



Massey University

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

Human Ethics Chairs Committee

Annual Report

1 January – 31 December 2017



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Human Ethics Chairs Committee

Annual Report 2017

1. Terms of Reference

The Massey University Human Ethics Chairs Committee was established to:

- 1.3.1 Advise the Academic Board of any matters brought to the attention of the Committee concerning the responsible conduct of research;
- 1.3.2 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 Determine issues which need to be addressed in educational programmes for staff and students;
- 1.3.4 Ensure that appropriate education is provided for all Committee Members;
- 1.3.5 Ensure that each of the Human Ethics Committees operates in an equivalent manner;
- 1.3.6 Review and audit the procedures of the Human Ethics Committees;
- 1.3.7 Review complaints about the performance or the decision-making processes of the Human Ethics Committees;
- 1.3.8 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 Monitor the Human Ethics website and Application/Notification documentation and make changes as necessary;
- 1.3.10 Report to the Health Research Council on behalf of all Human Ethics Committees.
(AB10/115)

2. Membership

In 2017 the Massey University Human Ethics Chairs Committee (HECC) had the following membership:

- Dr Brian Finch, Chair, (1 January 2017 – 31 December 2017);
- Dr Lily George, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern (1 January – 28 February 2017);
- Dr Brian Finch, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern (1 March – 12 April 2017);
- Dr Ralph Bathurst, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern (13 April – 31 December 2017);
- Dr Lesley Batten, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A (1 January – 31 December 2017);
- Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B (1 January – 31 December 2017);
- 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 October) in 2017.

The Director and 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 2017 and was completed in December 2017. During the year the Working Party of 12, representing various parts of the research and ethics communities, crafted and disseminated a draft revised code to the research community for further discussion and comment. The written submissions were considered and responded to in creating a final draft. The draft revised code was discussed and commented on by the University Research Committee and Academic Board, before

being approved by the University Council in December. An implementation process will take place during 2018.

4.2 Ethics Online Submissions

From 2016 all submissions have been made online and during 2017 a revised version of the application form was in operation with the research community by and large having adapted to the new approach.

In order to maintain and monitor 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. From the weekly review, any problematic notifications are immediately acted upon by seeking further information from the researcher, review by the staff and referral to the Director when required; the aim is to solve any ethical issues before data collection begins.

The researchers whose low risk notifications are included in the twice-yearly audit are notified in advance. Most of the notifications audited are within the scope of the low risk process. A small number of researchers have been provided with guidance following the audit 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 and exemplary notifications receive praise and sometimes a request for permission for a section of the notification to be used as an exemplar on the website.

The Human Ethics Chairs Committee has developed a set of criteria for evaluating low risk notifications in order to ensure that the process for audit is consistent and transparent so that the robustness of the low risk 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, update committee membership when changes occurred and increase the visibility of the process for submission of applications to a Health & Disability Ethics Committee.

4.4 Responsible Research Conduct

Massey University has a policy which covers both educative and disciplinary aspects of ensuring and maintaining high standards of research. During 2017 an additional networked role was instigated to better enact this policy. The role of Research Practice Advisor (roughly equivalent to Research Integrity Advisors in Australian universities) involves facilitating the informal resolution of difficulties between researchers within the two policy categories of 'Questionable Research Conduct' and 'Minor Breaches of Research Conduct'.

Failure to complete ethics approval is deemed to be within one of these categories and so this policy provides an additional set of mechanisms for ensuring quality research conduct.

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.

Human Ethics Chairs and a number of human ethics committee members, along with the Research Ethics Administrator (Albany) attend a Research Ethics Symposium convened by Dr Martin Tolich (Chair, NZ Ethics Committee) at Massey University (Wellington campus) and AUT. Guest speakers included Dr Gary Allen (Senior Consultant, Australasian Human Research Ethics Consultancy Services Pty Ltd AHRECS and a senior policy officer in the Ethics & Integrity team in the Office for Research, Griffith University (Queensland, Australia) who led discussion under the topic "If research 'only' involves the analysis of comments/posts/feeds on social media is it human research? Does it require review"; and Dr Dónal O'Mathúna (Senior Lecturer in Ethics, Decision-Making & Evidence, School of Nursing and Human Sciences, Dublin City University) who addressed "Disaster Ethics: Issues for Researchers and Participants". Given both sessions covered research areas regularly reviewed and discussed by committees, both sessions were well received and of particular relevance .

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 that arose 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.

