University of Southern Queensland

12 August 2025

Human Research Ethics Applications: What You Need to Know

Essential tips and guidance for a strong submission

CRICOS: QLD 00244B, NSW 02225M TEQSA: PRV12081

University of Southern Queensland

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 1

Introduction 3

Purpose of ethics review 4

Guidance for planning and writing your ethics application 5

Before you begin your application 5

- Planning your research project and ethics application 5
- Understanding ethics review pathways and risk levels 6
- Gatekeeper permissions and community support 7
- HDR Student requirements 8
- Research data management 8
- Risk management planning 8
- Digital tools and AI software 8
- Mandatory peer review 9
- Support and resources 10

Writing your application 10

- Responding to application questions 11
- Using guidance notes 11
- Reference current literature 11
- Describing your research processes 12
- Writing style and language 12
- Templates available 13
- Required documents 14

Technical aspects of the application 15

- Supervisor endorsement process..... 15
- Local Authoriser review 16
- Number of participant groups 16
- Completing the RDMP from within the ethics application.. 17

Important ethical considerations 18

- Participants..... 18
- Benefits: 18
- Risks..... 19

Further assistance 20

Introduction

Before commencing any research with or about people, or their data or biospecimens, human ethics approval ***must*** be obtained. It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that this approval is secured ***before*** commencing any research activities. **Retrospective ethics approval cannot be granted under any circumstances**.

Ethics applications should be clear and comprehensive, and written in a language that is easily understood by the ethics reviewers (5.3.5 of the *National Statement of Ethical conduct in Human Research, 2025*). A well-prepared and considered application enables a clear, informed, and timely review process. This is an application that clearly outlines the research aims, methodology, and procedures; is supported by current literature with a sound rationale; and thoroughly addresses potential benefits and risks.

Incomplete or ambiguous applications will result in requests for clarification or modification, which can delay approval. In such cases, the application will be returned to the principal researcher for careful revision and resubmission. If substantial changes are required, additional rounds of ethics review may be necessary, potentially postponing your project by a month or more. You may also need extra time to attend a weekly drop-in session or consult with a representative from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) prior to resubmitting.

This guide is designed to support staff and students seeking ethics approval by offering practical advice on preparing a strong application, helping to ensure an informed and efficient human ethics review.

UniSQ

Purpose of ethics review

Ethical review ensures that research involving humans, their data, or biospecimens is conducted responsibly and in accordance with the ethical standards outlined in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2025) (the National Statement)*. Its primary aim is to protect the rights, dignity, and welfare of participants, while supporting research that upholds the core principles of human research ethics: **research merit and integrity, justice, beneficence and respect.**

Before writing and submitting your ethics application, the specific project details and research procedures involved should be established. These specifics must be included within your application to enable reviewers to make a thorough and informed assessment. Ethics reviewers need enough detail so they can understand how your project will be conducted and how any potential risks will be managed.

It is important to understand that the ethics review process is not to approve your project *in principle*. Rather, **it evaluates and approves the methods and procedures by which the research will be carried out**, in particular: how you will engage and communicate with participants (and potential participants) during recruitment, data collection, and any post participation activities; how you will manage participants' data and maintain confidentiality during and post collection; and how any potential risks involved with these processes will be managed.

Your application responses should clearly demonstrate ethical consideration throughout each stage of the project's process. Transparency is essential, every step and detail of the proposed procedures must be included to allow for an informed review.

Guidance for planning and writing your ethics application

The following sections provide practical guidance for planning your research project and preparing a strong ethics application. By following this guidance, you'll be better equipped to submit a complete, well-considered ethics application that meets both national regulatory and institutional standards.

Before you begin your application

Planning your research project and ethics application

- **Design before you apply** – Before attempting to complete your ethics application, carefully plan your study design and the methods you intend to use.
- **Refer to the *National Statement*** – Specifically, Section 3: *Ethical considerations in the design, development, review, and conduct of research* and Chapter 3.1: *The elements of research*
- **Plan ahead and factor in review timelines** – Ethics approval is not instantaneous regardless of the level of risk. Consider the ethics application and review processes in your whole project timeframe, factoring in the review processes and turnaround times under '[Human ethics review process and timelines]'. Allow approximately four months to obtain ethics approval. Applicants should allow time for the following processes:
    - Supervisor review (*student projects only*);
    - Peer review;
    - Local Authoriser review and endorsement;
    - Administrative review and risk evaluation; and
    - Ethics review – expedited review for *lower risk* projects and full HREC review for *greater than low risk* projects.
- **Allow time for modifications** – Applicants are responsible for allowing sufficient time for the entire review process, this includes the potential for revisions and submission review times. Modifications may be required at **any** of the review processes listed above. Modifications are a normal and expected part of the review process, and **approval is rarely granted without some degree of modification**. To avoid delays, applicants should:
    - anticipate the possibility of revisions;
    - allocate time in their project timeline for responding to feedback;

- understand that each round of modifications will introduce additional turnaround time, changes must be reviewed before the project can progress to the next stage or receive final approval;
- be proactive and responsive during this process; and
- follow the tips in this guide to ensure modification requests are minimal.

