

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS PROCEDURE

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1 PURPOSE

This procedure supports the *Human Research Ethics Policy* by documenting the requirements and processes for ensuring the ethical and responsible conduct, and review, of human research at the Australian National Institute of Management and Commerce (IMC).

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the *Human Research Ethics Policy*.

2 SCOPE

This procedure applies to all staff, students, honorary appointees, and any others engaged in research at IMC, or under the auspices of IMC, including in joint research projects with other institutions or organisations. Further, the procedure applies to members of committees and governance bodies that are involved in the approval, management, or review of research.

3 PROCEDURES

3.1 Review Framework

All human research conducted at IMC must be submitted for ethical review, and must only proceed once approval is given, and is subject to any conditions imposed.

Retrospective ethics approval will not normally be granted. Research involving human participants must not commence until ethics approval has been obtained.

There are four categories of ethics approval outlined below, each with different processes calibrated to take account of the type of research and the level of risk to human participants involved in the research.

In this context:

- “negligible risk” describes human research which involves only accessing existing collections of non-identifiable human data or records; and
- “low risk” describes human research that involves no foreseeable risk to human participants other than possible discomfort.

3.1.1 Course Clearance Ethics Approval:

Course clearance ethics approval relates only to learning and teaching data collection. The Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) may approve teaching and learning activities involving negligible risk data collection for coursework purposes. Such activities are not normally considered independent human research projects requiring Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) review, unless the data is intended to be used for research purposes or dissemination beyond the course. In such instances, an application for ethical consideration would be sought with the appropriate HREC prior to research publication or dissemination.

3.1.2 Low Risk Ethics Approval:

The Research and Scholarship Committee (RSC) or a sub-committee of the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) may approve human research projects that are of negligible risk or low risk.

3.1.3 Full Review Ethics Approval:

Only the HREC may approve research projects that have a risk level above low.

3.1.4 Collaborative Research with Another Institution:

Research projects carried out in collaboration with another institution may be approved under the processes of that other institution, provided that those processes align with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2023* and IMC’s research policies and procedures. In such instances documentation confirming approval must be provided to the Research Office, which will maintain a register, and regularly update the HREC, regarding such projects.

3.1.5 Guidelines as to which category of ethics approval is required, and the procedures for applying for each type of ethics approval, are set out in the *Human Research Ethics Procedure*, as amended from time to time. In preparing

human research applications, researchers must be guided by the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2023*, which also assists in determining the risk level of their research.

Where there is uncertainty as to which category of ethics approval is required for a particular project, then the Research Office should be contacted for clarification.

3.2 Expedited Ethics Review

Expedited ethics review may be used for Low Risk Ethics Approval.

3.2.1 Applications

- Applications for expedited review must be lodged with the Chair of the RSC using the relevant form. Applications may be lodged at any time and will be reviewed as soon as is practicable.
- The ethical review process normally takes up to one month but may take longer if external expert advice is required. No proposed human research may commence, including participant recruitment and collection of data, until written approval is received from RSC
- Applications for expedited review must be accompanied by all required documentation, including:
 - research proposal information, including evidence of the merit of the project;
 - participant information and consent forms;
 - data collection tools;
 - endorsement/s from supervisors/peers; and
 - any other specific information which may be relevant to human research ethics assessment and approval.

3.2.2 Conditions of Approval

- The period of approval for human research projects is normally a maximum of three years.
- During the approved period, research activities are monitored by the RSC and where necessary HREC, which may also conduct audits of those activities.
- Researchers must submit reports on their research activities to the HREC annually, or more frequently if required by the HREC.
- Amendments to initial approval conditions require the written approval of the HREC, and must not be actioned until that approval has been granted and communicated in writing.
- Researchers are required to report adverse events or consequences arising from their research, as soon as they become evident, to the Director of Research, who will inform the Chair of the HREC or delegate.
- Final reports on human research projects must be lodged with the HREC by researchers once the project has been completed or discontinued.
- Complaints and non-compliance are managed in accordance with the

IMC's policies and procedures, the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2023*, and the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018*.

3.3 Full Ethics Review by the Human Research Ethics Committee

Full Ethics Review must be used for research that has a risk level greater than negligible or low.

3.3.1 Applications

- Applications must be created via the NHMRC's HREA Form Portal [Human Research Ethics Application form | NHMRC](#), and then downloaded and lodged with the Research Office.
- For consideration at a particular meeting of the HREC, an application must be lodged at least three weeks prior to that meeting.
- No proposed human research may commence, including participant recruitment and collection of data, until written approval is received from the HREC.
- Applications for ethical review must be accompanied by all required documentation, including:
 - research proposal information, including evidence of the merit of the project;
 - participant information and consent forms;
 - data collection tools;
 - endorsement from supervisors/peers; and
 - any other specific information which may be relevant to human research ethics assessment and approval.

