

## Process for UREC Ethics Application

If the applicant is a postgraduate student their research proposal is approved by their pathway's proposals network. Confirmation of proposal approval is sent to the ethics secretary pending ethics application. Ethics applications that do not have prior research proposal approval in place will not be accepted for review. Proposal approval/confirmation advice must be received in writing and signed by the applicable authority. Note that if the applicant is an undergraduate student then proposal approval will not apply. Therefore, to ensure rigor, it is the student's supervisor/course coordinator who acts as the principal applicant throughout the full duration UREC review.

The researcher (or if the applicant is a student, the researchers supervisor) submits the application to the UREC secretary by the due deadline. Unitec staff researchers may submit ethics applications directly to the secretary. One complete eCopy and one complete hard copy which is fully signed by all parties are normally submitted, however, complete and fully signed e-copies of applications can also be accepted.

Once received, the application is checked by the secretary to ensure it is complete with all support documents included, fully signed and formatted clearly. If all is order, the application is then processed and uploaded to a secure location on Unitec's Moodle network. Application number advice is then sent to the applicant and their supervisor for reference use.

Once applications have been processed, readers (three per application, a Primary Reader (PR) and two Secondary Readers and with the exception of Form B applications which have only one reader) are assigned to each application. Application review then commences online via a secure UREC platform within Unitec's Moodle network.

It is the role of the Primary Reader (PR) to lead an application through the review process. Upon receipt of an invitation to review a new application, the application is read and commented on by all three readers. The PR collates these comments and will then (if applicable) proceed to contact the applicant (cc their supervisor if required) with requests for minor application amendments to be made. Note that this step in the application process is at the discretion of the PR, in line with the quality of the application and significance of the amendments required.

The application will then progress to the next applicable meeting of UREC, where it will be presented to the committee by the PR and discussed accordingly. Note that all new Form A and C applications must be presented to the committee at an official meeting of UREC before any decisions about application status can be made (with the exception of Form B which are able to be approved at any time). A decision about the status of the application is then raised by the PR and noted by the committee (see attached documentation for more information about categories of UREC decisions).

Following the meeting (depending on the application status) a request from the PR may be sent to the applicant asking for further amendments to be made. Once these amendments have been completed by the applicant to the satisfaction of the PR, the application may then be approved by the PR under delegated authority from UREC in between meetings, allowing the applicant to begin their research. If approval takes place between UREC meetings, the applicant will be advised of approval by the Primary Reader via email and the application officially ratified at the next applicable UREC meeting. For applications approved or ratified at meetings, the applicant will be sent official UREC approval advice from the UREC secretary the day following the committee meeting.

Once approved, both eCopy and hard copy applications are filed appropriately and securely. This concludes the review process.

Applications are checked for the following upon receipt each month:

- Signed confirmation of proposal approval received
- Application fully signed by all parties
- Support documents in place
- Significant errors such as sections missing or incomplete within the application
- Tidy and clear format and language
- Correct application form submitted

Applications must be clear and of adequate research design, meet deadline requirements and be written in language that can be easily read and interpreted by reviewers and free from jargon. Application formatting must not be altered and re-formatted documents will be sent back to applicants via their supervisor with a request for amendment.

### **Categories of Decisions Made at UREC Meetings**

**There are four main categories of decision made at UREC meetings:**

#### **Approved**

An application may be **approved** when it is first presented to a meeting. Applications are set out in the agenda under their applicable application category (Form A, B or C).

#### **To Be Ratified**

The decision **to be ratified** will be made when an application requires minor to moderate amendments. The Primary Reader (PR) is given the authority to approve the application between meetings under delegated authority from UREC. The same application may appear on the UREC agenda for several months with the decision **to be ratified** until the applicant has completed all requirements to the satisfaction of the Primary Reader. Once the PR is happy with the application, this may then be **ratified** at the next applicable meeting of UREC.

#### **On hold**

Applications may be placed on hold if a significant amount of work is required to bring them up to standard. If an application is placed on hold it cannot be approved between meetings and must be presented and discussed at an official meeting of UREC before the **on hold** status can be lifted to the status of **to be ratified**.

#### **Declined**

Applications considered to be of poor and inadequate design and of an extreme low standard may be **declined** by the committee. In this instance a letter will be sent to the applicant and their supervisor from the UREC Secretary on behalf of the committee, advising that the application has been declined. Note that the applicants are invited to re-submit applications at any time providing the required standard for review is met.

#### **Ratified**

An application is **ratified** at a full meeting after the applicant has met all requirements to the satisfaction of the Primary Reader (PR). Usually the Primary Reader has approved the project between meetings.

The decision ***ratified*** applies to applications which have been presented to the Committee at an earlier meeting but were not approved.

**There is one further category of decision made at UREC meetings:**

**Noted**

This type of decision is made for Form B applications which have previously been approved by one internal reader. Note that Form B applications may be approved by the Primary Reader (PR) at any time and do not need to be presented to the committee at a meeting of UREC in order for approval to be granted.