Note: All new applications and re-submissions are reviewed in the order they are received by the Ethics Office. For example, a resubmitted application will be reviewed when it is next in the resubmission queue, not instantly upon resubmission.

Understanding ethics review pathways and risk levels

- **Familiarise yourself with:**
  - UniSQ's review processes, ethics review pathways, and the associated timelines, under Human ethics review process and timelines; and
  - the **risk profiles** of human research as explained in Chapter 2.1 of the *National Statement*).
- **Determine the risk level** – Consider whether your application will require review by the **full HREC** by reading the guidance under 'Is my research greater than low risk?'.
  - *Greater than low risk* research requires full HREC review.
  - *Lower risk research* can be reviewed via UniSQ's expedited review pathway.
- **Full HREC review considerations** – If your research is considered *greater than low risk*:
  - It cannot be reviewed via the expedited review pathway and **must be reviewed by the full HREC** at the next available scheduled HREC meeting.
  - Consider the HREC submission deadlines and meeting dates when planning research that would qualify as *greater than low risk* and preparing your application for submission.

***Note:** it can take more than one HREC meeting for your project to obtain approval.*

- **Expedited review considerations** – All applications assessed as *lower risk* are reviewed via the **expedited review pathway,** not by the full HREC at a scheduled meeting. However, this does not mean they are reviewed quickly. The expedited review turnaround time depends on several key factors:
  - **the quality and completeness** of your initial submission and any consequent resubmissions;

- **the number of modification requests** or requests for further information required before your application satisfies approval;
- **your response time** in addressing those requests and resubmitting for further review; and
- **the overall volume** of lower risk applications and other submissions and items already in the queue for review.

Note: You do not need to meet HREC submission deadlines for lower-risk projects. These applications are reviewed on regular business days, outside of scheduled committee meetings. You can submit at any time. However, please be aware of end of year submission deadline and office closure periods, typically from November to January, which will be posted on the Human Ethics website.

Gatekeeper permissions and community support

- Consider whether any other **organisations or community groups** are involved. If your research involves participants accessed through organisations, community groups, or cultural authorities, you **must include letters of support or permission in your ethics application**. These documents confirm that appropriate permissions have been granted and are essential for a complete and reviewable submission.
    - **If you intend to recruit UniSQ Staff and/or students for participation in research** - Information regarding permission to access UniSQ Staff and/or students can be found under 'Application resources and guidance.

***Note:** If the permissions section is incomplete, ethics reviewers cannot fully assess your application. Ensure all required permissions and supporting documents are provided to avoid delays in the review process.*

If letters of support or permission are unable to be obtained before submission (E.g., gatekeeper requires ethics approval first), please make this clear within that section of the application. The application may be approved with the additional condition that permissions are obtained and provided to the ethics office later, before the data collection commences.

HDR Student requirements

- **Confirmation of Candidature** – If you are a HDR student, Confirmation of Candidature must be completed prior to submitting your application and evidence of completion provided, such as the email sent by the Graduate Research School congratulating you on your successful confirmation of candidature. This should be attached in response to the question regarding peer review of your project. ***Note:*** *We do not need to see your confirmation of candidature submission.*

Research data management

- **Create a Research Data Management Plan (RDMP)** – Specific information about where your data will be stored and how it will be managed is required in your ethics application. An RDMP should be completed within RISE - Repository and in accordance with the Research Data and Primary Materials Management Procedure.

  RDMPs completed in RISE will auto-populate the relevant questions in the ethics application. It is recommended to complete the RDMP in RISE as this will guide you to provide the necessary information for the ethics review.

  - If you have any questions relating to **research data management planning**, refer to the Research Data Management Plan Guide and the Library Research Support webpage.
  - For **data storage options** refer to UniSQ's supported research data storage facilities. Further information and assistance can be found on the eResearch webpage and eResearch SharePoint site.
  - For **minimum retention periods** specific to your research project, refer to the University Sector Retention and Disposal Schedule [601.2/C111].

