



Human Ecology Professional Ring Terms of Reference

Purpose of this document

To describe the nature of and eligibility for the official ring of the profession of human ecology and home economics (HE) in what is now known as Canada. At the University of Alberta (U of A), the HE ring has been granted by the academic unit, through several transitions (e.g., from the School of Household Economics to the Faculty of Home Economics and since the mid-1990s, the Department of Human Ecology). Through these Terms of Reference, oral and written practices from the past 55+ years are documented as a basis for the future.

Background

The idea for a ring as a national symbol for home economists and human ecologists (HEs) came from the students at the University of Saskatchewan in the mid-1960s. The students wanted to celebrate the journey of their degree and have a shared, tangible reminder of the purpose and impact of their chosen profession. In 1966, they brought the concept to the annual convention of the Association of Canadian Home Economics (Human Ecology) Students (ACHES). In 1967, the official design of the ring was adopted by ACHES members. In 1968, the Canadian Home Economics Association (CHEA) endorsed the ring (McGregor, 2022). See Appendix A for a photo of the ring.

Graduands may apply for a professional ring in the final year of study. Each university is responsible for its own Ring Ceremony at which the professional pledge is recited in unison by all graduands. See the pledge on page 4. At the U of A, as part of each year's undergraduate-class event, a special, presentation ceremony occurs.

Purpose of the HE Professional Ring

The purpose of the HE professional ring is to act as a unifying force within the profession and to raise and maintain public awareness of the profession. The HE ring is a "national symbol representing professional home economists and tangible proof of the ideas and ethics of the profession. Graduates in degree programs in home economics where there is an active student association are eligible to obtain the ring" (Kieren et al., 1984, p. 65).

Eligibility

A person earns the privilege of wearing the ring. It represents a commitment to share responsibility for upholding the ethics and obligations of the profession (McGregor, 2022, p. 12).

The ring may be worn by a person who has completed a post-secondary, HE degree. At the University of Alberta, this includes: BSc Human Ecology; Master of Arts or Science in an area of specialization within the Department of Human Ecology; and PhD in Human Ecology.



Additional types of undergraduates may apply for the ring if they have taken the following course, **HECOL 100** (“Introduction to Principles and Practice in Human Ecology”), **and either of these paths** (both of which require HECOL 100):

Path A	Path B
HECOL 408 plus HECOL 409 = The Human Ecology Practicum which is: • a requirement in the BSc (Human Ecology); • an option for BSc (Fashion Business Management) and BSc (Nutrition & Food Science, with an HE Minor).	BEd (Secondary Education) with either: • a Major in Human Ecology (offered until ~2015); • a Major in Human Sciences (~2015 to present). HECOL 100 is a required course: https://calendar.ualberta.ca/preview_program.php?catoid=69&poid=110488

With this foundation, if a graduand identifies with the HE profession and supports HE’s shared purpose or mission, then they may apply for the ring. See Appendix B for a list of HE mission statements.

The history and purpose of the ring are introduced in HECOL 100 and HECOL 408 (“Intentional Professional Practice”) in the context of the HE profession, its purpose or mission, and ethical responsibilities.

Design of the Ring

The ring was originally designed in 10 karat yellow gold with a shank (or band) and ten facets each with a Florentine finish of crosshatched lines. In 2006, the Association of Canadian Home Economics (Human Ecology) Students (ACHES) changed their constitution to allow graduates to choose white or yellow gold. This change expanded the symbolism from denoting “the warmth of home and family” to “the warmth of human connection.” In addition, white gold created an option for individual preference within the shared profession; white gold is more durable for everyday wear.

Between 1968-1999, graduands and alumni ordered the HE ring through the head office of the Canadian Home Economics Association (CHEA) (McGregor, 2022). Since 2003 when CHEA dissolved, rings have been organized regionally through authorized jewellers. Tara Jewellers (Edmonton) was authorized to use the approved form/mold (10 etched facets with shank). In 2021, upon retirement, the owner of Tara Jewellers gave the form/mold to a jeweller who had previously worked at Tara Jewellers: **J.M. Turner Goldsmith Inc.**

Website: <http://jmtgoldsmith.com/> Email: jmtinc@shaw.ca Tel: 780-939-3920

Address: 9602 100 Street, Morinville, Alberta T8R 1V4

Symbolism of the Ring

To wear the HE ring means that a person has demonstrated clear capacity to carry out the intent of the ring and its professional pledge. The ring is worn on the small finger of a person’s working hand.



In the broadest sense, the ring symbolizes the interdependent bond of HEs and a commitment to the shared professional purpose or mission. The circular form of the ring represents the necessity of union of the many specializations and evolving nature of the profession to fulfill our purpose of enhancing the well-being of individuals, families and communities. Collaboration is critical for effecting change together (Kieren et al., 1984, p. 67).

The rationale for 10 facets varies across the country. In 2022, Sue L. T. McGregor drafted *A History of the Canadian Home Economics Professional Ring*; she reported that “when symbolizing the facets on the ring, ACHES did not name any ‘specific area of home economics because of the difficulty of doing so, and the evolving nature of the profession’” (p. 9, citing Carol Lemieux, March 10, 2022, who cited an undated newsletter from the Alberta Human Ecology and Home Economics Association; AHEA).

At the University of Alberta, in a 2007 document by Kathryn Chandler, the facets were described as representing: human relations, human development, resource management, consumer education, foods & nutrition, design & aesthetics, habitat, community development, clothing and textiles, and culture.

With time, as a ring is worn as part of everyday life, the etching and then the facets might wear away; at that stage, the smoothness of the gold band “represents the cohesion of the profession ...” (Alleyne Murphy, March 3, 2022, cited by McGregor, 2022, pp. 7, 10).

