



<b>PROCEDURE NUMBER</b>	<b>PDIIIE007</b>	
<b>PROCEDURE NAME</b>	<b>IIE Research Ethics Committee Terms of Reference</b>	
<b>VERSION</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>POLICY APPROVAL</b>	<b>Date of Approval</b>	<b>Date of Implementation</b>
<b>DATES AMENDED</b>		
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<b>RELATED POLICIES</b>		
<b>POLICY ANNEXURES</b>		
<b>RELATED PROCEDURES AND HANDBOOKS</b>		

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## 1 PREAMBLE

- (1) The IIE Research Ethics Committee (REC) is constituted as a permanent governance structure of The Independent Institute of Education (The IIE) and functions within the institutional academic governance and quality assurance framework. The IIE REC derives authority from Senate, through the Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee, and is a standing body responsible for ensuring ethical and lawful research oversight.
- (2) These Terms of Reference serve as a formal legal and institutional governance instrument and informs internal and external stakeholders of the IIE REC's mandate, powers, duties, and accountability in terms of:
  - a) The Higher Education Act and institutional governance structures,
  - b) The National Health Act and National Health Research Ethics Council standards, and
  - c) The National Department of Health Ethics in Health Research Guidelines
- (3) The Committee exercises independent judgment and performs its duties free from institutional, commercial, or political influence. Its permanent status ensures continuity of ethical governance, institutional memory, and compliance with national research ethics obligations.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

- (1) The IIE establishes the REC to ensure ethical, legally compliant, and socially responsible conduct of all research involving human participants, animal subjects, and the environment. The REC upholds principles of respect for persons, beneficence, justice, and integrity as reflected in the Belmont Report and the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity.
- (2) The IIE REC's Terms of Reference are aligned with the Research and Postgraduate Studies Policy and Procedures (IIE007) as well as with the National Health Act 61 of 2003 and the National Department of Health's 'Ethics in Health Research' Guidelines (NDoH 2024). The National Health Act 61 of 2003 per section 73 requires institutions to establish RECs which register with the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) and requires all 'health research' involving human participants to undergo prior ethics review by a registered research ethics committee. Committees are registered by the NHREC after an assessment of their eligibility and compliance with the relevant legal and ethics framework. Although the NHREC governs all 'health research' the IIE REC extends its oversight to all IIE-affiliated research that involves human participants.

### **3 PURPOSE**

- (1) The purpose of the IIE REC is to safeguard the welfare, rights, dignity, and safety of research participants and to ensure that all research conducted under the auspices of The IIE is responsible and meets ethical and regulatory standards.

### **4 AUTHORITY**

- (1) The REC is established as a standing sub-committee of the Research & Postgraduate Studies Committee and operates under delegated authority of Senate.
- (2) The IIE REC exercises independent ethical judgment without institutional interference.
- (3) The IIE REC is registered with the NHREC in accordance with the National Health Act 61 of 2003.
- (4) Administrative support is managed by the Research Office of the IIE Academic Centre of Excellence and supported by the Research Administrators at the Brands.

### **5 MANDATE**

- (1) The IIE REC is mandated to fulfil its functions in accordance with the National Health Act 61 of 2003 as outlined in the NDoH 2024.
- (2) It reports annually to the NHREC and to the IIE Research and Postgraduate Committee which in turn reports to Senate.
- (3) The IIE REC is accountable to Senate and must:
  - a) Provide written reports to Senate periodically via the Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee,
  - b) Maintain accurate records for audit and regulatory review,
  - c) Provide mechanisms for reporting ethical breaches or research misconduct,
  - d) Respond to complaints and allegations regarding ethical non-compliance, and
  - e) Make decisions transparently and provide written reasons for outcomes.
- (4) The IIE REC will establish formal mechanisms for reporting concerns or violations, including confidential channels for whistleblowing and misconduct reporting. All actions and decisions must align with institutional policies, applicable legislation, and national ethical standards.

- (5) The IIE REC shall ensure that mechanisms exist for the confidential reporting, investigation, and resolution of ethical breaches and research misconduct. Operational processes for reporting, investigation, and management are outlined in the institutional SOPs and related governance instruments.

