



Massey University

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

Human Ethics Chairs Committee

Annual Report

1 January – 31 December 2016



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Human Ethics Chairs Committee

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1. Terms of Reference

The Massey University Human Ethics Chairs Committee was established:

- 1.3.1 To advise the Academic Board of any matters brought to the attention of the Committee concerning the responsible conduct of research;
- 1.3.2 To consult with the University community on the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and recommend changes as necessary;
- 1.3.3 To determine issues which need to be addressed in educational programmes for staff and students;
- 1.3.4 To ensure that appropriate education is provided for all Committee Members;
- 1.3.5 To ensure that each of the Human Ethics Committees operates in an equivalent manner;
- 1.3.6 To review and audit the procedures of the Human Ethics Committees;
- 1.3.7 To review complaints about the performance or the decision-making processes of the Human Ethics Committees;
- 1.3.8 To monitor the Terms of Reference of the Human Ethics Committees, including the Procedures for Nomination and Selection of Academic Members, Procedures for Nomination and Selection of Community Members, Human Ethics Committees Membership Declaration, Human Ethics Committees Reconsideration Procedures, Human Ethics Committees Complaints Procedures, Human Ethics Committees Guidelines for Annual Report, and recommend changes as necessary;
- 1.3.9 To monitor the Human Ethics website and Application/Notification documentation and make changes as necessary;
- 1.3.10 To report to the Health Research Council on behalf of all Human Ethics Committees.
(AB10/115)

2. Membership

In 2016 the Massey University Human Ethics Chairs Committee (HECC) had the following membership:

- Dr Brian Finch, Chair, (1 February 2016 – 31 December 2016);
- Dr Andrew Chrystall, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern (1 January – 8 July 2016);
- Dr Lily George, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern (9 July – 31 December 2016);
- Mr Jeremy Hubbard, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A (1 January – 31 December 2016)
- Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B (1 January – 31 December 2016)
- Secretary: Ms Patsy Broad, Team Leader, Research Ethics;
- In attendance: Mrs Alice Lindsay, Committee Administrator, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern.

3. Meetings

The Massey University HECC met on two occasions (May and November) in 2016.

Human Ethics Committee Chairs have met with various academic programme and research groups on all three campuses to provide advice and guidance on the development of ethics protocols.

4. Revision of Documentation

4.1 Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants

The process for revision of the Code commenced in early 2016 and is currently ongoing. Three University-wide forums were held with featured speakers and time for discussion. Submissions were invited from the University research community, and a Working Party of 12 representing various parts of the research and ethics communities considered the submissions. A draft revised code will be disseminated for comment from the research and ethics communities in 2017.

4.2 Ethics Online Submissions

In late 2015, research ethics at Massey University migrated to an online environment for low risk notifications and full ethics applications. In 2016 all submissions were made online.

Some technical issues were fixed and there are still some improvements to be made (version 2 is currently awaiting publication); however, on the whole the system works efficiently and committee members as well as applicants have adapted to the new approach without difficulty.

Researchers, whose responses to a series of screening questions indicate that a project is minimal/low risk, submit a low risk notification online and receive an immediate email response noting acceptance.

In order to check the robustness of the low risk submission system, weekly review by the Research Ethics Advisors is undertaken along with a twice-yearly audit of low risk notifications by the Human Ethics Chairs Committee. The researchers whose low risk notifications were the subject of audit were notified in advance. A small number of researchers have been provided with guidance following review, together with details of where and how the processing of future applications might be facilitated. The concerns raised during the audit together with the outcomes are proving to be a valuable training resource.

The Human Ethics Chairs Committee is currently developing Terms of Reference for the audit of low risk notifications in order to ensure the process for audit is transparent and the robustness of the system is maintained.

Researchers whose responses to the initial screening questions indicate a project is more high risk in nature are prompted to continue with the submission of a full application through the online module.

4.3 Website

Minor changes were made to pages on the website to further enhance the new submission process; and update committee membership when changes occurred.