Ring-Application Process

As staff liaison between the BSc graduating class planning committee and the Department of Human Ecology, the practicum coordinator advises the committee on the annual round of applications and ordering process of the ring. In late November of each year, the committee announces the application process. Applications are due by late January. On behalf of the Department of Human Ecology, the practicum coordinator reviews each ring application to determine if an applicant is on track to graduate in a given year. The committee places the ring order by mid-February. The jeweller completes the rings by late March.

Once made, rings are held by the Department of Human Ecology until:

1. The Ring Ceremony during the undergraduate-class event in April of each year. Students who have applied for the ring and who will convocate in June receive their ring during the ceremony.
2. In November of each year, the practicum coordinator will contact students who have applied for the ring and will convocate in November (i.e., for students who have completed their academic requirements by the end of August).
3. For graduate students and alumni who have applied for a ring, the practicum coordinator will contact them to arrange for ring pick-up.



Alumni of degree-granting programs may order their rings through this annual process. Or, an alum may order a ring as an individual. Either way, U of A alumni should contact the practicum coordinator who will verify their degree and then introduce the alum to the jeweller.

Ring Ceremony

The Ring Ceremony marks a significant and much anticipated moment of transition from student life into careers as professionals, as they strive to make decisions with people in everyday life, as part of life-sustaining societies, with Earth's living systems.

To include all of the graduands, whether they have applied for a professional ring or not, the graduating class planning committee arranges for a flower (e.g., a yellow rose) to be given to each graduand during the ceremony to honour and signify the achievement of an HE degree.

Through this ceremony, the Department of Human Ecology expresses pride in graduands' accomplishments. In the 2020s, the graduating class planning committee and the practicum coordinator have invited an executive member of the Alberta Human Ecology and Home Economics Association (AHEA) to participate in the ceremony. Representing the Department of Human Ecology, the practicum coordinator who is also a Professional Human Ecologist (PHEc with the) announces each graduand's name; they cross the stage to be greeted by the practicum coordinator and given a flower and if they are graduating in spring and if they have applied and paid for a ring, then they are given their ring, too. The AHEA executive member then gives each graduand an envelope with an invitation to apply for Candidacy membership (i.e., the preparatory step for applying for registered status as a PHEc).

After all of the graduands have crossed the stage, the practicum coordinator invites the group to recite the pledge that is part of this ceremony.

The Pledge

As a demonstration of commitment to the shared purpose/mission of the HE profession, graduands are invited to state publicly and in unison the following pledge.

"In accepting this ring as a symbol of our profession, I pledge:

- *To demonstrate my competence in the body of knowledge unique to my facet of Human Ecology [or Home Economics];*
- *To further the development of human potential through working together with other disciplines;*
- *To help families and individuals realize a more satisfying life;*
- *And to live creatively in a changing world."*

Review

This document shall be reviewed by the Department of Human Ecology every three years.



Consultation has occurred with:

- Dr. Rhonda Breitzkreuz, Chair of the Department of Human Ecology;
- Justin Gabinet, BEd, PHEc, and Ewelina Warchol, BEd, PHEc, for their insights regarding BEd graduates with a Major in Human Ecology/Human Sciences, University of Alberta.

Approved by the Human Ecology Department Council on: May 12, 2026.

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Appendix A: Photo of the HE Professional Ring

This photo of the human ecology/home economics ring was provided by Tara Jewellers (November 2019) and was endorsed by J.M. Turner Goldsmith Inc. (2021).

**Appendix B: Shared Mission of Human Ecology / Home Economics (HE)**

The following list provides insight into the evolving language about the shared mission of the field of study and profession that is human ecology / home economics (HE).

In 1907, Ellen Swallow Richards, an early founder of HE in what is now known as North America, described two missions of “human ecology”:

- “educating about science for better living, and
- living in harmony with the environment” (as cited in Nickols & Collier, 2015, p. 16).

In 1978, Brown and Paolucci stated that:

“The mission of home economics is to enable families, both as individual units and generally as a social institution, to build and maintain systems of action which lead

- (1) to maturing in individual self-formation and
- (2) to enlightened, cooperative participation in the critique and formulation of social goals and means for accomplishing them”

(Brown & Paolucci, 1978, p. 23, as cited in Bubolz & Sontag, 1988, p. 3).

In 1988, Bubolz and Sontag wrote that:

- “The mission of human ecology extends the above mission [stated by Brown & Paolucci, 1978] to incorporate the global interdependence of individuals, families and communities with the resources of natural, constructed and behavioural environments for the purpose of wise decision making and use of resources essential to human development and the quality of life and the environment.
- Human ecology views the family as a major source of nurturance and renewal of its members, helping prepare them for productivity for self and society. Human ecology views the near environment as a source of essential resources and as the setting for human behaviour and development” (p. 3).



In 1990, Vaines stated that HE is “a mission oriented profession” (p. 7). Vaines (1994) discussed that our mission is “...inclusive in nature, and means we deeply care about each other and about all living systems” (p. 62).

In 2011, McGregor presented the HE mission as: “To enhance the well-being of families and individuals” (p. 31).

In 2015, Nickols and Collier observed that: “The field is broad and complex, increasingly requiring more specialized knowledge, yet continuing to address issues that are interrelated in complicated ways in daily life” (p. 30).

In 2026, the Department of Human Ecology’s Strategic Plan presents our mission to: “Enhance everyday life through our research, teaching, and service to prepare the next generation to provide solutions for the present and a sustainable future” (p. 6).