



University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

Terms of Reference (ToR)

ORYX UNIVERSITY

In Partnership with Liverpool John Moores University

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1. Establishment and Authority

1.1 Establishment

The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) is established by the University President / RKEO Director as the authoritative body responsible for the ethical review and oversight of all research involving human participants, their data, or their biological materials conducted under the auspices of Oryx University.

1.2 Authority

UREC derives its authority from:

- The University's Research Ethics and Governance Framework
- The Research Ethics Policy (**RKEO-POL-Research Ethics Policy**)
- The Research Integrity Policy (**RKEO-POL-Research Integrity Policy**)
- Applicable laws and regulations of the host GCC State
- Standards of our partner institution, LJMU (if required)

1.3 Scope of Authority

UREC has the authority to:

- Review and approve, require modifications to, or reject research ethics applications.
- Suspend or terminate approval for research not conducted in accordance with UREC requirements.
- Develop and recommend policies, procedures, and guidance related to research ethics.
- Monitor approved research for ongoing ethical compliance, including conducting audits.
- Investigate concerns about the ethical conduct of research.
- Report to the University President on matters of research ethics.

2. Purpose and Objectives

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of UREC is to protect the rights, dignity, and welfare of research participants while facilitating ethical research that contributes to knowledge and society.

2.2 Objectives

Objective	Description
Protection	Ensure adequate protections for the rights and welfare of research participants
Review	Provide thorough, fair, and timely ethical review of research proposals
Guidance	Develop and disseminate guidance on ethical research practice
Education	Promote awareness and understanding of research ethics across the University
Compliance	Ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and institutional policies
Monitoring	Monitor approved research for ongoing ethical compliance
Improvement	Continuously improve research ethics processes and standards

3. Membership

3.1 Composition

Role	Number	Qualifications	Appointment	Term
Chair/Deputy Chair	1	Senior academic (Associate Professor or above) with substantial research ethics experience; not holding senior administrative position	Appointed by President on recommendation of Director of Research	3 years (renewable once)
Faculty Representatives	3	One from each faculty; active researchers with completed ethics training	Nominated by Faculty Deans/RKEO Director; approved by Director of Research	2 years (renewable twice)
External Member	1	Independent expert from partner institution, local research community, or relevant profession; not employed by University	Appointed by President on recommendation of Director of Research	2 years (renewable twice)
Legal/Compliance Advisor	1	University Legal Counsel or Compliance Officer	Ex-officio	Ongoing

Total Voting Members: 6

3.2 Chair and Deputy Chair Responsibilities

The Chair shall:

- Preside over all UREC meetings.
- Ensure meetings are conducted fairly and efficiently.
- Make decisions on Fast-Track reviews.
- Represent UREC to University leadership and external bodies.
- Sign approval letters and official correspondence.
- Report annually to the President on UREC activities.

The Deputy Chair shall:

- Assume all responsibilities of the Chair in the Chair's absence, including making Fast-Track decisions.
- Assist the Chair in mentoring new committee members.

3.3 Member Responsibilities

All members shall:

- Attend meetings regularly (minimum 75% attendance required).
- Complete required training before serving and annually thereafter.
- Review assigned applications thoroughly and submit reviews on time.
- Maintain confidentiality of all committee business.
- Declare and manage conflicts of interest.
- Contribute constructively to committee discussions.

3.4 Term Limits and Succession

- Members may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms (except Chair: one renewal only).
- After a gap of at least one year, former members may be reappointed.
- Terms should be staggered to ensure continuity (no more than 50% of members rotating in any year).
- Succession planning for the Chair should begin at least 6 months before term expiration.

3.5 Removal of Members

Members may be removed for:

- Failure to attend 3 consecutive meetings without acceptable reason.
- Breach of confidentiality.
- Failure to declare conflicts of interest.
- Conduct incompatible with committee membership.
- Departure from the University (staff/student members). Removal requires recommendation by the Chair and approval by the Director of Research (or President for Chair/Deputy Chair).