3.3.2 Conditions of Approval

- The period of approval for projects is generally a maximum of three years.
- During the approved period, research activities are monitored by the HREC, which may also conduct audits of those activities.
- Researchers must submit reports on their research activities to the HREC annually, or more frequently if required by the HREC.
- Amendments to initial approval conditions require written approval of the HREC, and must not be actioned until that approval has been granted and communicated in writing.
- Researchers are required to report adverse events or consequences arising from their research, as soon as they become evident, to the Chair of the HREC through the Director of Research and Scholarship.
- Final reports must be lodged with the HREC by researchers once the project has been completed or discontinued.
- Complaints and non-compliance are managed in accordance with the IMC's policies and procedures, *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2023*, and the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018*.

3.4 Monitoring of Approved Research

IMC implements the following monitoring procedures.

3.4.1 Annual Progress Reports

Researchers must submit annual progress reports to the HREC for all approved **human research** projects. These reports should include:

- a summary of research progress;
- any changes to the approved protocol;
- unanticipated problems, including changing risks to participants;
- adverse events or consequences arising from the research; and
- list of any publications or presentations resulting from the research

3.4.2 Continuous Monitoring

Researchers must promptly report any of the following to the Research Office, which informs the HREC:

- proposed changes to the approved research protocol;
- unanticipated problems, including changing risks to participants;
- complaints from research participants; and
- breaches of confidentiality or data security

3.4.3 Site Visits

If human research projects are moderate to high risk, or involve vulnerable populations, the HREC may conduct site visits or request additional information to ensure compliance with approved protocols.

3.4.4 Final Report:

On completion, or discontinuation, of any human research project, researchers must submit a final report summarising the research outcomes and any significant findings, and confirming the secure storage or destruction of data as required by the approved protocol and IMCs data storage requirements.

3.4.5 Audits of the Conduct of Research:

The HREC will conduct annual audits of a sample of approved projects to ensure:

- adherence to ethical research practices;
- proper management of conflicts of interest;
- appropriate handling of commercially sensitive information;
- ethical use of data; and
- adequate data and information security and confidentiality.

The HREC has the authority to suspend or terminate approval of human research that is not being conducted in accordance with the approved protocol, or where there is unexpected serious harm to participants. Any such actions will be promptly reported to the Academic Board and to relevant regulatory bodies.

3.5 Research Ethics Training:

IMC provides:

- a comprehensive induction covering responsible and ethical research and research integrity, which is mandatory for persons commencing research at IMC or under the auspices of IMC; and
- regular refresher training on responsible and ethical research and research integrity, with a focus on emerging issues in areas where research is conducted at IMC or under the auspices of IMC. Researchers and supervisors at IMC must participate in this refresher training at least every three years.

3.6 Complaint Procedures

- All complaints are managed in accordance with IMC's relevant policies and procedures. These reflect IMC's commitment to sensitivity, confidentiality, transparency, and procedural fairness in the handling of complaints, and to ensuring that complaints may be raised without fear of reprisal.
- Complaints may relate to the ethical review process or to suspected research misconduct.
- Any person may report to the Research office suspected research misconduct. Reports should be made in good faith and with sufficient detail to enable a considered assessment of the nature and severity of the misconduct.
- IMC reviews the outcomes of complaints, and the conduct of the related investigations, to identify and address any underlying, systemic issues giving rise to complaints.

4 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- i. Code of Conduct for Research Policy*
- ii. Conflict of Interest Policy*
- iii. Guidelines on Minimum Resources for Higher Degree by Research Students*
- iv. Higher Degree by Research Supervision Policy*
- v. Higher Degree by Research Supervision Procedure*
- vi. Human Research Ethics Policy*
- vii. Research Materials and Data Management Policy*
- viii. Student Academic Integrity Policy*
- ix. Student Academic Integrity Procedure*
- x. Student Complaints and Appeals Policy*
- xi. Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure*

5 VERSION CONTROL

Historical Version	Approved by	Approval Date
2026.05	Research and Scholarship Committee	12 May 2026
2024.11	Deputy President	20 November 2024
2022.08	Academic Board	25 August 2022
2019.05	Academic Board	29 May 2019
2013.12	Academic Board	19 December 2013

6 STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP/MAINTENANCE

The Research and Scholarship Committee oversees the implementation of, and compliance with, this Policy. For any enquiries or clarification, please contact policy@imc.edu.au.