A Workshop for all committee members was held in November 2017. Session topics covered the revision of the current Massey University Code for research involving human participants, avoiding routine ethics thinking and conflicts of interest (specifically, research within own organisations). The Workshop was very well received, and attended by most members of the 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	1	0	1	1
Community	1	1	0	0
Vice-Chancellor's nominee	0	0	0	0
Southern A				
Academic	1	0	0	1
Community	3	0	1	1
Vice-Chancellor's nominee	1	0	1	0
Southern B				
Academic	0	0	0	0
Community	1	0	0	0
Vice-Chancellor's nominee	0	1	0	0

7. Staff Training Seminars

"Undertaking Research with Human Participants" seminar was held three times through video-links to each campus. In addition, short presentations were given to doctoral students and staff at various training sessions.

The members of the Human Ethics Chairs Committee provided workshops and presentations to research clusters of staff on request throughout the year at all three campuses.

8. Student seminars

Chairs of Human Ethics Committees and the Director, Research Ethics provided special lectures and seminars to various student classes on all campuses, as requested.

9. Equivalence between Committees

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

Consistency of approach between the three committees is regularly reviewed and monitored by the Human Ethics Chairs Committee at meetings and through the circulation of minutes.

10. Research involving Māori

No applications were received in Te Reo Māori.

Recording of Māori centred research was introduced during 2005. In 2017, 9 applications were received.

Year	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Total
2013	3	14	12	29
2014	2	12	5	19
2015	3	5	6	14
2016	7	2	4	13
2017	3	5	1	9

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 Health and Safety Programme Manager and the Director of Health, Safety and Wellbeing, who will work in collaboration with the relevant research units and report back to the Research Ethics Office on progress. During 2017, a standard for venepuncture and cannulation was drafted and comments received from researchers towards an accepted standard. 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 2017, 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 inquiries and complaints were received:

The Vice-Chancellor received a complaint from an overseas academic concerning a presentation by two Massey academics of research involving vulnerable participants, which did not appear to have ethics approval. This matter is being processed by the Assistant Vice-Chancellor Research, Academic and Enterprise and is ongoing. As a consequence of this complaint some changes to the

Responsible Research Conduct Policy documents are planned to make it explicit that staff on annual leave are required to comply with the University's research policies and practices.

HEC: Southern A

- A critique was received from the New Zealand Ethics Committee of both the application and dissemination of a research project using a recently developed methodology of wastewater analysis. The ethics of this methodology are emerging and being discussed in the international literature. The project had been peer reviewed and notified through our low risk process. The review to respond to the critique found that the ethics process had been appropriate, that the journal article dissemination had been appropriate, but that some aspects of one radio interview dissemination were not appropriate. The Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Research, Academic and Enterprise) handled the internal educative process involving the researcher and their Head of Unit.

There have been informal discussions with the researcher prior to a subsequent ethics application for review by HEC: Southern A Committee.

- One doctoral student whose research appeared under the umbrella of four ethics approvals but who was not named in all of them received our prompting to clarify the status of each of the data sets he was drawing on for dissertation and dissemination purposes. One of those applications, made by his supervisor (who had since left the university), had only proceeded to provisional and not final approval; our concern was that he could not claim approval for that data and this needed to be clear in his dissertation.
- Two doctoral research projects (one student, one staff member) collected data without full approval; the one which was not auto-ethnography submitted another application which was then approved.

HEC: Southern B

There was one instance of data collection undertaken without full ethics approval. This was an oversight failure to complete the approval process prior to the collection of data. The researcher provided documents showing that some of the Ethics Committee responses and suggestions were acted upon; some research circumstances changed rendering some application and response matters redundant. While we believe that the research was conducted responsibly, it was made clear to the researcher that ethical approval cannot be claimed for the data and we received a letter from the researcher acknowledging this.

16. Applications to Human Ethics Committees

16.1 Summary of Applications

a) By Month

Month	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Totals
February	6	8	0	14
March	14	7	0	21
April	6	4	5	15
May	3	5	5	13
June	8	8	8	24
July	4	5	4	13
August	4	5	5	14
September	3	6	4	13
October	6	10	0	16
November	5	9	0	14
December	6	7	5	18
Totals	65	74	36	175

b) By College

College	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Totals
Business	6	1	7	14
Health	10	41	1	52
Humanities & Social Sciences	43	22	23	88
Sciences	6	10	5	21
Creative Arts	0	0	0	0
Administration	0	0	0	0
Totals	65	74	36	175

