ETHICS AND INTEGRITY IN RESEARCH

HART COHEN
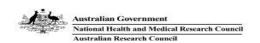
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND COMMUNICATION ARTS

WHAT WILL BE COVERED:

- National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research;

- The purpose of ethical processes in research;

- The relationship between ethics and integrity in research;

- Generative AI and its impact on integrity in research

- Key decision making in the ethics application process;

- New revisions due to start October 2025;

- HREA and Project Description Proforma – Practice

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2025

https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2025

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2025

Australian Government
National Health and Medical Research Council
Australian Research Council

UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA

National Statement
on Ethical Conduct in Human Research
(2025)

BUILDING
A HEALTHY
AUSTRALIA

NHMRC

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The Purpose of Ethical Processes in Research

Purpose

The purpose of the National Statement is to promote ethically good human research. Fulfilment of this purpose requires that participants be accorded the respect and protection that is due to them. It also involves the fostering of research that is of benefit to the community.

The National Statement is therefore designed to clarify the responsibilities of:
institutions and researchers for the ethical design, conduct and dissemination of results of human research; and review bodies in the ethics review of research.

The National Statement will help them to meet their responsibilities: to identify issues of ethics that arise in the design, review and conduct of human research, to deliberate about those ethical issues, and to justify decisions about them.
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PURPOSE OF THE NATIONAL STATEMENT

Impact: To promote trust and confidence in the processes of research and to achieve significant outcomes and benefits for those who participate in, fund and use research.

GUIDELINES

Research Merit and Integrity: Contribution to Knowledge; peer review

Justice: Access to benefits of the research (and by participants)

Benefit: Risk/benefit analysis; minimize harm;

Respect: Informed Consent; decision making;

Themes in research ethics: risk and benefit, consent

RISK LIES ON A CONTINUUM

Lower risk	Higher risk (Individual, group, community, societal or global)		
Minimal	**Low**	**Greater than low**	**High**
No risk of harm or discomfort; potential for minor burden or inconvenience*	No risk of harm; risk of discomfort (+/- foreseeable burden)	Risk of harm (+/- foreseeable burden)	Risk of significant harm (+/- foreseeable burden)

TYPES OF HARM

- physical harm:
- psychological harm:
- devaluation of personal worth:
- cultural harm:
- social harm:
- economic harm:
- legal harm:

Assessing Risk: Risk/Benefit; Risk Mitigation

Low Risk: Low and Negligible Risk (LNR)
Committee Assessment:

RISK/ MITIGATION ?
Discomfort/

Do the benefits justify the risks?

CONSENT

Consent should be a voluntary choice and should be based on sufficient information and adequate understanding of both the proposed research and the implications of participation in it.

What is needed to satisfy these conditions depends on the nature of the project, and may be affected by the requirements of the codes, laws, ethics and cultural sensitivities of the community

CONSENT

GUIDELINES:

- VOLUNTARY
- BASED ON SUFFICIENT INFORMATION (HENCE *INFORMED CONSENT*)
- MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN RESEARCHERS AND PARTICIPANTS

TYPES OF CONSENT

WRITTEN
VERBAL
IMPLIED
WAIVER (CONDITONS APPLY)
LIMITED DISCLOSURE (CONDITONS APPLY)
OPT OUT (CONDITONS APPLY)

SPECIFIC : LIMITED TO SPECIFIC PROJECT

EXTENDED: USE IN FUTURE RELATED PROJECTS

UNSPECIFIED: USE IN ANY FUTURE RESEARCH (SPECIAL)

KEY TERMS

lower risk (research) Research in which there is no risk of harm, but in which there is a risk of discomfort and in which there may also be a foreseeable burden (low risk research) OR research in which there is no risk of harm or discomfort, but which includes a potential for minor burden or inconvenience (minimal risk research).

higher risk research Research in which there is a risk of harm and in which there may also be a foreseeable burden. The risk of harm in higher risk research may or may not be a risk of significant harm and may be harm on the individual, group, community, societal or global level (see Chapter 2.1, Figure 1).

END OF SECTION 1

END OF SECTION 1

QUESTIONS?

Ethics and Integrity in Research

The University encourages and promotes ethical conduct and integrity in research. Through practical guidelines and advice, Australian researchers are assisted to meet both national and international standards.

As the NHMRC states: 'Integrity' is one of the key themes in our strategy for health and medical research. We aim to maintain a strong **integrity framework** for research and guideline development. This strengthens the foundations of research and accurate guideline development and promotes **community trust**.