4. Meetings

4.1 Meeting Schedule

Meeting Type	Frequency	Purpose
Full Committee Meetings	Monthly (10 per year; excluding August and Ramadan)	Review applications requiring full committee review; policy matters; monitoring reports
Fast-Track Review	As needed (rolling basis)	Low-risk applications; minor amendments
Emergency Meetings	As needed	Urgent matters requiring immediate committee attention
Annual Strategic Meeting	Once per year (June)	Annual review; planning; policy development

4.2 Meeting Schedule 2026-2027 (*Tentative*)

Month	Meeting Date	Submission Deadline	Notes
July 2026	15th	1st	Inaugural meeting
August 2026	<i>No meeting</i>	-	Summer break
September 2026	16th	2nd	
October 2026	14th	30th Sept	
November 2026	11th	28th Oct	
December 2026	9th	25th Nov	
January 2027	13th	30th Dec	
February 2027	10th	27th Jan	
March 2027	10th	24th Feb	Ramadan considerations

April 2027	14th	31st Mar	
May 2027	12th	28th Apr	
June 2027	9th	26th May	Annual Strategic Meeting

4.3 Quorum

A quorum for full committee meetings consists of:

- **Minimum 5** voting members present (approx. 83% of 6).
- Must include the Chair or the Deputy Chair.
- Must include at least 1 Faculty Representative.
- Must include the External Member. No business requiring a vote may be conducted without a quorum.

4.4 Decision Making

Decision Type	Process
Consensus	Preferred method; Chair facilitates discussion toward agreement
Voting	Used when consensus cannot be reached; simple majority of those present
Chair's Casting Vote	Chair may cast deciding vote in case of tie
Fast-Track Decisions	Chair (or Deputy) may approve low-risk applications and minor amendments without full committee

4.5 Conflicts of Interest

Members must:

- Declare any personal, professional, or financial interest in applications under review.
- Withdraw from discussion and voting on applications where they have a conflict.
- Leave the room during discussion of conflicted applications.
- **Refined Rule:** Not review applications where they are named as investigator, supervisor, or directly co-collaborate with the PI. Conflicts must be recorded in meeting minutes.

4.6 Confidentiality

All committee business is confidential. Members must:

- Not disclose application content to non-members.

- Not discuss committee deliberations outside meetings.
- Securely store and dispose of committee papers.
- Sign a confidentiality agreement upon appointment.

5. Application Review Process

5.1 Review Pathways

All research protocols are triaged by the Research Office into one of three mandatory pathways (More details [RKEO-SOP-Standard Operating Procedures-V1.1.docx](#)):

1. **Exempt:** No UREC review required (see [RKEO-POL-Research Ethics Policy](#), Section 4.2).
2. **Fast-Track Review:** Reviewed by the Chair (or Deputy) and one reviewer for minimal risk protocols.
3. **Full UREC Review:** Reviewed by the full committee for high-risk or sensitive protocols.

5.2 Fast-Track Review Criteria

Applications may be eligible for Fast-Track review if they involve:

- Minimal risk (no more than everyday risk).
- Adult participants with capacity to consent.
- No vulnerable populations or sensitive topics.
- Standard, well-established methods (e.g., anonymous surveys, standard interviews).
- Minor amendments to approved studies.

5.3 Review Criteria

All applications are assessed against the following criteria:

Criterion	Key Questions
Scientific/Scholarly Merit	Is the research well-designed? Will it generate valuable knowledge?
Risks and Benefits	Are risks minimized? Do benefits justify risks?
Participant Selection	Is selection fair and appropriate? Are inclusion/exclusion criteria justified?
Informed Consent	Is the consent process adequate? Is information clear and complete?

Privacy and Confidentiality	Are data protection measures adequate?
Vulnerable Populations	Are additional safeguards appropriate?
Cultural Sensitivity	Is the research culturally appropriate for the Qatar/GCC context?
Researcher Competence	Do researchers have necessary skills and resources?
Compliance	Does the research comply with applicable laws and policies?

