Research Ethics Policy

Date approved:	05/03/2015	**Date policy will take effect:**	05/03/2015	**Date of Next Review:**	31/03/2018
Approving Authority:	Academic Council				
Responsibility	Research Office, Chair of Ethics Committee				
Consultation undertaken:	Academic Council				
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy:	Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Guidelines for the conduct of ethical research at DkIT. IACUC Terms of Reference				
Reference(s)					
Audience:	Public – accessible to anyone				
Category:	Research and Research Training				

1 Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment(s)
1	13/05/2011	Academic Council (AC:DOC:118:03:01)	• Pages 4,5 and 11
2	05/03/2015	Academic Council (AC:DOC:141:09:01)	• Section 5 Amended • Section 6 Amended

Contents

2 Purpose of Policy

1. DkIT is committed to facilitating and promoting ethical research. This policy sets out key principles for conducting research to the highest ethical standard.

3 Application & Scope

1. All DkIT staff who are involved in research. This includes staff in academic departments, research centres and administrative centres.
2. All students, postgraduate and undergraduate, who conduct research.
3. External researchers who wish to conduct research within DkIT.

4 Introduction

1. DkIT is committed to ensuring the responsible conduct of research. This encompasses both the principles of ethical research and research integrity.
2. This policy is based on the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report (The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioural Research, 1979), namely, respect for persons, beneficence and justice.
3. Researchers are expected to conduct research in accordance with these principles, in a manner that ensure dignity, respect and care for others, honesty, integrity and accountability.
4. All those engaged in research activity, at any level, have a duty to be familiar with this policy and to implement it in their research.

5 Policy Principles

The following key principles underpin the Institute's approach to conducting research and sets out clear expectations in this regard.

1. Autonomy: Participants must be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their part in the research entails and what risks, if any, may arise. Participation must be entirely voluntary, free from any coercion, duress or any other offer of inappropriate incentives. Participants must be free to withdraw their participation for any or no reason and be made aware of this right.
2. Beneficence: Research should be methodologically sound and worthwhile. Benefits should outweigh potential risks.
3. Non-maleficence: Harm must be avoided and appropriate precautions taken to mitigate risk.
4. Privacy: The confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects and the anonymity of respondents must be respected and secured.
5. Integrity: The independence of the research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit. Any aspect of the research that might call into question its independence from outside interests or any possible conflicts of interest should be declared in writing at the outset.

6 Roles and Responsibilities

The researcher has responsibility for

(a) Ensuring that the research in conducted in line with these principles, and,

(b) Ensuring that the research is subjected to appropriate ethical review and approval.

These principles generate duties on the part of the researchers:

6.1 To determine whether the research should be submitted for formal review by a Research Ethics Committee. If there is any doubt, researchers should contact the Chair of their SREC. Researchers should complete the 'Ethical Approval Not required' form and submit to their SREC.

6.1.1 The categories of research that do not require ethical approval are listed below.[1] If there is any doubt, researchers should contact the Chair of the appropriate REC. Researchers should complete the 'Ethical Approval Not required' form and submit to their SREC

- Research using exclusively secondary sources.
- Research using materials legally accessible to the public that have legal protection, e.g. record of court judgements, data archives.
- Research using materials that are publically accessible and where there is no reasonable expectation for privacy, e.g. books, published third party interviews.
- Observations of human behaviour in public where (i) those being observed have no reasonable expectation of privacy, (ii) there is no intervention on the part of the researcher nor any interaction between the researcher and those observed, and (iii) individuals are not identifiable in the results.

6.1.2 Other data gathering activities that do not require ethical approval.

Activities are exempt where data is gathered by the institute to inform, evaluate or manage its activities. However there can be overlap between programme/module evaluations and teaching and learning research. This can be clarified by asking 'What is the purpose of this activity?' (Stockley & Balkwill, 2013, p.5)[2]. If the purpose of the data collection is to inform and improve the delivery of the programme **only,** this is programme evaluation and does not require formal ethical approval, although the data should be collected in an ethical manner following the principles outlined in 6.2 below Would this also depend on how the evaluation is being conducted for

[1] Adapted from, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2010). *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Research involving human participants*. Ottawa: Interagency Secretariat on Research Ethics. Available: http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2/TCPS_2_FINAL_Web.pdf

[2] Stockley, D. & Balkwill, L-L, (2013). Raising awareness of research ethics in SoTL: The role of education developers. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning,* 4(1), Article 7.

example if you are carrying out focus groups or individual interviews as part of the evaluation would this involve ethical issues? If the purpose of the data collection is to answer a research question then it is research and requires ethical approval. Where the proposed data collection is being undertaken to satisfy the requirements of a programme of study (e.g. MA Learning and Teaching) it is research.

