources

Clerk

Mr Nathan Bircham, Graduate Apprentice

Administrative support

N/A

Version	Amendments	Approved by
V1		
V2	The link between UREC and the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) is referenced. Minor amendments to reflect changes in Committee membership. Details transferred to the new University template.	UCRI – November 2021
V3	Names of members updated. Global Director of GALS was removed and University Secretary's attendance amended to replicate UCRI ToR	UCRI – 14 November 2022
V4	Names of members updated. Meeting frequency was changed to twice a year. Error corrected in 3.3, Members are appointed to the Committee by the Senate. Details transferred to new University template	UCRI – 2024 17 October 2024