c) By Project Type

Project Type	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Totals
Student Research	43	34	23	100
Staff Research	22	39	12	73
Teaching	0	1	1	2
Evaluation	0	0	0	0
Totals	65	74	36	175

d) **By Outcome**

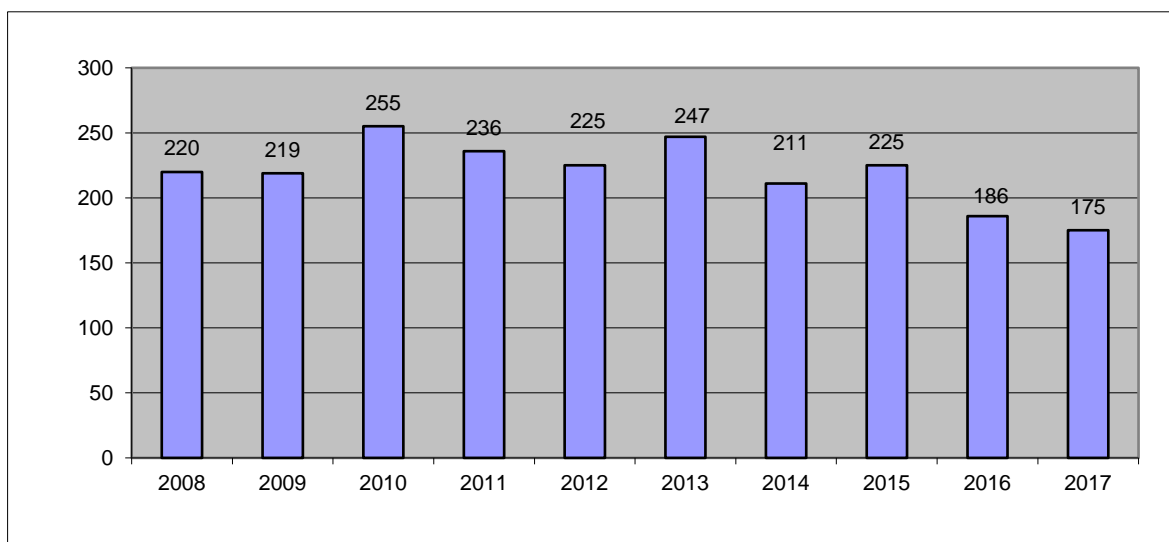
Decision*	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Totals
Unconditionally Approved	1	7	4	12
Approved with conditions	0	2	2	4
Provisionally Approved	52	59	25	136
Approval Deferred	10	4	3	17
Approval Declined	1	0	1	2
Referred	0	0	0	0
Withdrawn**	1	*2	1	4
Totals	65	74	36	175

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

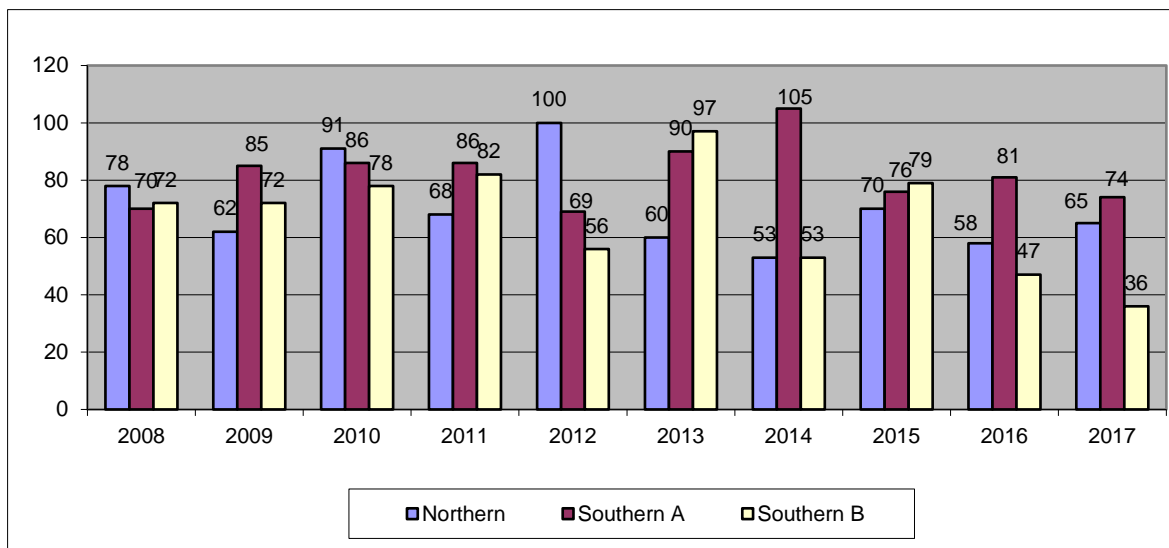
** 2 applications to be reviewed by a Health & Disability Ethics Committee (HDEC)

