ECU Unit Licence

Ethical Risk Assessment

*Please use this form to complete the Ethical Risk Assessment for your Unit.  
This form must be submitted along with your application.*

In the process of completing this form, please first read the examples given below which relate to classifying risk in human research ethics. For a Unit Licence to be granted, your project should include data collection that involves no risk to participants, above the every day. For more information about risk in human research, please see booklets 9 and 20 of the ECU Research Ethics Manuals.

# Risk Levels

Broadly, a Unit Licence will be granted to projects which involve no risk to participants above the every day. Some projects comprising minimal or low risk may also be included in some circumstances. The following describes examples of each.

1. **Data collection involving no risk to participants above the everyday**

This type of data collection includes:

* non-invasive procedures;
* no apparent risk to participants above the everyday norm; and
* circumstances where participants (and/or organisations) are not identified.

# *Examples*

* use of questionnaires/surveys (that do not involve sensitive questions) sent to average adult participants, and returned anonymously so that participants cannot be identified; or
* recording information from groups of participants (rather than individual participants) in an educational setting where participants are not identified.

1. **Data collection involving minimal or low risk to participants**

This type of data collection includes:

* non-invasive procedures;
* minimal or low risk to participants above the everyday norm (not including physical, psychological and social risk); and
* circumstances where participants (and/or organisations) may be identified during data collection but steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality.

*Examples*

* use of a questionnaire or interview that does not involve sensitive issues, where participants may be identified during data collection; or
* data collection involving children or young people, with parental consent, that is not part of a normal instructional or educational activity.

**Using the Ethical Risk Checklist**

The ethical risk checklist comprises a series of Yes / No questions designed to determine the risk level of the data collection process. In some cases, it is possible that some items on the ethical risk checklist are ticked **“YES”** but the project would still be considered to be low or minimal risk. An example of this might include:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **YES** | **NO** |  |
| **X** |  | Children and young people (under 18 years of age) who will be involved in activities other than in normal instructional or educational activities. |

In cases where the **“YES”** option has been ticked, further information should be provided. The explanation can then determine if the data collection may be considered low or minimal risk. An example of this might be:

Low/minimal risk: A survey with young children to determine which television programs they watch the most and why.

Significant risk: An interview with older children on knowledge and experience of alcohol consumption.

## Any project involving data collection which may involve significant risk to participants is not suitable to be approved under a Unit Licence.

# Ethical Risk Checklist

*Projects and collection of information, data and/or samples undertaken by students for the purposes of fulfilling the requirements of a unit should involve no more than low risk to the participants.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **YES** | **NO** | **PARTICIPANTS** |
|  |  | Children or young people (under 18 years of age) without parent consent |
|  |  | Children and young people (under 18 years of age) who will be involved in activities other than in normal instructional or educational activities. |
|  |  | Individuals who are unable to give informed consent (e.g. people with a mental or intellectual impairment, people with communication difficulties or who are highly dependent on medical care) |
|  |  | Individuals who are in a dependent relationship (such as students/lecturers, patients/doctors, employees/employers). |
|  |  | Intentional recruitment of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander groups or other identifiable cultural/minority groups with the intention of focussing on issues of significance to that group |
|  |  | People who may be involved with illegal activities |
|  |  | **PROCEDURES** |
|  |  | Any form or physically invasive diagnostic, therapeutic or medical procedure such as administration of substances, exercise regime or physical examination |
|  |  | Blood, body fluids or tissue samples will be obtained and/or stored |
|  |  | Physical pain (i.e. more than mild discomfort) or psychological stress is likely to result from participation |
|  |  | Investigation of sensitive personal or cultural issues (e.g. suicide, gender identity, sexuality, fertility, gambling, substance abuse) |
|  |  | Deception of participants, concealment or covert observation |
|  |  | Payments or inducements to encourage involvement in the project (which are so significant they might be considered coercive) |
|  |  | Disclosure of the results of the project could place persons and/or groups at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, professional or personal relationships |
|  |  | **DATA COLLECTION** |
|  |  | Collection, use or disclosure of personal information from a Commonwealth, State or Territory agency or a private sector organisation without consent of the participant |
|  |  | Audio-visual recordings of participants which may be of a sensitive or compromising nature |
|  |  | Use of a questionnaire, survey or interview (where the identity of the participant may or may not be recorded) that might be expected to cause discomfort, embarrassment, or psychological harm |
|  |  | An individual organisation will be identified, and this is likely to be of concern |
|  |  | Project that involves data collection in an overseas country that may involve politically sensitive or cultural issues, or that may put the students or participants at risk |

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| FURTHER EXPLANATION |
| If any of the items have been ticked “YES”, but you believe that the data collection involves minimal or low risk to the participants, please provide further explanation below. |