



Ethics Research Committee (ERC) External Audit: Strengthening Ethics Approval Processes



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The Ethics Research Committee (ERC) at the Faculty of Pharmacy, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), was officially established in September 2024. The committee is responsible for reviewing and approving ethics applications for research projects conducted by undergraduate and Master's by Coursework students. The current committee members are as follows:

- **Chairperson:** Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mahmathi Karuppannan
- **Deputy Chairperson:** Dr. Janattul Ain Jamal
- **Secretary:** Mdm. Farhana Fakhira Ismail
- **Members:**
 - Dr. Norkasih Ibrahim
 - Dr. Wong Yuet Yen
 - Dr. Choon Wai Yee
- **Laypersons:**
 - Mr. Fairos Abdul Hamid
 - Mr. Muhammad Hamdi Othman
- **Secretariat:**
 - Mdm. Zaleha Mahadi
 - Ms. Nur Halina Mustafa

On 22 - 23 July 2025, the Faculty hosted an external audit of the ERC, focusing on the ethics approval processes. The audit was chaired by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Farha Ariffin, supported by panel members including Dr. Astrid Sinarti Hassan, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tarita binti Taib, Dr. Muhd Hanis Md Idris, Dr. Amnah Azahar, and secretariats Assoc. Prof. Dr. Khasnur Abd Malek, ChM. Muhammad Hisyam Jamari, and Mdm. Nurul Athirah Johar.

Conducted in accordance with institutional requirements and recognised best practices in research ethics governance, the audit evaluated ethics applications procedures for three academic programmes:

PH240 – Bachelor of Pharmacy (Honours)
PH777 – Master in Clinical Pharmacy
PH778 – Master in Pharmacy Practice

Several research studies were randomly selected by the auditors to assess procedural adherence and ensure alignment with the established ethical framework. The audit included the evaluation of completed application forms, ERC meeting minutes, and relevant standard operating procedures (SOPs). The audit confirmed that the Faculty has a well-defined process in place for reviewing coursework-related research proposals. This includes standardised application forms and structured review workflows tailored to each programme.

Findings and observations were formally presented at a closing meeting on 23 July 2025. The session was attended by the Dean, Prof. Dato' Dr. Abu Bakar Abdul Majeed, Deputy Deans, Heads of Departments, ERC members, and other faculty representatives. The audit panel provided constructive feedback, noting strengths and identifying areas for improvement, particularly in improving process clarity, consistency, and overall efficiency.

In her concluding remarks, lead auditor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Farha Ariffin acknowledged that while the Faculty's ERC framework is functional and operational, there remains room for improvement. The findings and recommendations have been received with full commitment, and the Faculty ERC, led by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mahmathi Karuppannan is dedicated to addressing them to ensure that the ethics approval process remains clear, efficient, and in line with the highest standards of research governance.

