

School of Languages and Cultures Ethical Clearance Procedures Guidelines and Checklist

(Undergraduate Projects, Honours, MA (coursework), MPhil, PhD)

General Guidelines

This document is for research involving human participants carried out by Research Higher Degree, postgraduate coursework, honours and undergraduate students in the School of Languages and Cultures.

All human interaction, including the interaction involved in human research, has ethical dimensions. However, 'ethical conduct' is more than simply doing the right thing. It involves acting in the right spirit, out of an abiding respect and concern for one's fellow creatures. *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* is

...oriented to something more fundamental than ethical 'do's' and 'don'ts' – namely, an ethos that should permeate the way those engaged in human research approach all that they do in their research. (National Statement 2007, p. 3)

All research projects involving human participants carried out by students in the School of Languages and Cultures require ethical clearance. Student applications, up to and including PhD level, are considered by the School Ethics Committee chaired by the Ethics Officer. The current Ethics Officer is Associate Professor Helen Creese, who can be contacted at ethics@languages-cultures.uq.edu.au.

No research involving human participants can begin before ethics approval is given. The School Ethics Committee meets at regular intervals throughout the year and applications must be received by the advertised due dates.

Because your responses will reflect the ethical considerations and guidelines contained in the *National Statement* and UQ interpretations, it is not possible simply to fill in the form with a 'common sense' answer. Failure to read the documentation and to respond to the questions, in terms of the ethical considerations attached to your research, will generally result in delays to approval. The guidelines below are designed to help you complete the application form by directing you to relevant sections of the *National Statement*. These suggestions are only starting points and you should read all the relevant sections of the *National Statement* including the Preamble.

Essential Resources

The key resource to guide your application is the National Statement on <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e72syn.htm>

Before you begin your application, you should also review the UQ ethics documentation web page at: <http://www.uq.edu.au/research/integrity-compliance/human-ethics>

It is essential that you consult with your advisors at all stages of the process. Project and thesis advisors (Course Coordinators Honours, Postgraduate Coursework and Research Higher Degree) are required to sign off on applications. By doing so, they certify that they consider that the project has been appropriately developed and meets disciplinary norms and

expectations and that the ethical clearance application is complete and meets the requirements of the University's ethical clearance procedures. It is your responsibility to follow the procedures and guidelines outlined below in preparing an application for ethical clearance.

Allow yourself plenty of time to work on your application and to get feedback from your advisors. Applications that are incomplete or deal inadequately with the required information will be returned to applicants for reworking. If extensive revision is required you may be asked to resubmit the application in the following application round.

Before you apply for ethical clearance, you should have attended one of the Ethical Clearance seminars held regularly in the School. The seminar will usually be integrated into one of the research methodology courses taught in the School and will be advertised to staff and research students via e-mail.

The Application Form

You must answer every question. Missing or incomplete answers can lead to delays in ethical clearance approval.

Personal Information (page 1)

- Complete all details including: Project Title, your Student No, supervisors' names and emails, contact details including your UQ student email address. Personal email accounts such as gmail, hotmail or yahoo must **not** be used.
- Project Location: where the data will be collected
- Project Duration refers to the entirety of your project not just the data collection phase. For coursework students the project duration will normally be 1-2 semesters; for RHD students it is the anticipated length of candidature.
- Other Approvals: Answer both questions A & B.

Question 1: Participants.

Give a concise but comprehensive answer about who will be participating in your research. (See *National Statement Preamble* and **Section 1**)

Question 2: Special Groups

The *National Statement* has identified certain groups with specific ethical considerations. Researchers must take special care to protect the interests of these groups if they are in any way involved in the project. The National Statement Chapter 4 explains the specific needs of particular participant groups, including those that are currently referred to in this question. Those groups include: **pregnant women and the foetus** (Ch 4.1); **children and young people** (Ch 4.2); **people in dependent or unequal relationships** (Ch 4.3); **people highly dependent on medical care** (Ch 4.4); **people with cognitive impairment, intellectual disability, or mental illness** (Ch 4.5); **people involved in illegal activities** (Ch 4.6); **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** (Ch 4.7); **people in other countries** (Ch 4.8).

This is a key question with four parts. It determines many of the ethical considerations for student projects in the School of Languages and Cultures. In preparing your research project and application for ethical clearance, you should investigate thoroughly, through

consultation with supervisors, colleagues in your school and other professional groups/organizations, how these special groups may or may not be represented in your research and if participation in this research could have a negative impact on members of any of these groups.