Ethics and Integrity in Research

Research merit and integrity
1.1 Research that has merit and integrity is:

(a) Justifiable by its potential benefit:
• contribution to knowledge and understanding,
• to improved social welfare and individual wellbeing, and
• to the skill and expertise of researchers.

(b) Designed or developed using methods appropriate for achieving the aims of the proposal.

Ethics and Integrity in Research

Research merit and integrity
1.1 Research that has merit and integrity is:

(c) Based on a thorough study of the current literature, previous studies *

(d) Designed to ensure that respect for the participants is not compromised.

(e) Conducted or supervised by people or teams with experience, qualifications and competence that are appropriate for the research.

(f) Conducted using facilities and resources appropriate for the research.

Ethics and Integrity in Research

- Ethics works through the maintenance of integrity:

- Manage conflict of interest.
- Avoid harm to participants and researchers.
- Commit to evidence-based research outcomes and systems set to assess them.
- Make decision-making on ethics guidelines transparent.
- Consult broadly on ethical guidelines with community groups, consumers and anyone potentially affected by research practices.

End of Section 2

End of Section 2

Questions?

AI and Integrity in Research

KEY ISSUES IN the IMPACT of AI and the Ethical Conduct of Research

• UNESCO's *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence 2021-22*

TOOL 1: ETHICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TOOL 2: READINESS ASSESSMENT METHOD

AI and Integrity in Research

Discussions centre on AI's impact on:

- research accountability,
- transparency,
- the authenticity of academic outputs.

As AI capabilities expand, so does the dilemma:
Does AI enable researchers to publish better, faster, and more efficiently or
does it create shortcuts that derail rigorous scholarship?

AI and Integrity in Research

"AI is neither wholly an ally nor an adversary. It offers the potential to enhance research while simultaneously presenting new ethical risks."

AI's Impact on Academic Research Integrity

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08911762.2025.2488060#d1e161

AI and Integrity in Research

Peer review is being transformed.

AI-powered tools:

StatReviewer,

Proofig, and

SciScore

They can assist editors by:

- flagging statistical inconsistencies,

- detecting image manipulation, and

- assessing compliance with ethical standards,

- assist with sorting raw data,

- proofreading manuscripts, and

- streamlining administrative tasks

AI and Integrity in Research

RISKS and NEGATIVES of AI

• Text recycling, ghostwriting, and fraudulent publications, often through "paper mills" (Stokel-Walker & Noorden).
• AI-forged datasets and falsified peer reviews,
• Publication of fabricated research.
• AI-generated fraudulent datasets and peer reviews:
• Issues of authenticity and transparency,

AI and Integrity in Research

RISKS and NEGATIVES of AI

• Losing consumer trust when AI-generated messages are perceived as insincere or manipulative.

• The opacity of AI decision-making processes put transparency and accountability at risk.

• Biased datasets can perpetuate and amplify existing inequalities.

• Peer verification becomes increasingly difficult when synthetic data, such as that produced by generative adversarial networks (GANs), skew research outcomes.

AI and Integrity in Research

Guidelines and suggestions on AI use in research and publishing:
to promote responsible, transparent, and ethical AI use:
1. Be transparent about AI use
2. Maintain scholarly integrity
3. Uphold ethical standards in research
4. Responsible use in peer review and editorial processes

By fostering transparency, accountability, and inclusivity, we aim to support a responsible and innovative scholarly environment.

AI and Integrity in Research

TEXT
◆ Tools such as ChatGPT and Bard use AI to generate human like text based on prompts, past conversation or google-app integration.

IMAGE
◆ Products such as DALL-E, MidJourney or DeepDream use text prompts or photographs to generate images such as photographs or artworks.

MUSIC AND AUDIO
◆ Magenta and Lyrebird are examples of AI platforms where users can use machine learning to generate music or imitate human voices.

VIDEO
◆ Video generators use a variety of media types to quickly create realistic video content.

DRUG DISCOVERY
◆ AI can be used to assist in drug discovery by analyzing trends, patterns and molecule structures to help identify and predicted the outcomes and effectiveness of existing and novel drugs.

AI and Integrity in Research

Relevant Links:

◆ National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) - Updated 2018
https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018

◆ Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018
https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2018#block-views-block-file-attachments-content-block-1

Useful Resources:

◆ Specific challenges posed by artificial intelligence in research ethics
https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frai.2023.1149082/full

◆ TESQA Resources on Artifical Intelligence
https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources/higher-education-good-practice-hub/artificial-intelligence

◆ CSIRO Discussion paper: AI Ethics Framework
https://www.csiro.au/en/research/technology-space/ai/ai-ethics-framework

◆ UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380455

END OF SECTION 3

Questions?

