

RESEARCH PROJECT REVIEW FOR COVID-19

In response to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, the following information should be used by all ECU researchers to review their current ethics approved research and make informed decisions about its progress in the immediate to short-term future.

Underpinning these recommendations is the latest [advice](#) from the National Health and Medical Research Council. While the advice pertains to Clinical Trials, the recommendations may be applied to any research involving humans.

What should I do?

To assess the practicability of continuing your research, we have divided research projects broadly in to three categories:

1. Approved research which has not yet commenced recruitment or data collection;
2. Approved research which is currently in the recruitment or data collection phases; and
3. Approved research which has concluded recruitment and data collection phases.

For each project you are involved in, please refer to the guidance below to determine if your research project can continue in the immediate future and take the appropriate actions accordingly.

1: Approved research which has not yet commenced recruitment or data collection phases

All research which has received ethics approval, or is currently undergoing ethics review, should be assessed under the following categories:

1.1: Physical contact is required for recruitment and/or data collection

If you need to make physical contact with participants in order to recruit them to your research project OR to collect data from participants, you should make plans to delay the start of your approved research. Please email the Research Ethics Team to seek an extension and/or the Research Grants Team if you need to seek an extension to your externally funded research project.

1.2: Physical contact is NOT required for recruitment OR data collection

If you do not need to have physical contact with participants for recruitment OR data collection, you may still be able to continue with your project after reviewing the [NHMRC COVID-19 guidance](#). If your project meets these NHMRC criteria, you may proceed with your research. If it does not, please email the Research Ethics Team to seek an extension and/or the Research Grants Team if you need to seek an extension to your externally funded research project.

2: Approved research which is currently in the recruitment or data collection phases

All research which has received ethics approval and is within the phases of recruitment and/or data collection, must be reviewed in accordance with the [NHMRC COVID-19 guidance](#) and assessed under the following categories:

2.1: Physical contact is required for recruitment and/or data collection

If you need to make physical contact with participants in order to recruit them to your research project OR to collect data from these participants, you should refer to the [NHMRC COVID-19 guidance](#). If the guidance document suggests your research should be suspended, please contact the Research Ethics Team to seek an extension and/or the Research Grants Team if you need to seek an extension to your externally funded research project.

If you can proceed with modifications (for example changing the methodology to use Zoom or Teams to collect data), please send through a request for amendment to the Research Ethics Team who will send this amendment for review by a specially convened panel. Please allow up to a week for this review to be completed. Variations to projects may also need to be reviewed by the Research Grants Team.

Please note there may be situations where withholding the research project from participants may be unethical and/or detrimental to the participant's health. In these situations where you would like to continue with your research project unchanged, please also submit an amendment for review by the HREC including a strong argument for why the project should remain unchanged.

2.2: Physical contact is NOT required for recruitment OR data collection

If you do not need to have physical contact with participants for recruitment OR data collection, you may still be able to continue with your project after reviewing the [NHMRC COVID-19 statement](#). If your project meets the NHMRC guidance, you may proceed with your research. If your research does not meet the guidance, your research should be suspended. Please email the Research Ethics Team to seek an extension and/or the Research Grants Team if you need to seek an extension to your externally funded research project.

3: Approved research which has concluded recruitment and data collection phases

For all research which has concluded recruitment and data collection phases may continue as planned. If you intend to take research records off campus, please complete a Data Management Plan so we can securely track these research records in accordance with the WAUSDA guidelines and Privacy Act. Please email the [Research Integrity Team](#) for information relating to Data Management Plans.

The [Research Ethics Team](#) and [Research Grants Teams](#) are available by email during business hours should you have any further questions.

New research ethics applications are welcome and will continue to be reviewed as normal. Please allow additional time for research ethics and contracts review at this time given the increased demands on staff workload.