16.2 **Summary of Trends**

a) **Total Number of Applications Reviewed from 2008 to 2017**



b) Total Number of Applications Reviewed by Committees from 2008 to 2017



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
2017	251	308	108	667

b) **By College**

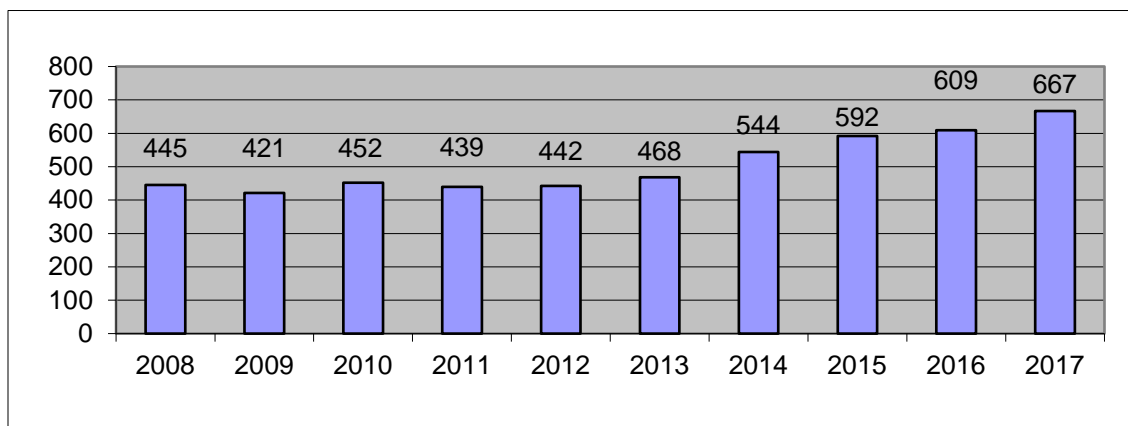
College	Albany	Palmerston North	Wellington	Totals
Business	79	69	21	169
Health	40	27	16	83
Humanities & Social Sciences	70	134	46	250
Sciences	61	73	1	135
Creative Arts	1	0	24	25
Administration	0	5	0	5
Totals	251	308	108	667

c) **By Project Type**

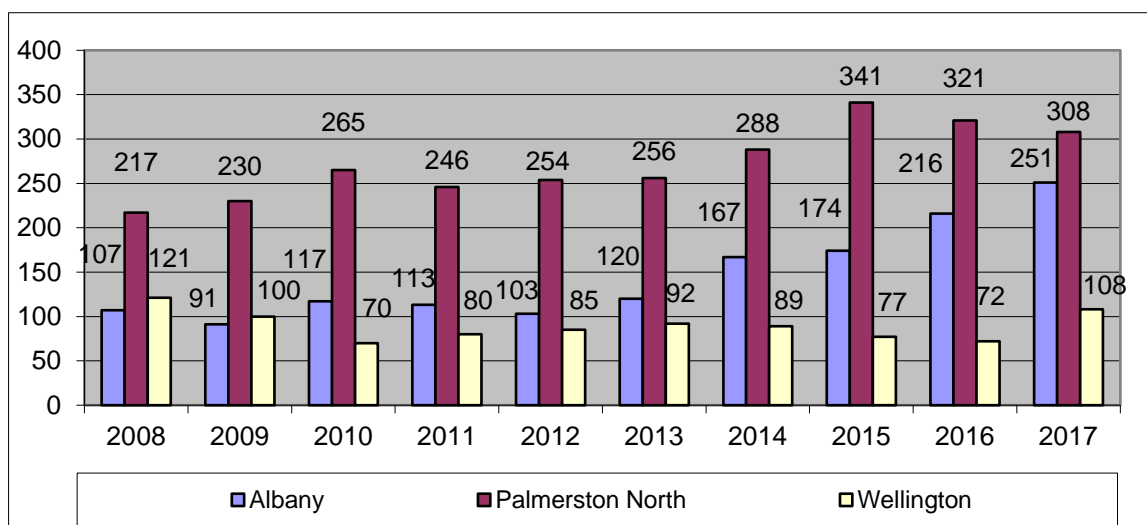
Project Type	Albany	Palmerston North	Wellington	Totals
Student Research	198	214	60	472
Staff Research	48	90	40	178
Teaching	5	1	6	12
Evaluation	0	2	1	3
Other	0	1	1	2
Totals	251	308	108	667