Data gathering that is exempt from ethical approval:

- Activities conducted purely for quality assurance purposes.
- Programme/module evaluation activities where the purpose of these is to inform delivery and the findings are for internal consumption only.
  Analyses of existing data that belongs to the institution, e.g. grades, Moodle usage data, as long as this does not seek to identify or track individual performance.

6.2 To conduct research with human participants in accordance with the principles below: Obtain Voluntary Informed Consent of participants who should understand and agree to their part without any duress. Participants should be advised why their participation is being requested, the purpose of the research, who will have access to the data, how and the findings will be reported and used and how long the data will be stored for. Normally avoid any element of subterfuge or any elements of subterfuge or deception that may arise are declared in the ethics application form.[3]

(i) Advise the participant of the right to withdraw for any or no reason, at any time prior to the submission or publication of the research.

(ii) Give detailed consideration to additional ethical issues that may arise where potential participants include those under the age of 18, Vulnerable Young People and Vulnerable Adults. The use of incentives to encourage participation must not amount to either undue influence to consent nor contain any element of duress.

(iii) Make known in writing to the participants any risks arising from the research or arising from the findings.

(iv) Recognise the participant's entitlement to confidentiality of personal information and ensure that data are stored and reported in an anonymous and confidential manner that is also compliant with Data Protection legislation. Where appropriate, warn participants that information found in the course of the research may be disclosed to the relevant authorities if it is concerned with illegality or may cause harm to participants/others.

[3] Exceptional circumstances in some fields of research, such as the study of human behaviour, require deception, concealment and covert observation. In the event that deception is unavoidable a debriefing for research participants is necessary following such studies. The research should clarify the real nature of and rationale for the research and seek to remove any misconception and should be closely examined by the REC.

6.3 Researchers using animal subjects must be aware of their responsibilities as researchers which are:

The implementation of the three Rs – Reduction, Refinement and Replacement regarding the use of animal subjects. Reduction is achieved by the requirement for statistical justification of animal numbers requested in applications submitted to the School Ethics Committee and by ensuring that only experiments that are rigorously justified are approved. In addition, there is a requirement to maximize the amount of data emerging from animal experiments by judicious experimental design. Refinement is brought about by ensuring that animal welfare is prioritised when designing experiments and by ensuring high standards of training and education of researchers and animals care staff. Replacement and uptake of alternatives to live animals in teaching and research are encouraged.

(i) Working in accordance with the protocols approved by the Institute Animal Care and Use Committee. All personnel carrying out research work on live animals, whether on the Institute premises or elsewhere, must observe these protocols Committee. These proposals must be approved by the IACUC before an application is made to a REC.

(ii) To ensure that persons carrying out regulated procedures on live vertebrate animals for teaching, for demonstration of clinical procedures, or for research, must hold a licence issued by the Department of Health and Children. Such licences will stipulate conditions in relation to experimental procedures and types and numbers of animals used.

(iii) To ensure that research on live animals may not commence until researchers have demonstrated competence in animal handling and skills necessary for performance of proposed procedures.

(iv) To ensure that regulated procedures on live animals are carried out only in designated premises which have been registered in accordance with legislative requirements.

(v) To ensure that licence holders may carry out work only at the designated premises specified on their licence and protocol.

(vi) To ensure that research involving post mortem tissue (animal or human) is ethically approved.

7 Allegations of Research Misconduct.

7.1 DkIT expects all of its researchers to adhere to the highest standards of integrity in the conduct of their research and takes allegations of research misconduct very seriously. These Guidelines for the Handling of Allegations of Ethical Misconduct in Research are intended to clarify the Institute's expectations in this regard. Research misconduct involves fabrication, falsification or plagiarism in proposing, performing or reviewing research or in reporting research results. It can also involve the conduct of unethical procedures during the course of the Research

7.2 Misconduct involving plagiarism or fabrication is dealt with using the procedures outlined in the DkIT Academic Integrity Policy.

7.3 Allegations of unethical procedures performed during the course of the research are to be investigated using the procedure outlined below:

(i) An allegation is made by a complainant, normally through the Chair of the School Ethics Committee or Chair of the Institute Ethics Committee where appropriate.

(ii) Written evidence should be provided by the complainant in support of the allegation.