Risk management planning

- Some research projects may require a **Risk Management Plan (RMP)**, particularly when activities involve travel to rural or remote areas, international travel for data collection, or other potentially hazardous activities.
- RMPs must be created using SafeTrak, which is a separate platform from your ethics application and RDMP. Please contact UniSQ Safety for any question relating to RMPs – this process is not handled by the Office of Research.

Digital tools and AI software

- Consider what **online software or AI tools** you might need to use – **these must be identified within your ethics application.**

- **Use UniSQ approved and recommended tools** – Before using any online digital or AI tools for data collection, storage, sharing, and/or processing (including tools for transcription or data analysis) **you must ensure they are approved by UniSQ ICT**.
    - Using approved tools helps protect the **privacy**, **security**, and **integrity** of your research data and participants' information.
    - We recommend referring to the Cloud Computing Use Inherent Risk Schedule for a clear matrix outlining which cloud services are acceptable for use in research.
    - **Software and AI tools approved for use are provided below:**
        - **Data storage and sharing:** eResearch Services.
        - **Survey Tools:** REDCap or the UniSQ survey tool.
        - **Transcription tools:** Zoom; Microsoft Teams; Microsoft Word (*whilst signed in with your UniSQ credentials)*.
        - **Data analysis:** Copilot (*whilst signed in with your UniSQ credentials*).
    - It is your responsibility to confirm the approval status of any online digital tools prior to submission. **Please note the following:**
        - Projects proposing the use of digital tools not recommended or approved by UniSQ ICT **will not receive ethics approval**.
        - After ethics approval has been issued, using digital tools that were not included in the approved application **may constitute a breach of your ethics approval**.
    - For additional guidance on secure and approved digital tools, visit the ICT Cyber Safety webpage or contact ICT Client Support for further information and advice.

Note: *If you want to trial or use new software or AI tools for research purposes, please refer to the Software Vetting Knowledge Article. Vetting requests can be made via the ICT Technology Solutions Advice Service Hub form.*

Mandatory peer review

- Before submitting your ethics application, **it must undergo a Peer Review process**. This step is essential to ensure your research proposal is well-developed.
- Why is Peer Review required?
    - At UniSQ, Peer Review is a **mandatory requirement** that confirms your research has merit and that your application is sufficiently completed.
        - *It provides oversight of method and research design by a discipline expert.*

        - *It helps ensure your submission meets the standards expected by the ethics reviewers.*
    - The process can also **help identify overlooked details** that may be missed due to your familiarity with the project.
        - *Addressing these early can reduce the number of revisions requested during the local authoriser, administration or ethics review processes, streamlining your path to approval.*
- The **Peer Review checklist** specifically for Human Ethics applications and further information about the process are located under, Submission processes and reporting.

Support and resources

- **Student support** – If you're a student, **seek support and guidance from your supervisor/s** when drafting your application. You're not expected to complete it alone.
- **Drop-in sessions** – **Attend a drop-in Zoom session** (held every Wednesday anytime between 2:00pm and 3:00pm AEST) if you have any questions about preparing your application or how to use the National Statement.
- **Human Research Ethics Foundation course** – This self-paced online course provides a comprehensive introduction to the principles and practices of human research ethics. It's designed to help researchers understand their ethical responsibilities and apply the National Statement effectively. **Completing this course is strongly recommended**, especially for students and first-time applicants to build essential knowledge before embarking on human research and completing an ethics application.
- **The Human Ethics website** – If you are unsure where to start or what steps to take, the Human Ethics website is your **central hub for all ethics-related resources**. The website includes application instructions, guidance documents and FAQs, review timelines, templates and contact information. It's the best place to begin when you need some direction or support.

Writing your application

All applications for human research ethics must be made in the UniSQ RISE – Ethics Monitor platform. As you progress through the form, the system builds your application based on your responses, ensuring that only applicable questions are presented, and irrelevant ones are eliminated. Due to the form's dynamic nature, **Word versions of the application are not available**. However, you can complete the application at your own pace - it does not need to be completed in one sitting. Just remember to **save regularly**.

Responding to application questions

- **Provide a complete, detailed and definitive response to each question:**
    - **Address each question in full** – Take time to carefully read and understand each question in its entirety.
    - **Avoid brief responses** – Where large or expandable response boxes are provided, such as the one below, detailed responses are required. **One- or two-word responses are not sufficient** and may result in requests for further information, delaying the review process.