The groups most relevant to research in the School include:

- Chapter 4.2 Children and young people
- Chapter 4.3 People in dependent or unequal relationships
- Chapter 4.8 People in other countries
- People in Australia belonging to other cultural or ethnic groups

If you are undertaking research that involves the participation of any special groups you must complete the declaration at Question 2a) confirm that you have read the relevant statement. You must explain your response, not just check one of the boxes.

NB: Irrespective of the level of risk involved, **involvement of any other group, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Chapter 4.7), requires the application to be referred to the central UQ Human Ethics Research Committee.**

See <http://www.uq.edu.au/research/integrity-compliance/human-policies-legislation>

Question 3: Participant Recruitment Details

This question seeks details of how you will make contact with the participants and the gatekeepers, if required. You need to explain how you will approach the context (i.e., place, situation) and access the participants and where relevant, how permission to access participants will be obtained. See, *National Statement Section 1: Values and principles of ethical conduct*. In this question, outline only the recruitment details. The specific ethical considerations of how you will deal with the participants (e.g., information sheets, consent forms, contact details) need to be dealt with in Questions 6-9.

Question 4: Aims and Benefit

Give a concise clear summary of your project aims and benefit. “Benefit” in this question is not only concerned with the academic rationale for your project. Provide a brief overview of the context of your research but focus on issues that incorporate the fundamental principles of ethical research by following the guidelines concerning the assessment of risk and benefit outlined in the *National Statement*. See especially **Chapter 2.1 Risk and benefit** and **Chapter 3.1 Qualitative methods**.

Please do not include lengthy and complex explanations of the research study being conducted. Literature reviews are especially not helpful when considering the ethics of a proposed study. The summary of the project and the research plan should be clearly explained so that the committee can judge whether all ethical issues have been considered. Keep your answers brief, exact and to the point of the question. If you find yourself repeating information in the form this means you have not answered the questions appropriately.

Question 5: Research Plan

Please only include information relevant to the Data Collection aspect of your study The Ethics Committee needs to know precisely what you will do and how you plan to carry out your research. The committee is seeking this information to consider the ethical considerations that you will outline in Question 6.

See also *National Statement Chapter 3.1* and **Chapter 3.2**.

In answering this question consider: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?

In the table, list each stage and the answers in chronological progression

RESEARCH STAGE: when will the data be collected; indicate an approximate time (eg December 2016) and the stage in the project if there are multiple stages

DATA COLLECTION: specify approximate time (eg 1.5 hours); where will it take place (school office, home etc) and by whom (researcher, a teacher etc)

PARTICIPANTS: which participants will be involved in data collection and how many.

Question 6: Ethical Considerations

Here you must consider the issues related to the ethical conduct of your particular research project. Do not replicate information found elsewhere in the application. This question does not necessarily require a solution to any ethical issues that may be part of the project but you must indicate you have considered carefully the implications of any ethical issues (including the involvement of special groups).

Questions 7-8 Consent and confidentiality

The *National Statement* deals at length with issues of informed consent. The most important sections to note are **Chapter 2.2** and **Chapter 2.3**. Where it is appropriate, it is no longer a requirement to have written consent from participants. This change allows greater flexibility for research conducted with other cultural groups. If you are not planning to seek written consent from participants, you must provide a justification. **Chapter 4.8** provides useful guidelines. See also Question 16.

A separate Participant Information Sheet will be required for each group and written in a manner and language appropriate to the age level/understanding of the at group. All PIS must be included with the application. Only final copies need to be on School letterhead.

7b). “Gatekeeper” Approvals

A “gatekeeper” or “permission-giver” is a person authorised to write a Letter of Authority and Recognition from an organisation of any type involved with the research, which gives permission to the researcher for access to the population under the “gatekeeper’s” or “permission-giver’s” authority.

For example, if you wish to conduct research in schools and the participants are the school teachers, then gatekeeper approval will need obtained from the relevant education authority (eg, Education Queensland) and the School Principals before you may approach those school teachers in recruitment. Or, if you wish to access staff from a private organisation, then similarly, gatekeeper approval will usually be required from senior personnel or an appropriate manager who is able to grant such access to approach that organisation’s staff in recruitment.]