5. Professional Development

5.1 Members of Chairs Committee

The professional development of members was assisted through the circulation of various articles from current journals and attendance of the Director, Chair (HEC: Southern B) and Team Leader at the Australasian Ethics Network (AEN) Conference in November 2016.

In addition, the Team Leader, Research Ethics and a Research Ethics Advisor commenced professional development modules through the Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS).

5.2 Members of Committees

A section for educational issues was included in the Agendas of the three Human Ethics Committees. Educational issues arising from the review of applications were addressed and articles on the ethics of research were distributed and discussed on a regular basis.

Members were advised of relevant externally-run conferences and seminars as notice came to hand.

Members were offered training in the new online submission process with an emphasis on how applications would now be received and reviewed.

A Workshop for all committee members was held in November 2016. Session topics covered ethical issues arising from using images as data; researching a community; researching within own organisation and a session was held to brief members on developments in the research ethics landscape. This included an update on the revision of the Code, Māori capacity building and the new Pasifika guidelines. As always, the sessions were very well-received and the day was attended by most members of Massey University's three human ethics committees.

6. Changes in Membership of Human Ethics Committees

Type of Appointment	New Appointments	Second term Appointments	Resignations	Completion of term
Northern				
Academic	2	3	2	0
Community	0	1	1	0
Vice-Chancellor's nominee	1	0	0	0
Southern A				
Academic	0	1	0	1
Community	0	0	0	0
Vice-Chancellor's nominee	0	0	0	0
Southern B				
Academic	1	1	0	0
Community	0	0	1	0
Vice-Chancellor's nominee	1	0	0	0

There has been ongoing difficulty in recruiting both academic and community members which results in additional workload for the Secretariat and potential challenges to Committee continuity.

7. Staff Training Seminars

“Undertaking Research with Human Participants” was held twice through video-links to each campus. Sessions included a brief introduction to the new online submission process.

The members of HECC provided workshops and presentations to research clusters of staff on request throughout the year at all three regional campuses.

8. Student seminars

Special lectures and seminars were provided to various student classes by Chairs of Human Ethics Committees and the Director at the three campuses, as requested.

9. Equivalence between Committees

Chairs frequently shared non-routine enquiries and draft replies were circulated to all members for comment.

Consistency of approach between the three committees is regularly reviewed at the HECC meeting and monitored through the circulation of minutes to all HEC chairs.

10. Research involving Māori

No applications were received in Te Reo Māori.

Recording of Māori centred research was introduced during 2005. In 2016, 13 applications were received.

Year	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Total
2012	4	9	8	21
2013	3	14	12	29
2014	2	12	5	19
2015	3	5	6	14
2016	7	2	4	13

Discussion regarding the establishment of an HRC accredited Te Reo Māori HEC was placed on-hold in 2014. This decision continues to be the position due to lower numbers of Te Reo Māori speaking staff and lack of clarity about demand for such a committee. The Chairs Committee remains open to further discussion regarding the establishment of such a committee.

11. Research conducted overseas

To permit Massey University researchers to comply with Federal funding conditions in the USA, the Research Ethics Office maintains Federal Wide Assurance approval [FWA00011672] and Institutional Review Board status [IRB00006014] for Human Ethics Committee Southern A. The AVC Research, Academic & Enterprise; Team Leader, Research Ethics and Chairperson of Human Ethics Committee Southern A have completed the online Human Subject Assurance Training required by the Office for Human Research Protections, of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

12. Standard Operating Procedures

In 2015 the Research Ethics Office and the Director, Risk and Assurance agreed that responsibility for venepuncture and cannulation certification would be passed to the Schools using these procedures in research, under the overview of the Director, Risk and Assurance. The responsibility for developing appropriate SOPs has now been accepted by the new Director of Health, Safety and Wellbeing, who will work in collaboration with the relevant research units and report back to the Ethics Office on progress.

Following approval, where necessary the Research Ethics Office refers applicants to the University Risk Manager and/or Insurance Officer for advice.