17.2 **Summary of Trends**

a) **Total Number of Notifications Received from 2008 to 2017**



b) Total Number of Notifications Received by Campus from 2008 to 2017

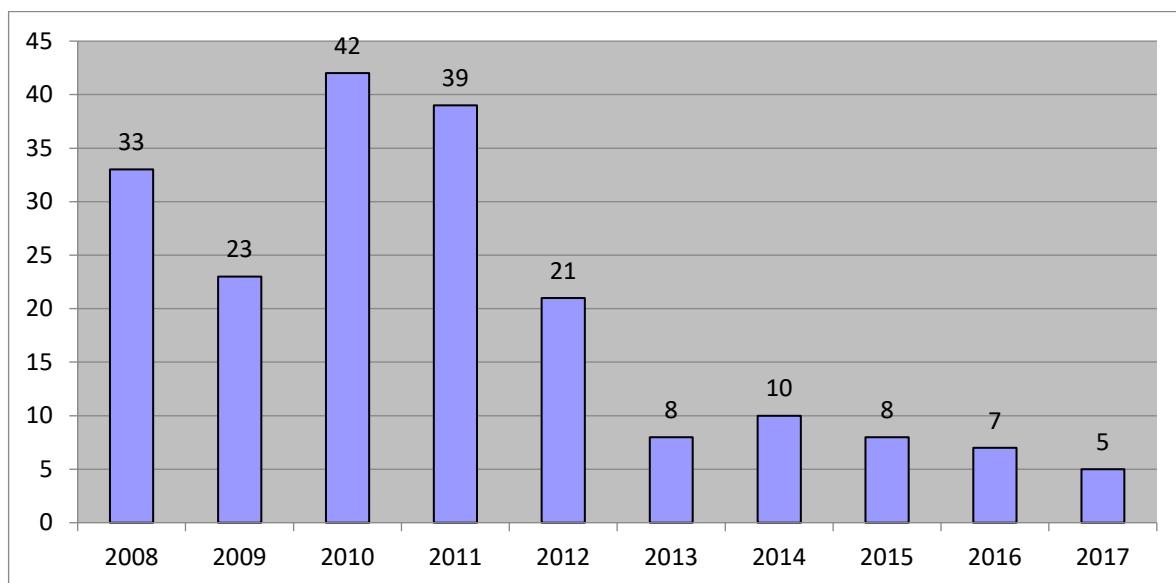


18. Research Requiring Approval by an HDEC

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.

In 2017, in response to new health and safety legislation and the replacement of the HDEC procedure flowchart to ascertain applications that should be reviewed by that committee; and following a small number of applications where the researchers were advised to submit their application to that committee after developing an application for the University committee, an audit was undertaken by the Chair of HEC: Southern A and the Team Leader, Research Ethics. All applications submitted since the start of online applications where there was a health focus were reviewed. No applications that clearly should have been submitted to HDEC were identified, however there were a number of applications that while not meeting the threshold for HDEC review, such as supervised studies of Masters level or below, were likely to have been of interest to HDEC due to the participant group or type of intervention. In addition, the new HDEC flowchart does not provide clear guidance for researchers to make an informed and timely decision about where their research fits, without completing another document and submitting that to HDEC. This has been noted in the Annual Report to the Health Research Council Ethics Committee along with a request for further guidance for institutional ethics committees.

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.



