



# UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

University of Toronto  
Governing Council

**Procedures for the Human Rights Review  
of International Projects, Agreements,  
and Other International Activity**

September 2, 2025

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## Procedures for the Human Rights Review of International Projects, Agreements, and Other International Activity

On June 17, 1982, the Governing Council approved an [International Cooperation Policy](#). The first principle of the policy states:

The University of Toronto reaffirms the value and necessity of international cooperation between members of its community and members of appropriate communities and organizations abroad provided that such cooperation does not violate fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Between 1982 and the development of these procedures in 1993, there was no agreed procedures to maximize the potential for the promotion and protection of human rights through the University's international activities, including research projects, exchanges, agreements, institutional partnerships, and less formal types of cooperation. The procedures which are spelled out here are designed to fill this gap in a way which ensures that the academic objectives of proposals are given appropriate weight and the academic freedom of investigators is fully respected.

A review process is provided which is designed to focus on concrete situations rather than on generalized exclusions. As a result, that process may lead to the recommendation that projects can be further strengthened as to their contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights, or that certain proposals be declined in countries with governments with clearly unacceptable human rights records, dependent on the specific human rights implications of the program itself. That is, although the general record of a country might be a reason to initiate a review, it will not be sufficient reason to advise against authorization; and proposals that do not themselves contribute directly or indirectly to human rights abuses would be recommended for approval. The focus should be on the relationship, if any, between the proposed activity and the violations of human rights occurring in the country.

The Vice President, Research and Innovation and the Vice President, International, in consultation with the Provost, will appoint an eight-member Human Rights Review Committee. Members of the Review Committee will be drawn from the President's International Councils as well as from outside of the councils' membership. The Vice President, Research and Innovation and the Vice President, International will appoint a Chair from among the members of the Committee.

Where there is some question relating to the human rights implications of a proposal, the Vice-President Research and Innovation, the Vice President, International, or the proposer should discuss the proposal with the Chair of the Human Rights Review Committee. Particularly when large-scale projects are proposed, the proposer may seek advice from the Human Rights Review Committee at a preliminary stage.

These discussions could lead to:

- a. the proposal going forward without the Committee's review, if the Chair is satisfied that its implementation would not lead to the violation of human rights; or
- b. modification by the proposer and reconsideration by the Chair or withdrawal by the proposer; or
- c. consideration by the Human Rights Review Committee. (The Committee's comments could lead to a responsive modification by the proposer.)

Before expressing reservation or recommending referral, the Chair will make his or her determination on the basis of a review of sources from such institutions as the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the Government of Canada, and various national and international independent non-governmental human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International. The determination will be made within 30 days of receiving the fully-documented proposal.

The Office of the Vice President International will provide staff and administrative support for the Committee. The review process will include discussions with the proposer, experts on the country and the academic field of the proposal and, if requested, with a representative selected by the department or the division involved.

In formulating its advice, the Committee will use the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a reference point, while attempting to take due account of the breadth and complexity of human rights issues, and consider ways to contribute to and further strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights in the country of the project. It will also give due weight to the academic goals of the proposal. The Human Rights Committee will present its advice to the Vice President, Research and Innovation and the Vice President, International, who will make the final decision as to whether or not the University of Toronto should be involved in the particular international activity. The Human Rights Review Committee will also convey any concerns relating to human rights to the proposer. The Vice Presidents' decision will be made not only on the basis of the Committee's advice relating to the human rights implications of the activity, but also on academic, business, public relations and a range of other relevant considerations, in accordance with applicable university policies.

*June 3, 1993 – Initially approved.*

*September 2, 2025 – Amended to reflect an update in position titles and committee structure.*