## 6 SCOPE

- (1) The IIE REC is responsible for ethical oversight of all research involving human and animal participants conducted under the auspices of The IIE, including by students, staff, adjuncts, contracted researchers, and external investigators seeking access to IIE data, participants, facilities, or systems.
- (2) No non-affiliated research activity based on IIE staff, students and artifacts may commence without IIE REC approval. External researchers must comply with the same standards, and the IIE REC may require evidence of external ethics approval in addition to undertaking its own independent review.
- (3) Ethical clearance is not required for non-research but rather business / operational requirement surveys or gathering of information provided the research will not be disseminated or published further than the internal structures of the business.
- (4) The IIE REC reviews and grants ethical clearance for:
- a) Research conducted by IIE staff and students involving human participants, animals, or the environment,
  - b) External research involving IIE students, staff, systems, data, or premises,
  - c) Amendments to approved protocols that materially alter methodology, sampling, or ethical risk, and
  - d) Appeals relating to ethics decisions, heard by members not involved in the original review.
- (5) The IIE REC will ensure appropriate reporting occurs to fulfil the oversight obligation and monitoring of welfare interests of participants.
- (6) The IIE REC will establish IIE reviewer procedures in the Standard Operating Procedures Document (SOP) that will govern how reviews are classified and how they are dealt with between meetings.
- (7) The IIE REC may establish subcommittees to deal with specific aspects of the work of the IIE REC, e.g. undergraduate student ethics review applications. The subcommittees will be authorised to approve the applications and to report to the full committee for noting.
- (8) The SOP describes how the subcommittee is constituted and how it does its work.

- (9) The IIEREC will establish and make accessible a Code of Conduct for its members that describes what is expected of members, a Confidentiality Agreement and a Conflict of Interest Declaration.
- (10) The IIE REC will establish and make accessible a transparent and inclusive recruitment and appointment process for members of the REC that includes paying attention to achieving demographic representivity and succession planning.
- (11) The IIE REC will establish and make accessible SOP that systematically describe all the processes and procedures involved in its work including the institutional arrangements and reporting obligations.
- (12) The IIE REC will ensure that the SOPs are systematically reviewed every three to four years or more frequently as necessitated by research ethics changes.
- (13) The IIE REC will establish and make accessible appropriate documentation, including application forms, guidance documents, review guidance, information and consent document guidance as well as report templates amongst others to facilitate appropriate processing of applications and to assist researchers to comply with requirements.

## **7 RESEARCHER OBLIGATIONS**

- (1) Ethical clearance is required prior to any data collection.
- (2) No study may proceed without a formal clearance letter issued by The IIE REC.
- (3) External clearance does not substitute IIE REC approval where research involves The IIE.

## **8 MEMBERSHIP**

- (1) The IIE REC shall consist of members appointed to ensure competence, independence, and regulatory compliance. Composition shall reflect multidisciplinary expertise and sufficient independence to enable objective ethical review.
- (2) Membership must include individuals with demonstrated expertise in:
  - a) Research ethics and research governance.
  - b) Research methodology and disciplinary fields relevant to the applications under review,
  - c) Legal and regulatory frameworks relating to human and animal research, constitutional principles, and data protection,
  - d) At least one external member to ensure independence, accountability, and public trust, and

- e) A lay/community representative to ensure participant-centered and societal interests.
- (3) Membership must reflect gender diversity and representation capable of identifying ethical issues affecting vulnerable or marginalised groups.
- (4) All members must uphold independence, confidentiality, and declare conflicts of interest.
- (5) The Chair shall be an experienced academic or equivalent with ethics expertise.
- (6) Members are appointed for terms determined by Senate and may serve renewable terms subject to performance and institutional requirements.

## **9 MEETINGS AND QUORUM**

- (1) The REC convenes monthly or more frequently if required.
- (2) Quorum includes at minimum:
  - a) One external member
  - b) One legal or ethics expert
  - c) One research methodology expert
  - d) One lay/community representative

## **10 DECISION-MAKING**

- (1) Decisions are reached by consensus or simple majority vote where necessary and communicated formally in writing.

## **11 CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

- (1) IIE REC members must declare conflicts of interest and recuse themselves where appropriate.

## **12 CONFIDENTIALITY**

- (1) All proposals, discussions, and decisions remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law, ethical duty, or institutional governance.

## 13 RECORD KEEPING AND DATA RETENTION

- (1) The IIE REC maintains secure records of all submissions, decisions (including reasons for descent), and communications in accordance with legal and institutional requirements.

## 14 REVIEW OF TOR

- (1) These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed every five years or earlier if legislative or institutional changes require amendment.

## 15 SIGNATURES

Chairperson, Research Ethics Committee: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson, Research and  
Postgraduate Studies Committee: \_\_\_\_\_

Registrar: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_