13. Research Transferred to Massey University

In 2016, four notifications of research with prior ethical approval were received.

14. Monitoring of Research

Staff are reminded of the requirements of the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants in a memorandum and email to Massey University Heads and Secretaries.

Any enquiry about a piece of research that had either been approved by a Committee or was on the low risk database acted as a trigger to review the complete file for that research.

In order to ensure adherence to HDEC procedures and accurate reporting of figures in this annual report, the Research Ethics Office must be named and provide sign-off as a sponsor for research that requires the approval of an HDEC. Whilst guidelines are provided to researchers on the MUHEC website and details have been circulated to researchers it appears that the Research Ethics Office is still not being included as a sponsor on some research submitted to an HDEC.

15. Complaints/Reconsideration

While not received as formal complaints to be considered as per the Complaints Procedures set out in the Human Ethics Committee Terms of Reference, the following complaints were received:

HEC: Southern A

One complaint was received alleging that an unacceptable and unresolved conflict of interest existed with respect to the researcher and the participants.

The application was considered at 2015 November Meeting where the issue of conflict of interest was identified with other issues which resulted in deferral. The amended application was reconsidered at the December Meeting where it was provisionally approved as on the information provided the conflict of interest and other issues had been substantially addressed. It was finally approved by the Chair on 14 January 2016.

The complaint, which was in effect an OIA request, was received on 1 April from someone who had been approached as a potential participant. The complaint was that request for information came from the business manager of the funding agency which was engaged with the complainant's practice. A second complaint to the like effect was received from another client of the researcher's agency some 4 days later.

Investigation showed that although the committee had been assured that research was not threatening to the agency's clients and would almost certainly benefit them, which together with changes made by researcher convinced the committee and the Chair that the conflict of interest had been dealt with, the committee did not know, and at the time it is assumed neither did the researcher, that the two complainants were in dispute with the researcher's agency when the request to participate was received. The complaints were resolved by (1) providing the information and (2) the researcher volunteered to change her plans to totally remove conflict of interest.

HEC: Southern B

Two letters of complaint from separate organisations were received regarding one particular application which was reviewed in the September 2015 meeting and approved on October 8th 2015. The first complaint alleged that the researcher was not conducting the study according to the terms of their approval and the Code; they were also raising questions about the conduct of the researcher. The Ethics Office managed the first part of investigating with the main investigation being managed by the AVC Research, Academic and Enterprise Office. The second complaint came in 22nd July 2016 and again as it referred to processes reflecting the points made above it was also managed by the AVC Research, Academic and Enterprise Office. This process includes

the opportunity for the researcher to respond to the complaint for the consideration of the AVC. In both instances the researcher was found to be undertaking their research in compliance with their approval and the code and the University's stance was to support the researcher's right to conduct research but also to discuss the situation with the researcher and their head of unit and come to understandings about how to avoid such sources of complaint in the future. Through this process the researcher has since become better informed about managing instances where their research may put them off-side with a participant group and managing those who may be negative about research in this sensitive area.

16. Applications to Human Ethics Committees

16.1 Summary of Applications

a) By Month

Month	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Totals
February	5	9	0	14
March	6	6	6	18
April	9	9	7	25
May	9	6	6	21
June	1	8	8	17
July	6	4	4	14
August	5	6	6	17
September	3	10	0	13
October	3	6	0	9
November	6	8	0	14
December	5	9	10	24
Totals	58	81	47	186

b) By College

College	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Totals
Business	5	2	7	14
Health	12	58	3	73
Humanities & Social Sciences	37	16	33	86
Sciences	4	3	4	11
Creative Arts	0	0	0	0
Administration	0	2	0	2
Totals	58	81	47	186

c) **By Project Type**

Project Type	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Totals
Student Research	38	48	34	120
Staff Research	20	31	13	64
Teaching	0	2	0	2
Evaluation	0	0	0	0
Totals	58	81	47	186