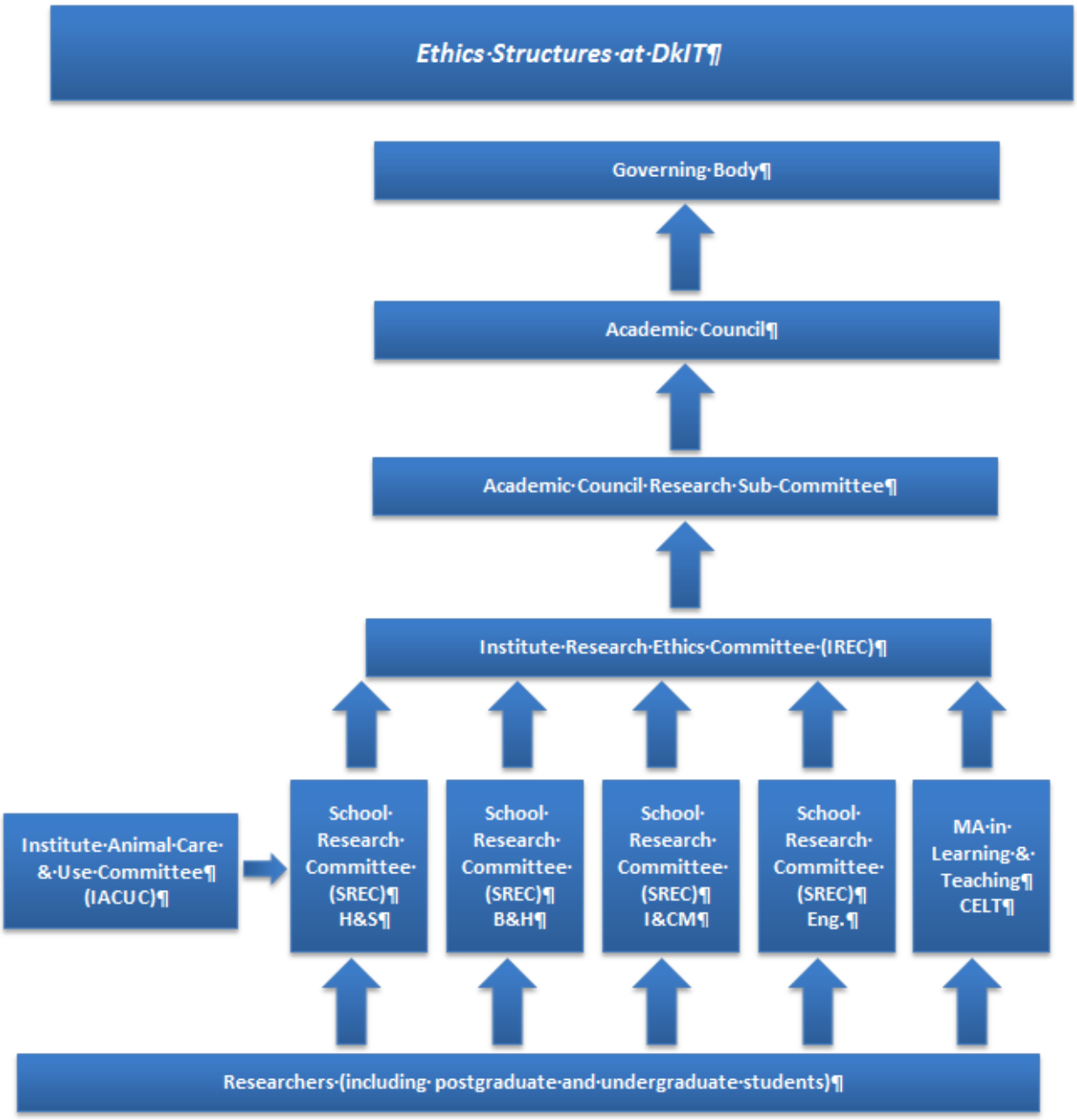
(iii) The researcher will be informed in writing that an allegation has been made.

(iv) The relevant School Ethics Committee or Institute Ethics Committee meets to examine the evidence. If necessary, the relevant REC will interview, separately, all relevant parties.

(v) In carrying out their investigation, the Ethics Committee will ensure that the person(s) against whom the allegation is made will have the opportunity to present his/her side of the case and to be represented by an appropriate person of their choice. Any investigation will be conducted in accordance with the agreed Institute procedures.

8 Research Ethics Structures at DkIT.

Figure 1 illustrates the research ethics structures at DkIT. The institute Research Ethics Committee (IREC) reports to Academic Council via the Research Sub-Committee. School Ethics Committees (SRECs) are sub-committees of the IREC and deal with research at the School level. The terms of reference for each REC are in the Standard Operating Procedures. A further subcommittee is convened as needed to consider proposals for research conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MA Learning and Teaching**.**


Ethics·Structures·at·DkIT¶
Governing·Body¶
Academic·Council¶
Academic·Council·Research·Sub-Committee¶
Institute·Research·Ethics·Committee·(IREC)¶
Institute·Animal·Care·&·Use·Committee¶ (IACUC)¶
School· Research· Committee· (SREC)¶ H&S¶
School· Research· Committee· (SREC)¶ B&H¶
School· Research· Committee· (SREC)¶ I&CM¶
School· Research· Committee· (SREC)¶ Eng.¶
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Researchers·(including· postgraduate·and·undergraduate·students)¶