The Decision Tree

Human Research Ethics Decision Tree

Exemption from Ethical Review

This tool will assist you to determine whether your activity (research, quality assurance or evaluation) can be exempted from ethical review.

The Decision Tree

Are you conducting research or a research-like activity?
Research is widely understood to include at least investigation undertaken to gain knowledge and understanding or to train researchers. Human research is conducted with or about people, or their data or tissue. Human participation in research is therefore to be understood broadly, to include the involvement of human beings through:

The Decision Tree

Is the activity lower risk?
An activity in which there is no risk of harm, but in which there is a risk of discomfort and in which there may also be a foreseeable burden (low risk research) OR research in which there is no risk of harm or discomfort, but which includes a potential for minor burden or inconvenience (minimal risk research).

The Decision Tree

What type of activity are you conducting?

- Research
- Quality Assurance/Evaluation

The Decision Tree

CATEGORY A: Are you conducting **research** that involves the use of collections of information or data from which all personal identifiers have been removed prior to being received by the researchers?

Yes

No

The Decision Tree

Do the researchers agree:
(i) not to attempt to re-identify those with whom the information or data is associated;
ii) to take all reasonable steps to prevent re-identification of the information or data for unauthorised purposes or access to the information or data by those who are not authorised;
and
(iii) that any sharing of any research data during or after the project will not create any additional risks of re-identification of the information or data
Yes
No

The Decision Tree

Your research may be exempt from ethical review. Please submit an [Application for Exemption](#).

NOTE: Many scholarly journals require evidence of ethics approval. Please consider this carefully before applying for an exemption because ethics approval cannot be granted retrospectively. If in doubt, please apply for ethics approval.

END OF SECTION 4

QUESTIONS?

New revisions due to start October 2025

NEW NATIONAL STATEMENT: 2025 (Updated from 2023)

"We have a new ethics management system being implemented. The aim is to replace the current HREA + Project Description application. It will be an online form, customised for us by the developer. It will minimise the duplication which we currently have between the HREA + PD. It will also make ethics review a lot more streamlined.
Ethics reviewers will be able to place their comments right at the point in the application where they are relevant, similar with commenting under a post on social media. And the applicant will then be able to address the comment right there, both in the sense of updating the app and writing their reply to the reviewer's comment. Amendments will also be a lot easier to make. And there will be a dashboard that shows the status of your projects, upcoming deadlines and expiry dates etc."
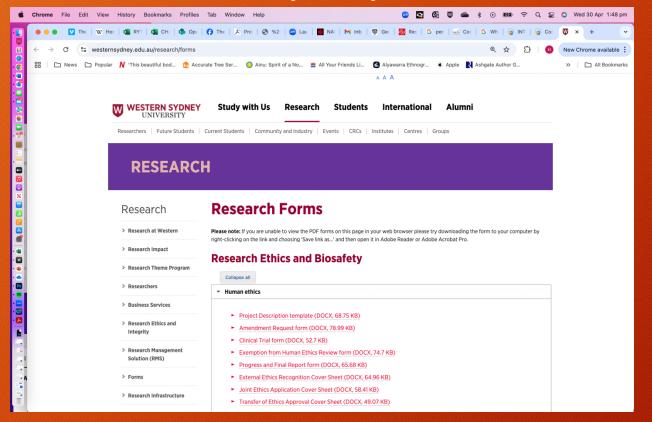
Mark Antoniou, Chair, LNR Committee

Western Sydney University Human Ethics

https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/research_ethics

LINKS: **Research Forms: Research Ethics and Biosafety**

https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/forms

LINKS: **Research Forms: Research Ethics and Biosafety**

westernsydney.edu.au/research/forms

News | Popular | N 'This beautiful bod... | Accurate Tree Ser... | Ainu: Spirit of a No... | All Your Friends Li... | Alyawarra Ethnogr... | Apple | Ashgate Author G... | All Bookmarks

► Project Description template (DOCX, 68.75 KB)

► Amendment Request form (DOCX, 78.99 KB)

► Clinical Trial form (DOCX, 52.7 KB)
   Clinical Trial form

► Exemption from Human Ethics Review form (DOCX, 74.7 KB)

► Progress and Final Report form (DOCX, 65.68 KB)

► External Ethics Recognition Cover Sheet (DOCX, 64.96 KB)

► Joint Ethics Application Cover Sheet (DOCX, 58.41 KB)

► Transfer of Ethics Approval Cover Sheet (DOCX, 49.07 KB)

► **Human ethics – Participant Information Sheets and Consent forms**

Ethics and Integrity in Research

QUESTIONS?