



AIATSIS

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT
ISLANDER STUDIES

AIATSIS RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE CHARTER

2010

PREAMBLE

The AIATSIS Research Ethics Committee (the “Committee”) is concerned with reviewing the ethical aspects of research projects, including ethical suitability and oversight as appropriate during the course of a project.

The quality of research projects in other respects is the responsibility of the AIATSIS Research Advisory Committee and Council.

1. THE COMMITTEE

(a) Membership

Council may appoint members of the Committee, all of whom must be resident in Canberra or its near environs at the time of appointment. The Committee must be constituted by a minimum of eight members, comprising at least:

- (a) a chairperson;
- (b) a lay man and lay woman;
- (c) at least two members with knowledge of, and current experience in, the areas of research that are regularly considered by the Committee;
- (d) at least one member with knowledge of, and current experience in, the professional care, counselling or treatment of people;
- (e) at least one member who is a minister of religion or a person who performs a similar role in the community such as an Indigenous elder; and
- (f) at least one member who is a lawyer.

Membership must include at least four Indigenous members and, as far as practicable, should reflect a gender and age balance. At least one member should preferably have relevant experience in dealing with ethical issues.

At least three members, and preferably a majority, must be independent of AIATSIS.

The Committee may be assisted by such other persons as it considers appropriate.

(b) Remuneration

Members of the Committee are entitled to payment of fees and reimbursement of expenses under the same arrangements as apply to members of the Research Advisory Committee as determined from time to time by the Remuneration Tribunal.

(c) Documents

On their initial appointment and subsequently at meetings, members of the Committee, must be provided with copies of: the AIATSIS Induction Manual for Committee Members; the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research; AIATSIS Conflict of Interest policy; the Information Privacy Principles; and the AIATSIS Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies.

2. TERM OF OFFICE

(a) Appointments

Members normally serve for three year terms. Members may be reappointed by Council.

2013 transitional provision: To ensure continuity of knowledge of the Committee's operations, of the members to be appointed in 2013: half shall be appointed for only ½ of a term (ie 18 months) and the remainder for a full term. The members appointed for a ½ term will subsequently be eligible for appointment for a normal term. Members appointed for a ½ term will be selected by ballot, except that only one of these appointments will be from each of categories (b) and (c) above.

(b) Absences

If a member is unable to attend a meeting, the AIATSIS Chair may appoint another person to stand in for that member, for whatever number of meetings the AIATSIS Chair considers appropriate.

If a member misses more than two consecutive meetings without good reason, the AIATSIS Chair may decide to nominate a replacement for that member for the remainder of that Member's term.

Members are generally expected to attend the whole of a scheduled meeting.

3. THE COMMITTEE'S WORK

The Committee may consider research proposals where at least one of the researchers is:

- seeking funding from the AIATSIS Research Grants Program; or
- professionally associated with the Institute including staff, visitors, contractors and consultants.

4. MEETINGS

(a) Frequency of meetings

Meetings of the Committee will be held at least twice each year and additionally as required. The Committee may decide to hold meetings in Canberra, or by any convenient electronic / online medium.

Members unable to attend a meeting may submit their comments on any agenda item to the Chairperson before a meeting.

(b) Quorum

Four members constitute the quorum for a meeting of the Committee.

(c) Preparation of agendas

The agenda for the meeting will be prepared by Research staff in consultation with the Chairperson and the Director of Research. Members may submit notice of agenda items which they wish to have considered.

(d) Minutes

The proceedings of the Research Ethics Committee must be properly minuted. Minutes must be presented to the Council, for information, at the next convenient Council meeting.

(e) Conflict of interest

A member must not consider any matter in which that member has any conflict of interest as outlined in the *AIATSIS conflict of interest policy*, unless the Committee agrees otherwise. Where conflicts of interest exist, such conflict should be dealt with in accordance with the policy and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

(f) Distribution of papers

Papers will be circulated to members of the Committee at least seven days prior to meetings.

The Chair may decide whether late papers can be considered at a meeting.

(g) Confidentiality of Committee proceedings

The Committee operates under the confidentiality provisions of the Australian Public Service (APS), including the APS Code of Conduct. All Committee proceedings are confidential. Information about discussions will be made available only to members of the Research Advisory Committee, Council and relevant AIATSIS staff members.

5. PROCEDURES:

(a) Review of research proposals

The Committee may invite researcher(s) to be present for discussion of their research proposals, and may request amendments to, or additional information in relation to, those proposals.

In the case of proposals where the Committee does not give unqualified approval, the Committee may decide a convenient process to deal with subsequent information received.

(b) Methods of decision making

Members of the Committee must endeavour to reach decisions by consensus. Decisions must take into account any comments provided by members not able to be present.

If the Committee is unable to reach consensus, decisions must be made by vote. The Chair has a deliberative and, if necessary, a casting vote.

(c) Prompt notification of decisions

Decisions made by the Committee on applications for research grants will be conveyed in writing for consideration by the next convenient meeting of Council.

Decisions made by the Committee on other research proposals will be conveyed to the Director of Research and the principal researcher(s) in a timely way.

(d) Privacy

The Committee must satisfy itself that people carrying out research involving the collection, storage, interpretation, evaluation or other use of personal information are aware of, and compliant with, the Guidelines approved under Section 95 and 95A of the *Privacy Act 1988* and the Information Privacy Principles to ensure that the privacy of persons to whom personal information relates is protected.

6. RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

(a) Monitoring

Written reports detailing progress on research, maintenance and security of records, compliance with the approved protocols and compliance with any conditions of approval must be provided by grantees or AIATSIS associates doing research on a six-monthly basis, for assessment by the Director of Research and referral, if necessary, to the Committee.

(b) Reporting of adverse occurrences

Any adverse occurrences in an approved research project will be reported by the Director of Research to the Committee.

(c) Receiving complaints

All complaints will be dealt with, in the first instance, by the Director of Research, who will endeavour to resolve them in a timely and satisfactory manner. Should the complainant wish to take his or her complaint further, they will be advised to contact the AIATSIS Principal or the REC Chairperson.

The Director of Research will inform members of the Committee of any complaint received that is relevant to the ethical aspects of the research and all steps taken to address such complaint.

(d) Discontinuing a research project

Where circumstances have arisen such that a research project is not being or cannot be conducted in accordance with the approved ethical protocols, the Director of Research may direct the researchers to suspend the project until ethics concerns have been adequately dealt with. The Director must draw the matter to the Committee's attention, including subsequent actions and any sanctions.

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