



Ethics Policy

Date	Version	What changes	Approval
June 2017	1.0	Creation of document	CEO
May 2021	1.1	Reviewed	CEO

Introduction

The AIHE Ethics Policy governs all research and teaching activity that involves human subjects. The policy specifies the need for ethical conduct in AIHE research and teaching practice for individual researchers (academic and non-academic staff), teaching and non-teaching staff, and students and within research and teaching projects.

It is the responsibility of each individual researcher, teacher (academic and non-academic staff) or student to ensure that their research and teaching projects comply with relevant legislation, external and internal guidelines and policies. AIHE will review and approve each application (in accordance with the guidelines herein expressed) to undertake research activity or teaching activities, which involve collecting information from or about clients or otherwise using clients as the “subject”. Formal review and approval seeks to minimize the risks and danger inherent in undertaking research or activities that involve human subjects.

Supporting Documents

- Complaints and Appeals Policy
- Student Information Guide v 6.0
- Student Absentee Policy v 3.0
- Course outline AIHE v1
- FAQ Graduate Diploma v3
- AIHE brochure v5
- Privacy Policy

Policy guidelines

All AIHE research activities and teaching activities which involves patients as "subjects", must meet Ethical Standards and Conduct in the Practice of Human Research (ESCPHR). The AIHE approach to managing research ethically, is shown in Figure 1.

AIHE Research Ethics Project Management: Governing Principles				
Identify, log and manage all research projects	Apply stringent in-house application procedures	Compliance with Government and regulatory requirements	On-going ethics review and annual reporting	Secure storage facilities and management of research data

Figure 1: AIHE Governing Principles for Research Ethics

Meeting ethical standards in research begins before the research project starts and ends long after the research project has finished. All research conducted by AIHE staff and students , except that for which “in house” approval (see below) is appropriate, requires approved by AIHE Ethics Committee.

To accomplish the required Ethical Standards and Conduct in the Practice of Human Research (ESCPHR) the Ethics Policy draws on three tools to guide, assess and approve research activity. The ESCPHR tools are:

- ESCPHR Guidelines - The Guidelines provide specific information sources, review procedures and application forms for research activity approvals
- Ethics Approval Application Form - The Application must be completed to seek and obtain approval for research activity.
- Each Application provides detailed information on the research activity, participants and ethical procedures Ethics Committee - The Committee will provide guidance and feedback on and approval for individual research applications. The Ethics Committee will meet monthly to review applications

Applications and approvals will be made via electronic and paper submissions.

Procedures

ESCPHR levels of research approval: the Ethics Committee approval levels are as follows.

1. **In-House Applications – Research Undertaken as a Learning Activity Within a Unit**

Not all activities will require consideration of the full Committee. “In House” clearance by the Year Coordinator without reference to the Ethics Committee is available for ethics applications regarding certain research undertaken by students as a learning activity within a subject.

Note – approval is not required for regular class projects in which students act as participants with results being collated as part of a class activity, unless this involves disclosure of potentially sensitive information (see below). Some academic staff request in-house approval for class projects that fall outside of our guidelines, as the process of obtaining informed consent is seen as an important part of the teaching activity. AIHE considers this to be a legitimate reason for submitting an application.

In general, an in-house application meets the following criteria:

- Data collection is primarily for teaching purposes. Students may use the data for an assignment to be submitted to the unit lecturer, but there is no intention by students or staff to publish the data.
- Data collection involves recruiting participants who are not enrolled in the unit for which the project is being conducted or participants are students enrolled in the unit but are not involved in data collection for the project other than as participants.

Teaching projects involving the following should be submitted to the Ethics Committee for clearance. In-house clearance is not allowed:

- Data that is intended for publication (including as a thesis or conference paper) by students or staff. Such applications will automatically be sent to the full committee for review.
- Projects in which data collection is conducted with students enrolled in the unit, but data collection or analysis involves linking potentially sensitive information to the identity of individual

students. It is important to note that such class activities may not comply with the NSW Privacy Act, and this should be checked before an application is submitted.

2. Level 1 ESCPHR Approval

Level 1 research approval is acceptable where:

- A particular unit involves a number of students undertaking similar research projects, the course coordinator may wish to seek ethics approval for the unit as a whole
- Research which involves surveys using anonymous questionnaires where there is no coercion to participate Research which involves simple assessments normally carried out in the classroom or laboratory, provided adequate protocol/safety procedures are used and the points in this document and the attached guidelines are taken into account, should not normally need ESCPHR approval
- Some activities, which normally involve interviewing people and collecting information but are not considered 'research' as such. Activities such as these may be more readily dealt with through the appropriate professional codes and guidelines

NOTE: Anonymous research is research in which the identity of units/participants cannot be linked to their response in any way.

Level 1 approval requires that the research project is documented and approved by the ESCPHR Director. Documentation entails teacher and/or student project details, a copy of the Unit Outline and a statement of research outcomes.

3. Level 2 ESCPHR Approval

Level 2 research approval is required where teacher/staff/student research projects will involve:

- Direct interventions with humans which may have significant consequences for them (e.g. questions about sexuality or cancer could have significant effect on some people because of their own or family experience, changes of treatment protocols, and teaching interventions)
- Significant issues of privacy (e.g. access to medical records or the collection of sensitive information) Another institution which requires formal ethics approval from AIHE (e.g. schools and nursing homes) Significant ethical issues (e.g. conflict of interest and deception)
- Using units with whom he or she has an existing or prior relationship, such as student, employee, or family member

Level 2 research approval requires a full ESCPHR Application and approval to conduct research. Research clearance is granted internally in consultation with the AIHE Ethics Committee.

Definitions

Key definitions for research ethics are outlined in the AVCC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The terms include the following.

- **Integrity** "...Commitment to the search for knowledge, to recognised principles of research conduct and in the honest and ethical conduct of research and dissemination and communication of results."
- **Respect for persons** "...regard for the welfare, rights, beliefs, perceptions, customs and cultural heritage, both individual and collective, of persons involved in research."
- **Beneficence** "The researcher must minimise risks of harm or discomfort to participants and maximise benefits."
- **Justice** "A researcher must not impose on particular groups; benefits and burdens must be balanced."
- **Consent** "Consent (informed and voluntary) must be obtained from research units."
- **Design of research protocols** "The dignity and wellbeing of the participants is more important than the benefits to knowledge of the research."
- **Proportion of burden/benefit** "Balancing the risks and benefits to the participant. High risk (or burden) should be accompanied by high benefit, while no benefit is justly balanced by minimal risk. Research must be stopped or modified if risks outweigh benefits."
- **Ethical inadequacies** As significant as scientific inadequacies.
- **Scientific inadequacies** These have ethical implications. Inadequate scientific merit wastes resources and units participants to risks.
- **Information protection** When collecting, storing, accessing, using, or disposing of information, privacy, confidentiality and cultural sensitivities must be respected.
- **Public scrutiny** Results must be published.

Source for definitions: UTS, Bell Program for Ethical Practice and Study