d) **By Outcome**

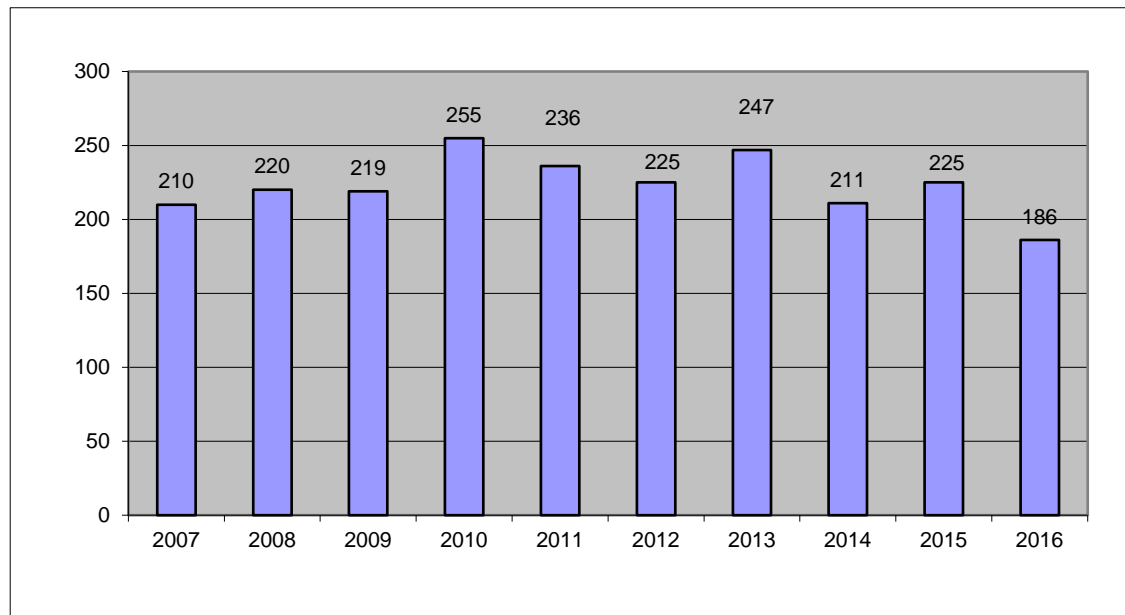
Decision**	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Totals
Unconditionally Approved	2	8	5	15
Provisionally Approved	49	63	37	149
Approval Deferred	1	9	3	13
Approval Declined	2	0	1	3
Referred	0	0	0	0
Other*	4	*1	1	6
Totals	58	81	47	186

* 1 application withdrawn prior to review.

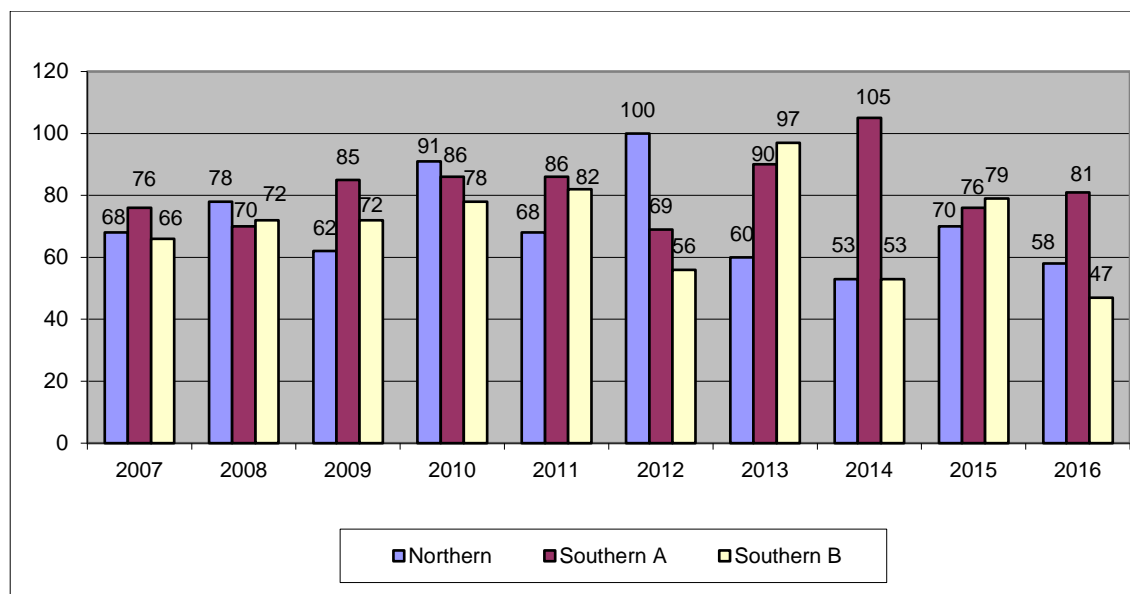
** Initial decision only. Deferred applications, if not withdrawn by the researcher, are re-presented for review at a subsequent monthly meeting.