    - **Provide specific details within the context of your project** – vague or generic responses are not sufficient. E.g., If you are conducting research at a particular organisation don't write 'at a local organisation', name the actual organisation.
    - **Do not redirect** – Do not refer reviewers to another response or to an uploaded document to answer a question. A complete response is required where the question is being asked.
    - **Not applicable?** – If a *required field* appears not to apply to your project, do not simply write 'N/A'. Instead, provide a brief explanation to justify why the question is not relevant in your context. This helps reviewers understand your reasoning and ensures your application remains complete.
    - Responses with **'TBA' will not be accepted** – definitive details must be provided.

Using guidance notes

- **Refer to the guidance notes (ⓘ)** – These are available at certain questions throughout the application.
    - These notes provide clarification and tips for answering specific questions appropriately.

Reference current literature

- When completing the 'Aims and Significance' page, **include references to the current literature** to support your claims and choice of research methods.
    - This strengthens your justification and demonstrates awareness of existing research.

UniSQ

Describing your research processes

In particular, the recruitment and informed consent strategies and how participation will be carried out must be clearly described (Chapter 3.1 of the *National Statement*).

> *"The guiding principle for researchers is that a person's decision to participate in research is to be voluntary, and based on sufficient information and adequate understanding of both the proposed research and the implications of participation in it." (Section 2.2.1 of the National Statement)*

Note: Your application must clearly demonstrate that participation in the research will be genuinely voluntary, free from any actual or perceived pressure or coercion. It should also show that participants are provided with sufficient, understandable information to make an informed decision about their involvement.

- **Provide full details of each process**, even if it seems obvious - the **reviewers cannot make assumptions.** Your application is a formal document that should have clarity for any reader, even beyond the ethics review process.
    - Think of your application as **an instruction manual**, any reader should be able to follow it and carry out the steps involved.
    - Reviewers need to understand **how you intend to communicate and interact with participants** throughout the project, including potential participants during the recruitment phase.
    - Comprehensive details are **important for post-approval purposes as well**. Specific details should be **easily identified** within your ethics application to assist with any project monitoring or research investigation processes.

Note: your approved ethics application becomes a reference for project compliance. If you conduct activities not as explicitly stated within your ethics application, you may be in breach of your ethics approval.

Writing style and language

- **Write clearly and in plain English** – the HREC membership is diverse (5.1.30 of the *National Statement*) and members (and non-HREC reviewers) are not always discipline experts.

- **Avoid jargon and technical terms** – if specific terminology is necessary, ensure it is clearly defined.
- **Write acronyms out in full** in the first instance and use them sparingly.
- **Use lay language in recruitment material, Participant Information Sheets (PIS) and Consent Forms** – Information being communicated to participants (including potential participants) must be written in plain, accessible language so they can easily understand the purpose of the research, what their involvement entails, and how their **data will be used.** To ensure readability:
    - Avoid technical jargon and ensure the content is clear to individuals without specialist knowledge (Chapter 3.1of the *National Statement*)
    - use second person (you) language throughout the PIS. The PIS should be talking to the potential participant – not the ethics reviewers;
    - use short, clear sentences and simpler words where possible, and aim to keep the document within two pages. For projects involving multiple participation activities or time points, consider using bullet points or a timetable to present the information clearly; and
    - Thoroughly proofread your application for grammar, spelling, and formatting. This not only improves readability for potential participants but also helps minimise unnecessary revisions during the ethics review process.

Templates available

- **Use the official UniSQ templates** available for PIS and Consent Forms. These are design to ensure all relevant information necessary for achieving informed consent, as advised by the *National Statement,* is included.
    - **Choose the template that best matches your data collection activities** – templates are not one-size-fits-all. If your project involves multiple types of data collection, select the most suitable template and incorporate relevant information from the others as needed.
    - **Always download the most current version** when preparing a new project application or updating existing documents.
    - **Do not repurpose** – Do not reuse PIS and Consent Forms from previous projects. They may contain outdated information or lack important details specific to the data collection activities for your new project.
    - **Copyedit and proofread the PIS and consent form thoroughly**, including the removal of the blue instructional text any review comments before submitting your application. Keeping this text or writing the PIS carelessly, will necessitate a resubmission of your

application with the copyedited documents - **upload the finalised document** that will be disseminated to the potential participants, preferably in MS Word version for review.

