

The University of Queensland

Ethics Advisory Group

Terms of Reference

January 2025

Version 3.0

1. Purpose and Scope

The University of Queensland (UQ or the University) **Ethics Advisory Group** provides a consultative resource for review of ethical matters that arise from activities of the University, its staff and students that are not related to human research ethics and the approval of research projects. The group has a focus on provision of advice related to:

- A. The School of Anatomy and its operations.¹
- B. The use of UQ's corporate data for non-research purposes.
- C. Non-research consultancy activities.
- D. Quality assurance and evaluation activities.
- E. Other matters of ethics concern to the University.

While not considering research-related matters, the Ethics Advisory Group may refer to the *National Statement on the Ethical Conduct of Human Research* and other relevant guidelines and Codes as reference for its deliberations.

2. Functions

The functions of the **Ethics Advisory Group** are to:

- i. Provide ethics advice to, and oversight of, the UQ School of Anatomy.
- ii. Support and enhance the decision-making processes of the University with respect to complex ethics issues that are not related to research ethics.
- iii. Help resolve ethics conflicts and consider ethics questions.
- iv. Support staff by providing opinion and advice on an ethically defensible process for arriving at an ethically justifiable decision.
- v. Review policies or standard operating procedures that strengthen the capacity of the University to provide care or service grounded in the values, mission and vision of the University.
- vi. Recommend guidelines for specific ethics issues that arise in a non-research context. The group may identify and make recommendations related to systems-level factors that induce or exacerbate ethics problems and/or impede their resolution.
- vii. Promote a positive ethics culture and ethical leadership at UQ through its operations.

3. Accountability

- i. The Ethics Advisory Group is directly accountable to the Provost.
- ii. The Ethics Advisory Group will undertake its reviews in a timely and efficient manner and monitor and evaluate its performance.
- iii. The Ethics Advisory Group provides an annual report to the Senate Risk and Audit Committee on its operations. Matters of significant concern are brought to the attention of

¹ The School of Anatomy means the authorised anatomy operations under the Transplantation and Anatomy Act 1979 (Qld). It is the legislative terminology used by the government for anatomy operations and is not to be confused with academic Schools. At UQ, the School of Biomedical Sciences (SBMS) operates UQ's authorised School of Anatomy to include a Body Donor Program (BDP), Gross Anatomy Facility (GAF), and any authorised alternate sites.

the Provost in a timely manner.

4. Role of the Chairperson

- i. The Chairperson is responsible for the conduct of the Ethics Advisory Group business and for ensuring that the group reaches decisions on all matters. The Chairperson is appointed by the Provost.
- ii. A Deputy Chairperson may be appointed, and act where the Chairperson is unavailable. The Deputy Chairperson will be identified by the Chairperson.
- iii. Matters deemed as not requiring review by the full group may be reviewed by the Chairperson, who may elect to seek input from one or more group members.
- iv. The UQ Research Ethics and Integrity office will assist the Chairperson in maintaining records related to group operations.

5. Membership

Composition

- i. The Ethics Advisory Group will have a minimum of four members (including the Chair), that collectively demonstrate:
 - Experience in reflecting on and analysing ethical decision-making (e.g., through membership of a human research ethics group or similar body).
 - Experience in and/or knowledge of the professional care, counselling, pastoral care or treatment of people.
 - Experience in a medical or allied-health related field.
 - Knowledge of human data and its use in corporate settings.
- ii. Efforts will be made to identify members that reflect the diversity of the UQ community and to maintain gender balance.
- iii. At least one-third of group members (excluding the Chair) should be external to the University.
- iv. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement), President Academic Board and Director Research Ethics and Integrity, or their nominees, will be additional ex-officio members.

Appointments

- v. Group members are appointed by the Chairperson:
 - Members are appointed for a period of up to three years and may serve an additional term.
 - Members will be asked to sign a statement undertaking to keep confidential all matters of which the member becomes aware during the course of their work on the group.
 - Members will be asked to declare any conflicts of interest that exist or may arise during their tenure on the group.
 - Members are expected to act in accordance with these Terms of Reference and any conditions contained in their offer of appointment.

- Termination of an appointment is subject to approval by the Provost. Such approval is not required in cases where a membership lapses, as described in the offer of appointment.

6. Conduct of Business

- i. The Ethics Advisory Group receives administrative support from the Research Ethics and Integrity office.
- ii. The Ethics Advisory Group is not an approval body. In providing advice on a matter the group:
 - Allows members a reasonable opportunity to express relevant views on the matter under consideration.
 - Endeavours to reach consensus on a decision concerning the ethical acceptability of the matter.
- iii. Determinations and the reasons for the determination are recorded. Particular views are not attributed to individuals in records or minutes, except in circumstances where a member seeks to have their opinions or objections recorded.
- iv. In providing advice the group will comment on the ethical acceptability of the matter and any areas of concern and/or uncertainty. Where appropriate, advice will be given as to any further considerations that could be made to lessen any ethical concerns. The group shall provide a rationale for their judgement.

Quorum

- v. The group will endeavour to provide advice based on feedback from the minimum membership, as per clause 5(i). Where a minimum membership cannot be achieved, such as where a member has a conflict of interest in a matter under consideration, suitable expertise may be sought to inform the deliberations of non-conflicted members.
- vi. Where a matter is considered by the Chair only (as per clause 4 iii), this will be detailed in the provision of advice.

Use of expert opinion

- vii. The Ethics Advisory Group is free to consult with any person it considers qualified to advise on a particular matter that is before it. This includes inviting input from members or groups of the UQ community on matters that may directly impact them. Such individuals must not have a conflict of interest and an undertaking of confidentiality must be given.
- viii. The Research Ethics and Integrity office will assist with establishment of a confidentiality agreement prior to any information and documentation being provided to the expert.
- ix. The Ethics Advisory Group considers the advice of the expert reviewer and makes an independent decision on the ethical acceptability of the matter being discussed. The advice is recorded in the records related to the matter.