

Conducting research in countries other than Australia

ECU Research Governance have developed a range of guidelines which describe the institutional position on key ethical matters. These guidelines should be used by ECU researchers and reviewers alike to ensure the ethical conduct of research at ECU is consistent with the University's position as well as other external guidelines, policies and legislation.

Background

This guideline provides advice to ECU staff members and students who plan to conduct research in countries other than Australia. Chapter 4.8 of the National Statement indicates the following:

“When a researcher from an Australian Institution proposes to conduct research in another country, additional ethical considerations may arise. In some situations, regard for the beliefs, customs and cultural heritage of participants will require recognition of values other than those of this National Statement. Sometimes these values will be in tension with one or more of the ethical values of this Statement. Sometimes the legal, regulatory or ethical review processes of another country may also demand conduct that is in tension with the ethical values of this National Statement.”

National Statement, page 80

Furthermore, the preamble to Section 4 of the National Statement indicates that ethical review by a Human Research Ethics Committee is required for research that is described in Section 4.8. For this reason, ECU Research Governance have prepared this guideline to outline the requirements of research involving people in other countries and how this research will be reviewed at ECU.

Please note that this guideline may not be applicable to ECU students located on international ECU campuses who are undertaking data collection for the purpose of teaching and learning activities. In such circumstances a unit licence may be applicable.

Guideline

1. Where research involving people in other countries is presented to ECU for ethical review, the principles outlined in Chapter 4.8 of the National Statement always apply.
2. For ECU led research, the level of ethical review will be determined by the research context and enterprise risk. Therefore, there may be some variability in the actual pathway for research projects. However, the level of ethical review will typically be determined as follows:
 - a. For online research where participants are asked to take part in an anonymous survey distributed by ECU researchers, the review may be conducted via the most appropriate review pathway for the risk associated with the research;
 - b. For research where ECU is the only institution involved (i.e. no other Australian or international institution, agency or organisation is involved), but data are being collected from people in other countries, the review should be conducted by the ECU Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC);
 - c. For research where ECU is the lead institution and the research involves other parties who will be collecting or leading research within other countries who do not have a process for ethical review, the review should be conducted by the HREC; or
 - d. For research where ECU is the lead institution and the research involves other parties who will be collecting or leading research within these other countries where local

ethical review **will be** sought, the review can be conducted by the most appropriate review pathway for the risk associated with the research. These research projects should have robust agreements in place between all international parties. Please contact research-grants@ecu.edu.au for more information.

3. Where the research is being led by another institution, ECU will provide reciprocal approval when the lead organisation's ethical review is consistent with the principles of the National Statement. If the lead organisation's ethical review is not consistent with the National Statement, a full application should be submitted by the ECU lead researcher and the principles outlined in Chapter 4.8 of the National Statement will apply. The lead institution may request ECU enter into data sharing agreement, especially if the research is based in Europe and the requirements of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) need to be met. Please contact research-grants@ecu.edu.au if you need assistance with a data sharing agreement.

Further Information

1. [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#)
2. [Research Data Management at ECU](#)
3. Collecting research data in the European Union - [Australian entities and the European Union General Data Protection Regulation](#)
4. [Guidelines to counter foreign interference in the Australian university sector](#)

Contact information

For queries relating to this document please contact research.ethics@ecu.edu.au

Version History

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Research Governance	5 October 2021	5 October 2024