16.2 **Summary of Trends**

a) **Total Number of Applications Reviewed from 2007 to 2016**



b) Total Number of Applications Reviewed by Committees from 2007 to 2016



17. Research Recorded as Low Risk

Delegation of decision-making to researchers for projects identified as low risk was introduced in 2003. Researchers are required to notify in advance such research to the Research Ethics Office.

17.1 Summary of Low Risk Notifications

a) By Campus

Year	Albany	Palmerston North	Wellington	Total
2007	75	192	67	334
2008	107	217	121	445
2009	91	230	100	421
2010	117	265	70	452
2011	113	246	80	439
2012	103	254	85	442
2013	120	256	92	468
2014	167	288	89	544
2015	174	341	77	592
2016	216	321	72	609

b) **By College**

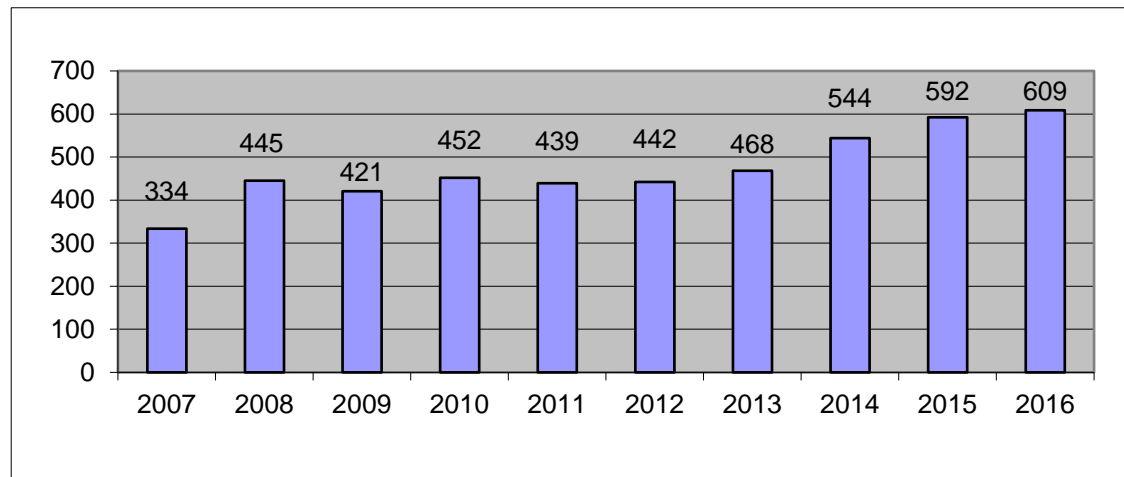
College	Albany	Palmerston North	Wellington	Totals
Business	65	86	14	165
Health	43	49	12	104
Humanities & Social Sciences	83	129	33	245
Sciences	25	54	1	80
Creative Arts	0	0	12	12
Administration	0	3	0	3
Totals	216	321	72	609

