



## **Procedure to respond to complaints to the VIFM Ethics Committee from researchers**

Where concern is expressed by, or a complaint received from, a researcher who has applied to the Ethics Committee, the following procedures should be used:

1. Concerns or complaints should be directed in the first instance to the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee.
2. The Executive Officer should endeavour to ascertain as fully as possible the nature of the complaint. If the complaint is initially received verbally, detailed notes should be taken or the Executive Officer should ask the complainant to provide the complaint in writing.
3. On receipt of a complaint, a written acknowledgment should be promptly sent by the Executive Officer to the complainant. This acknowledgment should briefly re-state the nature of the complaint and outline the principles and procedures used by the Ethics Committee for handling complaints, and the expected timing for further contact with the complainant.
4. The Executive Officer should then alert the Chair of the Committee to the complaint, who should, in the first instance, attempt to resolve the concern or complaint by negotiation with the complainant.
5. If this process is not successful, a grievance panel will consider the matter. The grievance panel will be made up by:
  - A nominee of the complainant, from his/her institution or organisation
  - A nominee of the HREC (not the Chairman)
  - A representative of the VIFM Council.
  - An external person who is familiar with research and research ethics.
6. The complainant and the Chair of the HREC will present their cases to the panel, whose decision will be final.
7. The panel will only be formed if, and when, the need arises.