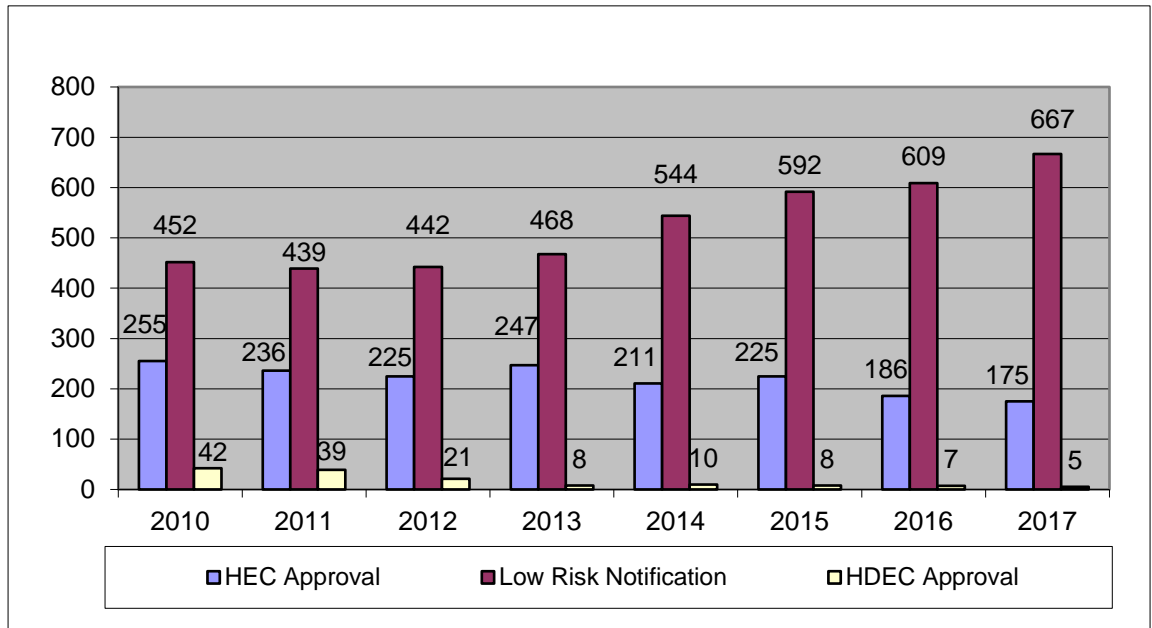
19. Overview

19.1 By Campus

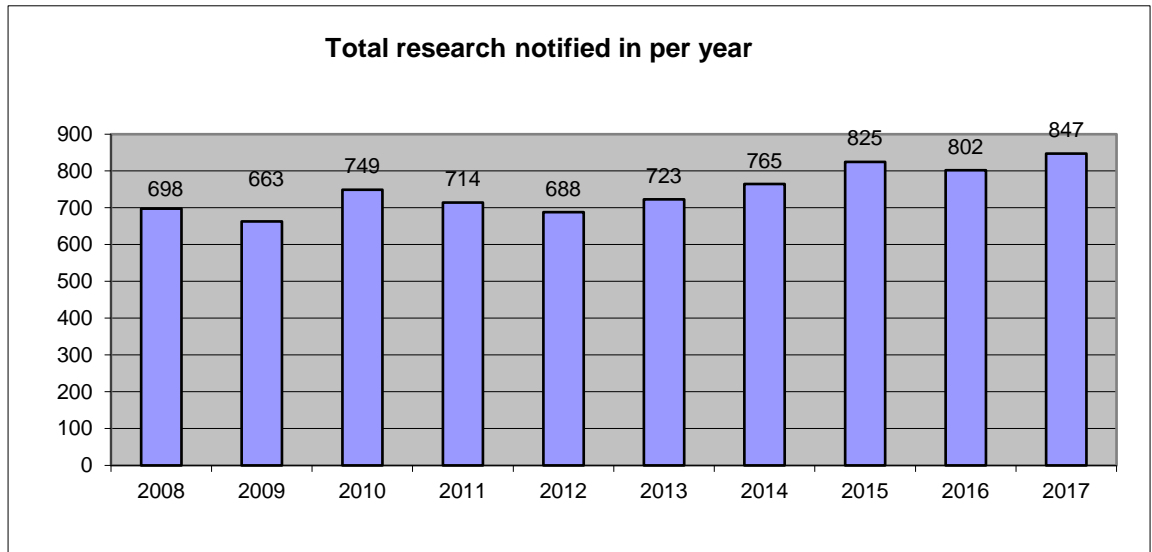
Project Type	Albany	Palmerston North	Wellington	Totals
Approvals***	73	76	26	175
Notifications	251	308	108	667
HDEC Notifications	0	2	3	5
Totals	324	386	137	847

*** 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 ongoing 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 as Team Leader, ensuring that the Office team continues to improve its engagement with and service to researchers. On behalf of the HECC, I wish to acknowledge the continuing support from Research Operations, through Oliver Britz, Viv Smith and Dr Jo Innes and from the Dean Research, Assoc. Prof Tracy Riley, and the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Research, Academic & Enterprise), Professor Giselle Byrnes.



Dr Brian Finch
Director, Research Ethics
Chairperson, Massey University Human Ethics Chairs Committee
25 January 2018