

A Program of Research and Human Research Ethics Review

To facilitate research in UWS while also ensuring institutional compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), the following guidelines relating to *programs of research* have been developed to assist staff and students.

The new National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) comprises a greater focus on peer review and risk management within what remains a strong formal reporting and compliance regime. The National Statement and the UWS Code of Conduct, requires all staff and students seeking to conduct research with humans to apply for and receive clearance from the UWS Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

Researchers conducting a coherent *program of research* involving a series of *very* closely related research projects or replication of the *same* study with similar populations in different sites can apply for HREC approval for the *program of research* to a maximum of 5 years, obviating the necessity for iterative applications to HREC.

The criteria for HREC approval of a program of research will be the same as that for a single research study, namely compliance with the principles of research merit and integrity, justice, beneficence and respect detailed in the National Statement (2007).

Does this apply to my research?

Key definitions:

1. A *program of research* is a coherent program of research comprising a suite of very closely related studies or replication of the same study conducted over an extended period of time.
2. A *phase* in a program of research consists of a new wave of data collection with the same instruments and population or a new wave of data analysis using methods outlined in the original program of research or the appointment of a new staff member or student to the program of research to undertake analyses of the data.

Typical examples of a *program of research* include:

1. Identical analyses conducted on time series data. A typical example would be identical annual analyses of aggregated anonymous data collected through the UWS student feedback data collection activities (CEQ, SFU and SFT).
2. The repeated administration and analysis of the same instruments administered to the same population in one or more sites over an extended period of time. A typical example would be the administration of the same interview schedule to 15-17 year olds in different schools through-out the State over a five year period.

How do I get HREC approval for a *program of research*?

HREC approval for a *program of research*, as distinct from a single, isolated study, requires the research to satisfy the following three conditions:

1. Meets the criteria for a *program of research* provided.
2. The consent provided as part of the data collection is consistent with the aims, methods and analyses in the program of research.
3. The application for HREC approval of a *program of research* explicitly details in the lay summary that it is an application for approval of a program of research
4. The program of research meets the standard criteria of research merit and integrity, justice, beneficence and respect required of all HREC applications.
5. The process for consideration of applications is the same as that for single project applications. In the case of unfunded research, the research merit and integrity will be attested to by the College Peer Review Committee prior to be forwarded for HREC review. Applications related to funded programs of research will go directly to HREC via the Human Ethics Officer.

How many times do I have to apply for HREC approval?

HREC approval is only required *prior* to commencement of a program of research. Multiple HREC applications for different phases of the program are not required.

When a new phase of the *program* is about to commence, the lead/first named Principal/Chief Investigator is required to email the Human Ethics Officer and notify that a new phase in the program is about to be conducted. Subject to this condition, the same HREC protocol number will apply to all phases of the program of research. The failure to provide notification of a new phase in the program will result in withdrawal of the HREC approval and protocol number. Research with humans cannot be conducted by UWS staff or students without a HREC approval and protocol number.

For further advice

Please contact the Human Research Ethics Officer humanethics@uws.edu.au