c) **By Project Type**

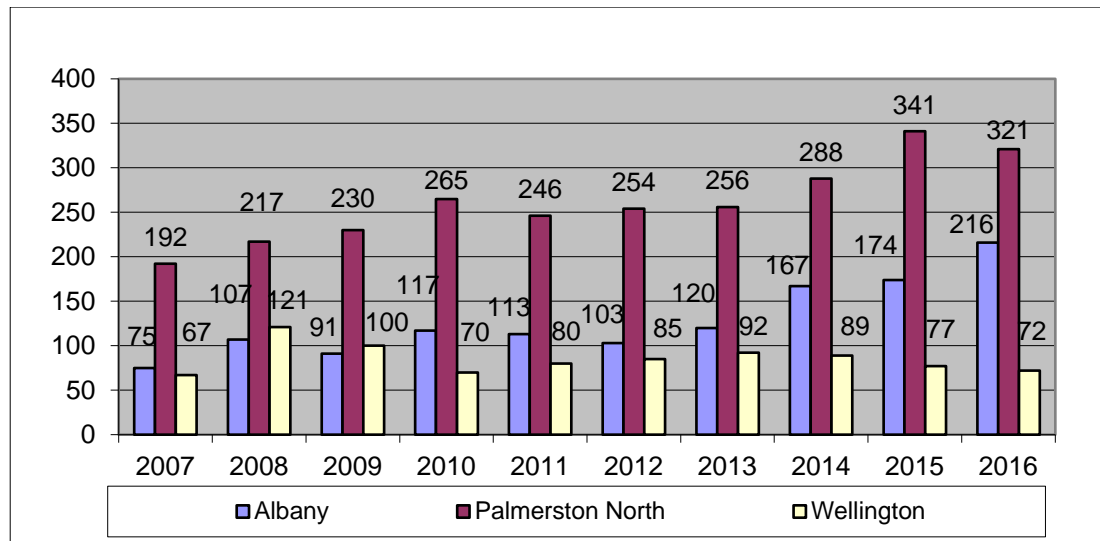
Project Type	Albany	Palmerston North	Wellington	Totals
Student Research	173	213	40	426
Staff Research	38	89	28	155
Teaching	3	16	3	22
Evaluation	2	2	1	5
Other	0	1	0	1
Totals	216	321	72	609

17.2 **Summary of Trends**

a) **Total Number of Notifications Received from 2007 to 2016**



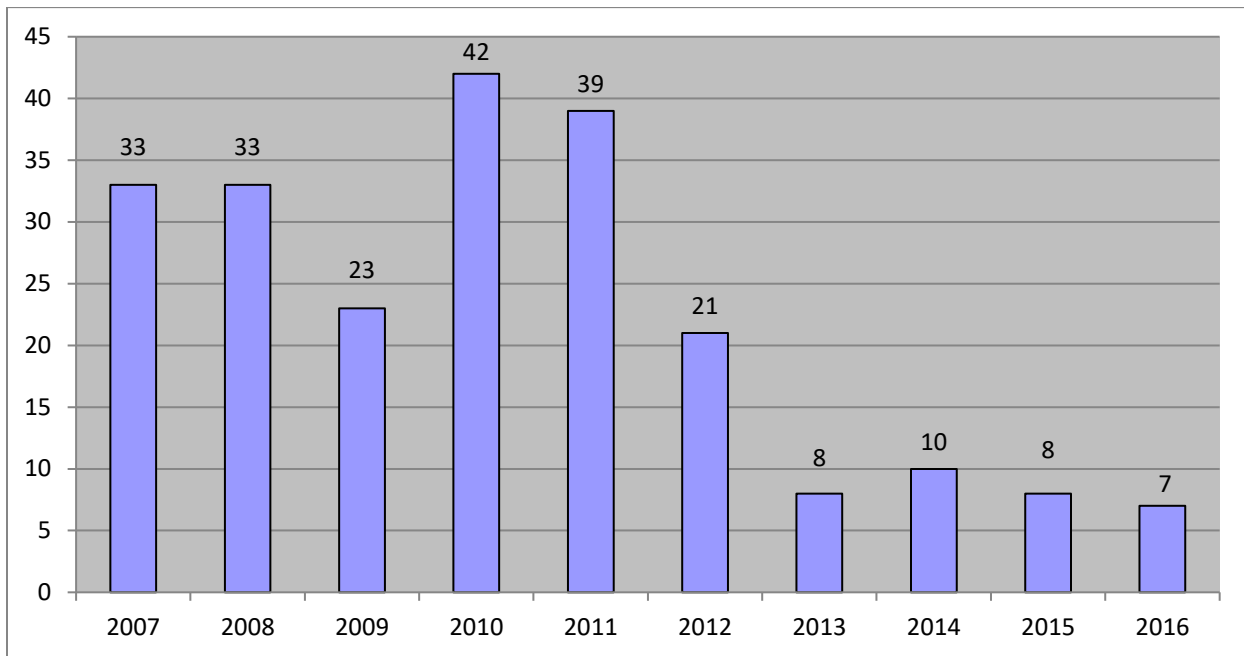
b) Total Number of Notifications Received by Campus from 2007 to 2016