Question 9-11: Data Collection and Storage

These questions require you to consider the most appropriate way to collect and store your data. Please note that it is not a requirement (nor necessarily an advantage) to have the data non-identifiable; in many cases it is appropriate to have re-identifiable or individually identifiable data. See also the National Statement **Chapter 2 Management of research data and primary materials** and **Chapter 3.2 Databanks**. Remember that if your data are non-identifiable you cannot or will not be able to determine or attribute to any participant the data each participant submitted. This approach may be entirely appropriate for your research topic. There is no “correct” answer to these questions. What you must do, though, is provide a justification or explanation for the approach you will take in your research.

Note that video data is always potentially individually identifiable

Question 12 Feedback

Feedback is not compulsory but applicants are encouraged to think of ways they can share their final findings with participants. For example, you could offer to conduct a seminar for school staff; you could offer to provide a copy of the thesis or final project. Please consider your methodological timeframe if you include information here about ‘member-checking’ processes of feedback.

Question 13-14: Level of Risk

The School’s Ethics Committee may only consider project in the two bottom categories: negligible (no foreseeable added risk above the risks of everyday living) and low (minimal) risk. If your project involves higher levels of risk, the application will in most cases be referred to the University’s HREC. The time needed for approval from University-level committees can be much longer. The School Ethics Committee may suggest modifications to your project to allow review at School level. The *National Statement* deals in detail with levels of risk. The School Committee can only deal with low risk projects as defined in the *National Statement Section 2.1*.

Question 15: Withdrawal

Please give a careful and considered answer to Question 15. You need to fully inform participants about how their data will be managed if they withdraw. As well as making this clear in this question please ensure that it is included in the information sheets and consent forms. Even with informed consent participants must be able to withdraw at any time, and to be able to withdraw without explanation; no degree of persuasion or coercion can be used. It is essential that you address this requirement in your project methodology so that your research can still be completed if some participants withdraw. See National Statement **Chapter 2.2.19-2.22**.

Question 16-17: Funded research and conflict of interest

These question will usually be answered ‘No’ as most student research is not funded. However, should the student’s research be funded, these questions need completion.

Supporting Documentation

The following paragraph must appear on all information sheets concerning your research project.

This study adheres to the Guidelines of the ethical review process of The University of Queensland. Whilst you are free to discuss your participation in this study with project staff (contactable on [insert your phone number here]), if you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study, you may contact the Ethics Officer of the School of Languages and Cultures on (07) 3365 2270 (within Australia), +61 7 3365 2270 (international), or email at ethics@languages-cultures.uq.edu.au

NB: If the language in which Participant Information Sheets, Consent Forms and other documents such as questionnaires or surveys are written is not English, an English translation must be provided.

Amendments

If there are significant changes to the data collection process during your research project then an application to amend the approval to conduct research must be submitted. Those changes that require an amendment relate to the ethical conduct of the study. For example if the participant cohort changes, or if the data collection methods change, then the ethical considerations will also change.

Audits

Please note that the Committee reserves the right to visit the research site and view materials at any time, and to conduct a full audit of the project.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

1. **You** submit your application as ONE Word or PDF document, attached to an email sent from your student email account. The subject line of the email must be in the following format: FAMILY NAME Ethical Clearance Application (eg SMITH Ethical Clearance Application).

You must include the following declaration in the body of your email and forward it to your Principal Advisor/Supervisor.

STUDENT DECLARATION:

I have read The University of Queensland Human Ethics Policies and Legislation (<http://www.uq.edu.au/research/integrity-compliance/human-policies-legislation>) and agree to abide by them in the conduct of this research. It is understood that this includes the reporting and monitoring roles associated with the approval by The University of Queensland.

2. **Your Principal Advisor/Supervisor** should then forward the emailed application, including the following declaration in the body of their email to ethics@languages-cultures.uq.edu.au.

PRINCIPAL ADVISOR DECLARATION:

I have read the student's Application and believe it is an accurate indication of the research/data collection to be undertaken. The application is at a standard ready for consideration by the Committee.

3. Due dates for Ethical Clearance Applications for 2016 are: 27 March, 29 May, 7 August, 24 October and (if required) 18 November.
4. The School Ethics Committee meets at regular intervals (usually within two weeks of the closing dates for applications) but is not able to consider applications from students on an *ad hoc* basis.
5. Applications from RHD students should be submitted at least one month prior to the anticipated research/fieldwork activity. In most cases, ethical clearance procedures must be completed prior to, or at the time of, confirmation of candidature.
6. Honours and Masters coursework students must submit their applications by the final closing date (usually May and October) in the semester prior to their thesis studies.