

Ethics Committee

Ethics Committee By-law

BY-LAW PURSUANT TO THE CONSITUTION OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF BOARD COMMITTEES

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References/Legislation	<i>Corporations Act 2001</i> (Cth)
Associated RACP Documents	Governance of College Body By-law, Appointments to College Bodies Policy, RACP Constitution
Applicability	Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand

Note: This is a controlled document within the [RACP Policy Framework](#). The Framework covers all RACP policies, procedures, by-laws, terms of reference, guidelines, forms and so forth. Any new documents or amendments of existing documents or changes to approver, owner or area of college should be done in accordance with the RACP Policy Framework and Document Control (RACP Policy Framework) Procedure.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Board of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians has established the Ethics Committee. The Governance of College Bodies By-law sets out the general provisions for governance of Board Committees. Both the Governance of College Bodies By-law and this By-law govern the Ethics Committee.

2. PURPOSE

The College's Board of Directors has established the Ethics Committee to advise the Board on ethical considerations in the context of policy and advocacy, education, clinical practice and the health of our communities.

In all its work, the Ethics Committee acknowledges that Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and Māori cultures, belief systems, and world views are foundational to understanding ethics in these lands.

3. FUNCTIONS

The functions of the Ethics Committee include:

- a) Raise ethical considerations in the context of policy and advocacy, education, clinical practice and the health of our communities.
- b) Consider and respond to ethical issues raised by members.

4. COMMITTEE PROHIBITIONS

The Ethics Committee must not:

- Enter into any agreement binding upon it or on the College; or
- Represent or imply in any way that the Ethics Committee is a body independent of the College.

5. MEMBER COMPOSITION

The Membership of the Ethics Committee shall comprise up to 14 members.

5.1. Appointed Members

Up to 8-10 members appointed via an Expression of Interest process comprising:

- up to seven (7) Fellow or Trainee members (including an Aotearoa New Zealand member)
- a Trainee member
- a Māori representative and an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representative, who may be Fellows, trainees or non-members of the College.

5.2. Independent Community Members

Up to 4-6 independent community members (non-members; persons external to the College) comprising:

- up to two (2) healthcare consumer representatives
- a non-clinical ethicist
- a legal professional who understands bioethical issues.

5.3. Co-opted Members

Co-opted members may be appointed for a particular purpose or term.

5.4. Member Skills

Members appointed in accordance with item 5.1 shall be appointed based on their experience and skills in:

- ethics
- continuing professional development
- education and training
- the Australian and/or Aotearoa New Zealand health systems, or
- any other experience and skills considered relevant for the effective and efficient operation of the Ethics Committee.

For members appointed in accordance with item 5.1, appointments should reflect the diversity of physician practice.

5.5. Member Terms

The Trainee member shall be appointed for a term of two (2) years and can only serve a consecutive two (2) year term if they do not become a Fellow of the RACP at the expiry date of their first two (2) year term.

The Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and Māori representatives may serve an additional three (3) year term in exceptional circumstances.

6. MEETINGS

This section is to be read in conjunction with the Governance of College Bodies By-law.

The Ethics Committee may, subject to resource limitations, convene an annual education event to be held in conjunction with a face-to-face meeting of the Ethics Committee. These events shall be open to all members of the RACP.

6.1. Number of Meetings

The Ethics Committee will hold no more than one face-to-face meeting and two videoconference meetings per calendar year, unless otherwise approved by the College Board.

6.2. Chair

The Chair or their appointee will Chair all meetings.

6.3. Quorum

A quorum is one half of the total Ethics Committee membership.

6.4. Voting

Decisions will be made by consensus of the majority of members.

6.5. Minutes

The proceedings of all meetings of the Ethics Committee shall be recorded in the minutes.

6.6. Secretariat

Meeting agenda, supporting papers and minutes or outcomes will be provided prior to the date of the meeting.

6.7. Committee Reviews

The Ethics Committee are to undertake a skill and experience review annually.

The Ethics Committee are to review their performance against this By-law every two years.

7. REPORTING

The Committee must report and make recommendations to the Board as required. Including any emerging, or risk management issues as required.

The Committee is required to provide to the Board each year:

- a new or updated Work Plan
- a report against the preceding years' Work Plan.