5.4 Possible Outcomes

Decision	Definition	Implications	Resubmission Path
Approved	Application meets all ethical requirements	Research can commence immediately	N/A
Approved with Minor Revisions	Minor changes needed (typos, clarifications)	Chair can approve; no need for full committee	5 working days
Major Revisions Required	Significant changes needed to methodology or ethics	Must return to full committee	Next meeting cycle
Deferred	Insufficient information to make decision	Additional information requested	Next meeting cycle
Rejected	Application fails ethical standards	Cannot proceed; new application required	New submission only

5.5 Communication of Decisions

- Decisions communicated in writing within 5 working days of the meeting.
- Decision letters signed by Chair or Deputy Chair.
- Approval letters include: reference number, approval period, and reporting requirements.

6. Monitoring and Compliance

6.1 Ongoing Monitoring

UREC monitors approved research through:

Mechanism	Frequency	Purpose
Annual Progress Reports	Yearly for studies >12 months	Confirm ongoing compliance; identify issues
Amendment Reviews	As submitted	Ensure changes maintain ethical standards
Adverse Event Reports	As they occur	Respond to participant safety issues
Completion Reports	End of study	Confirm proper closure; lessons learned

Random Audits	Selected studies	Verify compliance with approved protocols
For-Cause Reviews	When concerns raised	Investigate specific compliance concerns

6.2 Adverse Event Reporting

Researchers must report to UREC:

Event Type	Reporting Timeline
Serious Adverse Events (death, hospitalization, permanent harm)	Within 24 hours
Unexpected Adverse Events	Within 72 hours
Protocol Deviations (significant)	Within 7 days
Complaints from Participants	Within 7 days
Data Breaches	Within 24 hours

6.3 Non-Compliance Procedures

Non-compliance procedures, including investigation and disciplinary actions, are handled according to the **RKEO-POL-Research Integrity Policy-V1.0**

7. Reporting

7.1 Internal Reporting

Report	Recipient	Frequency	Content
Meeting Minutes	UREC Members; Director of Research	After each meeting	Attendance, decisions, actions
Quarterly Summary	Director of Research	Quarterly	Applications received/approved, issues, trends
Annual Report	President; Academic Council	Annually (July)	Full year statistics, themes, recommendations

7.2 Annual Report Content

The UREC Annual Report shall include:

- Summary of applications received, reviewed, and outcomes.
- Analysis of review timelines and efficiency.
- Summary of amendments, adverse events, and complaints.
- Training activities completed.
- Policy developments and guidance issued.

- Themes and trends in research ethics.
- Challenges encountered and how addressed.
- Recommendations for improvement and priorities for the coming year.

7.3 External Reporting

UREC may report to external bodies as required:

- LJMU University (partnership reporting).
- Research funders (as per grant conditions).
- Regulatory authorities (as required by law).

8. Training and Development

8.1 Member Training Requirements

Training	When	Duration	Mandatory
UREC Induction	Before first meeting	3 hours	Yes
Research Ethics Fundamentals	Before first meeting	Online module	Yes
GCC/Qatar Regulatory Framework	Before first meeting	1 hour	Yes
Annual Refresher	Annually	2 hours	Yes
Specialized Training (as needed)	As scheduled	Varies	As directed

8.2 Induction Program

New members receive:

- Welcome meeting with Chair or Deputy Chair.
- UREC Terms of Reference and key policies.
- Access to application review system.
- Mentoring from experienced member (first 3 meetings).

8.3 Continuous Development

UREC supports member development through:

- Attendance at external conferences/workshops.
- Subscription to research ethics publications.
- Networking with other ethics committees.

9. Policy Development

9.1 UREC Role in Policy

UREC is responsible for:

- Developing and recommending research ethics policies.
- Creating guidance documents for researchers.
- Reviewing and updating application forms and templates.
- Advising on ethical implications of University research strategy.