18. Research Requiring Approval by an HDEC

In 2012 the Ministry of Health reduced the scope of ethical review undertaken by Health and Disability Ethics Committees and introduced an online application form. Since that time the number of notifications the Research Ethics Office receives about HDEC applications has dropped and the number of health focused applications received for consideration by MUHECs has increased.

The 2013 - 2016 columns in the graph below, and the summary figures in Section 20 of this report, should be treated with caution as it is still unclear whether all Massey researchers applying to HDEC notify the Research Ethics Office. The HECC continues to work with Research Directors within the Colleges of Health and Science in order to ensure researchers are aware of their obligations when applying to an HDEC and to ensure that the Research Ethics Office is notified as a sponsor of all research reviewed by an HDEC.



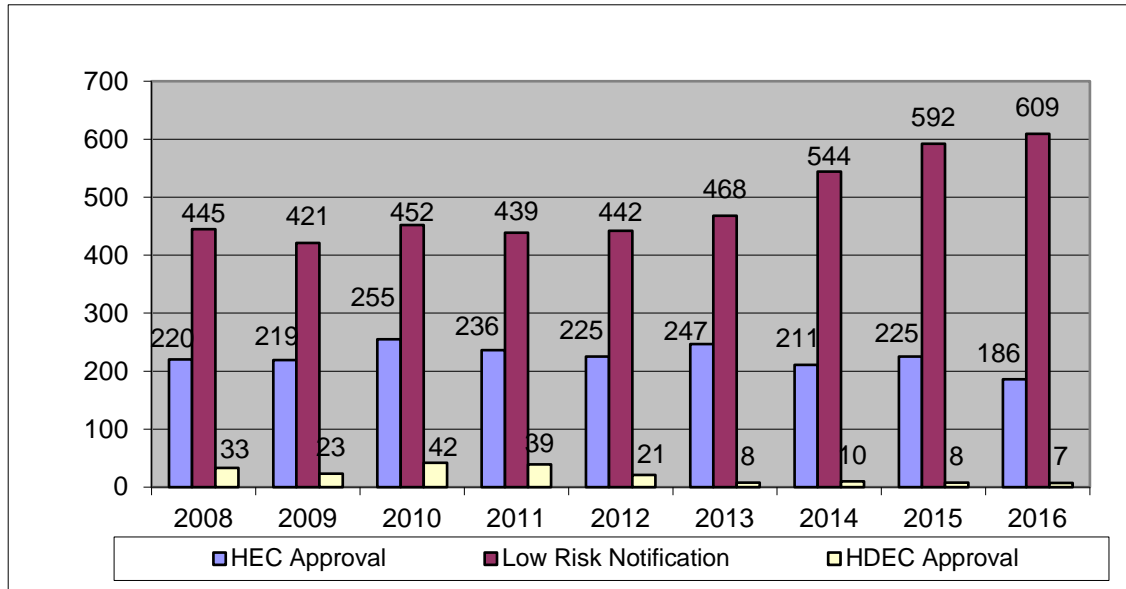
19. Overview

19.1 By Campus

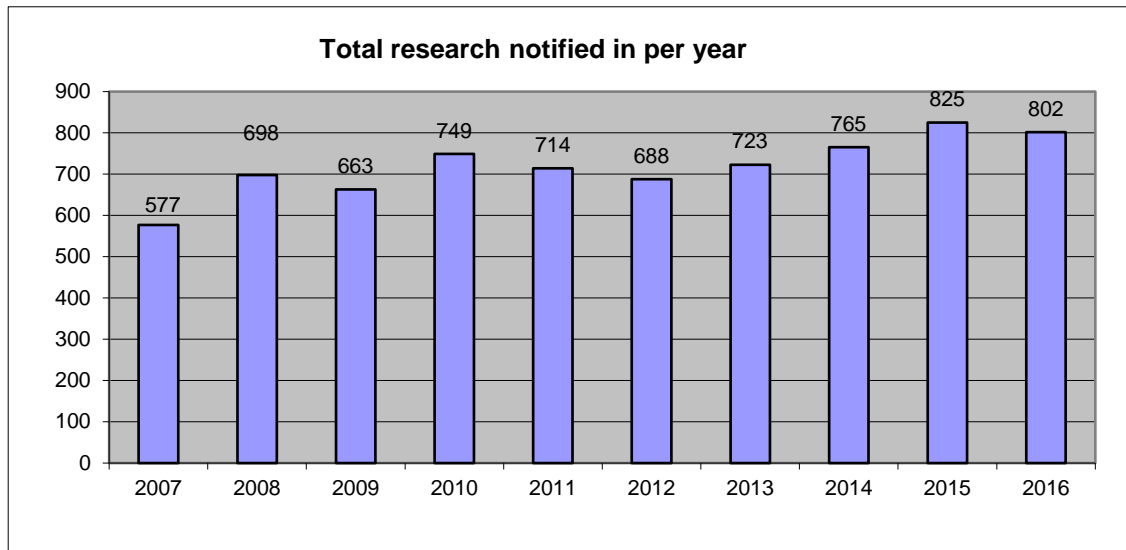
Project Type	Albany	Palmerston North	Wellington	Totals
Approvals***	66	81	39	186
Notifications	216	321	72	609
HDEC Notifications	3	1	3	7
Totals	285	403	114	802

*** Figures by campus differ from those reviewed by committee to allow for applications reviewed by HEC: Southern A due to the need for approval by a committee with medical expertise; and to ensure balancing of workflow across the Secretariat.

19.2 Comparison of HEC Applications, Low Risk Notifications and research requiring HDEC Approval



19.3 Total number of HEC Applications, Low Risk Notifications and research requiring HDEC Approval by year



20. Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the Chairs and the members of the three committees for their dedication and service to the University. I wish to thank staff of the Research Ethics Office at Albany and Palmerston North for their professionalism, commitment and client-centred approach over the last twelve months.

This period has seen further development of office processes and procedures resulting from the move to online submissions. I am grateful to Patsy Broad, Miralie Thomas Vincent, and Alice Lindsay for their professionalism in further fine tuning the innovations. In particular, I would like to thank Patsy Broad for her leadership in the Team Leader role ensuring that the Office team continues to improve its service to researchers. On behalf of the HECC, I wish to acknowledge the continuing support from Research Operations, through Oliver Britz and Dr Jo Innes and from the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Research, Academic & Enterprise), Professor Giselle Byrnes.



Dr Brian Finch
Director, Research Ethics
Chairperson, Massey University Human Ethics Chairs Committee
29 May 2017