8. REVIEW OF BY-LAW

This By-law will be reviewed every three years.

9. DEFINITIONS

Term	Means
Board	The Board of Directors of The Royal Australasian College of Physicians

Term	Means
College	The Royal Australasian College of Physicians, an incorporated body limited by guarantee ACN 000 039 047.
College Body	Has the same meaning as in the College Constitution
Fellow	Has the same meaning as the Governance of College Bodies By-law
Member	Has the same meaning as the Governance of College Bodies By-law
Trainee	Has the same meaning as in the College Constitution.

10. HISTORY

Commencement		
This By-law was approved by the College Board and commenced on [21/11/2025]		
Revision	Effective Date	Summary of Changes
1.0	25.07.2014	Initial approval/New Document
2.0	19.03.2015	Amendment to clause 2.1.2 to reflect that the number of positions approved has increased from five to “up to six”
3.0	24.07.2015	Removal of clause 1.4.3 from the By-Law
4.0	12.02.2015	Change of composition to include Māori, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, consumer and legal representatives as well as non-clinical ethicist.
5.0	22.07.2016	Change to term, selection of Chair, and scope/purpose.
6.0	2.09.2016	Change to Meetings, Reporting and addition of definition of College Board
7.0	12.07.2019	<p>Previous Clause 6.2 moved up under Clause 1.1, and the word ‘exception’ was removed.</p> <p>Clause 2.1.3- Clause added to specify that the Committee shall comprise a Trainee member</p> <p>Clause 2.1.4 (previously 2.1.3) - Amendment to wording: a Māori representative and an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representative who may be Fellows, trainees or non-members of the RACP</p> <p>Clause 2.3 – Amendment to wording:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethics; and” <p>Clause 3.1 - Amendment to wording: Ethics Committee members with the exception of the Trainee representative shall be appointed for a term of three (3) years. These members of the Ethics Committee cannot serve more than two (2) consecutive terms.</p> <p>Clause 3.2 added: The Trainee representative member of the Ethics Committee shall be appointed for a term of two (2) years and can only serve a consecutive two (2) year term if they do not become a Fellow of the RACP at the expiry date of their first two (2) year term.</p> <p>Clause 3.3 added: The Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and Māori representatives on the Committee may serve an additional three (3) year term in exceptional circumstances.</p>

		<p>Clause 3.4 added:</p> <p>The appointments of Ethics Committee members shall, as far as practicable, be staggered to ensure continuity in the work of the Ethics Committee.</p> <p>Clause 5.2 added:</p> <p>The Ethics Committee may, subject to resource limitations, convene an annual education event to be held in conjunction with a face-to-face meeting of the Committee. These events shall be open to all members of the RACP.</p>
8.0	03.09.2019	<p>Clause added under Clause 1.1 to acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori cultures, belief systems and world views are foundational to</p>
9.0	11.12.2020	<p>Clause 5.1 –Amendment to wording:</p> <p>The Committee will hold no more than two one-face-to-face meetings and two or three teleconference-videoconference meetings per calendar year unless otherwise approved by the College Board.</p> <p>Clause amended to reflect Clause 13.4 of the RACP Governance of College Bodies By Law approved by the Board on 11 December 2020 which states that “up to one face-to-face meeting (unless otherwise approved by the Parent Body) per year may be funded for approved College Bodies.”</p>
10.0	17.12.2021	<p>Clause 2.2 amended to wording:</p> <p>The Chair and Deputy Chair will be appointed by the Board from the Committee’s membership. The Committee may recommend to the Board its preferred Chair and Deputy Chair.</p>
11.0	18.10.2024	<p>Clause 2.1 was amended to remove Clause 2.1.1, “a Member of the Board,” from the Composition of the Committee.</p> <p>Clause 2.1.2 was amended to be new clause</p> <p>2.1.1 “up to seven (7) Fellow or Trainee members (including a New Zealand member).”</p> <p>Clause 2.3 was amended to be in sequence with the amendment to Clause 2.1 member of the Board position.</p>
12.0	22.10.2025	<p>Previous By-law transferred to new template, minor wording changes throughout document; major amendments highlighted for approval. Changes discussed and approved by the Ethics Committee at their meeting on 22 October 2025.</p>