



GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATIONS

The following guidelines have been developed to assist with the completion of the *Application for Approval of Project Involving Human Participants in Victoria University* form. All documents and information pertaining to the application form are electronically available at <http://research.vu.edu.au/hrec.php>, or may be obtained on request from the Ethics and Biosafety Administration Group, details of which are listed at the end of this document.

Available on the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Website is an application kit, which includes this document, Applications Process flow chart, the Application Form, a sample Consent Form for Participants, a sample Information for Participants Form and an Application Review Checklist. You are advised to download the Application Form from the website so as to ensure that a current version of the form is being used. Please note that applications submitted on older versions of the form will not be accepted.

It is essential that applicants forward 1) twelve (12) **hard copy applications** (one original application and eleven duplicate copies)* with any accompanying documentation to their Faculty Ethics Officer (please refer to the above website for current details of Faculty Ethics Officers) and 2) an **electronic application** to the relevant Faculty Ethics Officer at AEHDEthics@vu.edu.au (Arts, Education and Human Development), BLEthics@vu.edu.au (Business and Law) or HESEthics@vu.edu.au (Health, Engineering and Science). However, if you have ticked "YES" on the Application Form to any of the items 5.3 g to k, please forward your Ethics Application with the above mentioned number of **hard copy applications** and an **electronic application** directly to the Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (researchethics@vu.edu.au). It is important to note that submission deadlines for the VUHREC differ to Faculty HREC submission deadlines and this may impact on your project's timelines. Details of submission deadlines for the relevant Committees are available at <http://research.vu.edu.au/hrec.php>.

** Applications to be considered at the Faculty of Business & Law need submit one original hard copy application and electronic copy.*

The Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee is constituted in conformance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's Statement on Human Experimentation.

Anyone studying or working at Victoria University and engaged in research involving human participants must apply for approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) **before** they approach human participants.

For the purposes of Human Research Ethics Committee approval, an application for approval to conduct a research project should:

- demonstrate knowledge of the relevant literature and builds on prior research to contribute to the field of knowledge;
- plan to involve human participants in providing information which is not already made public (i.e. not a literature review, which is information already in the public domain); and
- be conducted by one or more members of Victoria University staff or by postgraduate students under their supervision, or by external researchers seeking to make use of Victoria University students or other University resources.

Human Research Ethics Applications

All questions in the Application form must be completed. In general, the most important issues to consider within the application relate to:

- What evidence is presented to demonstrate that the researcher has fully considered the effects of participation in the research upon the participant/s?

- What risk and inconvenience is posed to participants in this research? *Risks may involve physical, psychological, social or legal aspects. Most proposals need to consider the risk of loss of confidentiality of information provided by participants.*
- How are risks and inconvenience to be minimised? The Committee is likely to require further information if there is no clear argument made regarding what degree of risk is constituted by the proposed project and as to how that risk can be managed.
- How are the participants' privacy and confidentiality to be protected? What provision is there for safe storage of data for 5 years after completion?
- Will participants be fully aware of what participation involves before they agree to take part in the research? *State exactly what the researcher will communicate to the participant (this must be stated in clear and concise language) in order to obtain informed consent. The Consent form must indicate the nature of the participants' involvement, the nature of the project and its aims, and to give contact details to enable participants to reach the researcher. The researcher and the participant each require a copy of the Consent form.*
- Will participants be clear that their involvement is entirely voluntary and that they are able to withdraw at any stage of the research?
- When considering the nature of risks, is the research worth doing?
- Have all investigator/s, student/s, and the Head of School/Department read and signed the Declaration form?

Note: It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to ensure that the above questions have been answered fully in the Application form. A well constructed argument and evidence will always assist an applicant's case.

Special Groups:

- If you are seeking to involve participants whose language is other than English, appropriate arrangements for accurate translations must be taken. For example, Information for Participants Involved in Research (e.g. approved by a NAATI-accredited person or by an independent native speaker of the language) needs to be provided to the Committee.
- If you are seeking to involve government school students, you will be required to provide the VUHREC with independent approval from the Directorate of School Education.
- Parental consent must be sought for any participant under the age of 18.
- Applications seeking to involve Victoria University students must develop procedures to ensure voluntary and where possible anonymous involvement, in such a manner that students can be assured that their non-participation will not occasion them any disadvantage.
- Applications which involve collaboration with other institutions must describe the arrangements with the other institution for managing the program including, where appropriate, confidentiality, intellectual property, ethics and safety clearances, reporting to appropriate agencies and the dissemination of research findings.

Surveys / Questionnaires / Interviews and Focus Groups

- Researchers seeking to involve participants in projects requiring them to partake in surveys, questionnaires, interviews and/or focus groups are required to submit applications for ethical approval prior to commencement.
- Researchers are required to ensure compliance with human ethics requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research as well as the National Code for the Responsible Conduct of

Research. Consideration for the specific field of research and associated requirements of the National Statement must be taken into account when conducting the research.

Copyright Infringement For Use Of Hyperlinks On Web Pages

It is essential that researchers:

- only copy or display content from other sites where permission has been obtained from the operators of those other sites;
- before inserting a hyperlink on a VU site to another site, ensure the content of the other site is appropriate and does not breach copyright (or any other law); and
- if there is no association between VU and the other website, state next to the hyperlink that it is “for information purposes only”.

Which projects require approval by a Human Research Ethics Committee?

Victoria University's Code of Conduct of Research, Section 3.1 notes:

- All research is to be conducted in a manner that preserves the rights and liberties of others, and pays particular attention to the safety, rights and dignity of the participants of research.

In particular, Section 3.1.b notes:

“Where research could expose participants to procedures which could infringe the safety, rights or dignity of those participants it must be submitted for the prior approval of the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee.”

Important

To avoid unnecessary delays, please ensure the following:

- All questions in your application are appropriately answered
- The Application Review form has been signed off by the PI and attached to the application
- An electronic application is submitted to the relevant Ethics Officer
- 12 hard copy applications (one original and eleven duplicates) authorised by appropriate staff and submitted
- Applications will not be processed without the appropriate authorisation.

YOU ARE REMINDED THAT PROJECTS MUST NOT COMMENCE WITHOUT PRIOR WRITTEN APPROVAL FROM THE APPROPRIATE HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE.

If you require additional information or assistance in completing any aspect of the application, please refer to the Victoria University Human Research Ethics website:

<http://research.vu.edu.au/hrec.php>

Or direct your queries to the Ethics and Biosafety Administration Group located at:

Office for Research

Footscray Park Campus

Victoria University

PO Box 14428

Melbourne VIC 8001

Ph: 9919 4781 / 9919 4148