**Standard Operating Procedure\_Blanket, Course Approval**

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| LNR Panel Review |
| **SOP No.** | LNR10 – Blanket, Course Approval |
| **Version** | 1 |
| **Governing Policy / Procedure**  | https://ppl.app.uq.edu.au/content/4.20.07-human-research-ethics  |
| **Endorsed by****Approved by** | HREAGDirector |
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| **Contact** | Senior Manager, Human Research Ethics |

# Purpose

A number of courses of study involve research activities of limited scope and complexity that are undertaken by student researchers as a required component of a course of study.

Given the number of applications and the limited time usually available, it is often impractical for separate ethics applications to be submitted for each individual research activity.

Student research projects can raise significant ethical issues and involve risks and burdens to research participants. For this reason, student research projects are not exempted from ethics review.

Indeed, students and academic staff who coordinate and conduct undergraduate and postgraduate programs involving short-term research projects, must comply with the University’s commitments to the ethical conduct of human research.

To facilitate an efficient procedure for obtaining ethics approval for these small-scale research activities, a course-based review is available that permits course coordinators to submit an ethics application for an ‘umbrella’ approval that will cover all qualifying student projects for the duration of the ethics approval.

Applications are submitted through My Research Portal. The review process is coordinated by Research Ethics and Integrity.

Review will be by undertaken by LNR Panel Chair.

# Eligibility

To be eligible for processing under these special arrangements a human research activity must meet the following test:

1. The human research activity is to be undertaken by a cohort of students and it is impractical, because of academic timing constraints and/or the number of students involved, for individual ethics clearance to be sought for individual student projects.
2. The human research activity is to be undertaken as a small, discrete component of a graduate or postgraduate course or research program.
3. The research constitutes no greater than low risk research

# Functions

The following features apply to course-based ethics approval:

1. The course coordinator must submit a an LNR application including Course Ethics Approval in the title through My Research.
2. The course-based ethics application must provide an overview of the range of student activities that will be undertaken, the most sensitive area(s) of research interest, specification of an informed consent procedure for use by individual students (including a template for information sheets and consent documents where possible), and clear documentation of standard arrangements pertaining to recruitment, limits on the scope of research interests, information management (including anonymity or confidentiality procedures), and how the project is limited to ‘negligible’ or ‘low’ risk categories.
3. Course-based applications for ethics approval are reviewed by Low and Negligible Risk (LNR) Panel Chairpersons.
4. Each student to be covered by the umbrella course-related approval must submit a separate application to the Course Coordinator for approval. The course convenor is responsible for determining the requirements of student applications.
5. When completed, the Course Coordinator takes responsibility for reviewing each student application and authorising all student research activities implemented under the course-based ethics approval umbrella.
6. Students to be covered by the course-based ethics approval umbrella must receive instruction from the course coordinator (or suitable delegate) on the principles of ethical conduct in human research, including appropriate exposure to the principles and guidelines of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (link).
7. A course-based ethics approval is limited to 12 months, with extension on annual reporting. Annual reports should include name of students and title of research project approved by the course coordinator.

# General Guidance

In most cases, an applicant for an umbrella, course-based ethics approval will not be able to provide specific details about the design and conduct of each individual student project. Therefore, the applicant should provide as much detail as possible and convey a clear sense of the type of student projects to be covered by the course-based ethics approval.

For example, in considering ethical issues related to accessing data and recruitment of participants, where applicable to the project the applicant would be likely to address the following:

* Different potential participant groups
* Non-inclusion of vulnerable participant groups
* Whether potential participants are employees of organisations
* Whether issues of dependency and possible coercion exist and how they would be resolved
* Provision of clear information for participants
* Emphasis of a voluntary basis for participation and the right to withdraw at any time
* Either a guarantee of anonymity for participants or protection of their confidentiality
* Whether data is freely available and there is a reasonable expectation that this data has been made available for public viewing and use (applicable to the use of social media data)
* The research data constitutes secondary data created by a third party and access is free, or the data has been provided to support a student research activity

The foregoing is not an exhaustive list and is provided to give a sense of some of the issues that usually need to be considered.

When an application for course-based ethics approval is considered by LNR Panel Chair, there will not be an expectation for specific, individual details of each student project to be provided. However, it will be necessary to provide a clear description of the scope of the projects in terms of their ethical considerations.

If the course is granted ethics approval, all student projects conducted under the umbrella of the approval must be consistent with the terms of that approval.

The determination of whether a student project falls within the scope of the course-based approval should be determined by the Course Coordinator when reviewing individual student project proposals. Alternatively, separate ethics clearance must be sought for any student project that proposes to go beyond the scope of the umbrella approval.

**Participant information and consent procedures**

If relevant to the project and wherever possible, the Course Coordinator should produce a ‘template’ or outline of participant information and consent documents that may subsequently be modified by individual student researchers for use in their project. The ‘template’ or outline should refer to guidelines provided on the UQ Research Ethics and Integrity website and include reference to the role of, and contact details for, the Course Coordinator.

The individual informed consent procedures should also include the project reference number that will be provided by the My Research Ethics management system to enable identification of the approval in a situation where individual student projects will have different titles.

Although individual student projects may involve the use of questionnaires, focus groups, online data collection, or phone surveys (all of which would employ different mechanisms to obtain and record informed consent from participants) the Course Coordinator’s information and consent ‘template’ or outline would form the basis for the design of the informed consent procedure for each student project.

Students should not use their personal contact details on Information sheets and consent forms.

# Assurance

The Course Coordinator should include in the application for course-based ethics approval an assurance that, if any additional approvals are required for individual student projects – for example, approval from the Department of Education – then such approval has been, or will be, obtained prior to the commencement of research and a copy of this approval will be kept on file by the Course Coordinator and submitted with annual reports.

**Student responsibilities**

Although the Course Coordinator is ultimately responsible for all student research projects conducted under a course-related ethics approval, student researchers are expected to be aware of their ethical responsibilities and obligations.

# Acknowledgement

The University of Queensland Research Ethics and Integrity acknowledges the work undertaken by University of Western Australia in developing Course ethical approval application (2013).

<https://www.research.uwa.edu.au/staff/human-research/approvals/course-unit> accessed August 2022.

# Policies

* 4.20.01 Responsible Conduct of Research Policy
* 4.20.02 Managing Complaints about the Conduct of Research
* 4.20.04 Authorship
* 4.20.06 Research Data Management
* 4.20.07 Human Research Ethics
* 4.20.08 Open Access for UQ Research Publications
* 4.20.10 Research Misconduct - Higher Degree by Research Students