Required documents

- Make sure you **upload all necessary documents** in the specified sections of your application. These include, but are not limited to:
    - **Peer Review Checklist** – this must be completed and signed by a peer reviewer.
    - ***Confirmation of candidature*** *(HDR students only)*
    - **Letters of support** or **permission to access participants** – These should be obtained from any relevant community groups, elders, or gatekeepers involved in your research.
    - **Recruitment material** – Invitation letter/email, social media post/advertisement, flyers, etc (include every invitation variant you intend to use).
    - **Data collection document/s** – Include all materials that will be used to collect data, such as:
        - Survey questions and/or instruments (*as they will be displayed to the participants*)
        - Interview or focus group questions
        - Psychological or physiological tests
        - Other tools, plans, or itineraries relevant to the data collection process

    > *These documents help reviewers clearly understand the nature and scope of your data collection methods and what is being done to the participants. Ensure they are complete and accurately reflect what will be communicated to participants and what they will experience.*

    - **Participant information sheet/s (PIS)** – Required when directly recruiting participants to ensure they receive sufficient information to make an *informed* decision to participate and to provide *informed* consent. Online surveys should replicate this information on the landing page, but it is also advised to provide a downloadable copy of the PIS for the participants, also provided on the landing page of the survey.

    > ***Note:*** *Informed consent cannot be achieved without a PIS.*

    - **Consent form/s** – A consent form should be used for most data collection activities. However, an exception applies to anonymous surveys, where a process of *implied*

consent is more appropriate. In such cases, a separate signed consent form is unnecessary and may even raise ethical concerns, such as compromising anonymity.

- For implied consent, researchers must include a clear *implied consent statement* within the PIS. This statement should explain that by proceeding (e.g. submitting or returning the survey), the participant is providing their informed consent to take part in the research.
- Implied consent it not considered appropriate for forms of data collection where the data is collected in an identifiable form in the first instance (even if it will be later de-identified) or where the data will be audio/video recorded, such as interviews and focus groups.
- If there are cultural dimensions to the form of consent you have selected, please ensure this is addressed in the cultural needs section for that participant group and reiterated in the consent section of the application.

***Note:** A consent form is a separate document from the PIS. The PIS is designed for participants to keep, while the consent form is intended to be signed and returned to the research team. Consent data must be retained by the research team for 15 years.*

Technical aspects of the application

Supervisor endorsement process

- **Students must not be listed as the Principal Investigator** of a project within the ethics application. This **role must be filled by the Principal Supervisor** to facilitate the supervisor endorsement process. Student must be listed as a 'Co-Investigator (Student)'.
    - If you are **UniSQ Staff** but are conducting the research in a **student capacity**, you **must list yourself as 'Co-Investigator (Student)'** with your supervisor listed as Principal Investigator.
- **Principal Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that student research is conducted in accordance with UniSQ policies and national guidelines.** Before submission, the Principal Supervisor should review the entire application, including all participant information and consent forms. Acting as the Principal Investigator, the Supervisor then submits the application on behalf of the student, confirming their endorsement.

Local Authoriser (Head of School/Centre/Department) review

Once the Principal Investigator submits the application it is forwarded to local authoriser for review and endorsement before it is considered submitted to the Ethics Office. The following should be noted:

- **Overview page** - Ensure to **provide the correct response to the '*host department*'** question. This should be the school, centre or department where your research project is based.
    - **If you are a staff member who is conducting research as a student**, ensure to indicate the school where you are placed as a student, **not your staff role**.
    - Based on the response provided to this question, upon submission, the system will automatically direct your application to the relevant Head of School/Centre/Department for local authoriser review and endorsement before it is submitted to the Ethics Office.

Note: *Your application is not considered submitted to the Ethics Office until it has been endorsed by the local authoriser. It is your responsibility to allow sufficient time for this step and to monitor the progress of this process – check the* ***timeline page of your ethics application record itself*** *not the Ethics Monitor home page listing all your applications.*

Number of participant groups

- **Ethical considerations page** – when asked about 'how many groups of participants,' please specify the total number of **groups**, not the total number of individual participants. **This distinction is essential for the proper functioning of the form.** A maximum of six (6) participant group forms can be added to the application.

Note: *A group of people or a single data collection activity does not always equate to one participant group. The division of participant groups depends on several factors, including:*

- *the diversity of participant types and the unique ethical considerations associated with each;*
- *the need for different recruitment strategies; and*
- *the nature and sequence of data collection activities.*

Refer to the two examples on the next page:

UniSQ

Example 1:

If you invite a group of people to complete a survey and at the end of the survey you ask the participants to express interest in a follow-up interview, this constitutes ***two participant groups*** *– a* ***survey group*** *and an* ***interview group****.*

However, *if you invite a group of people with the intention that they will complete* ***both a survey and an interview from the outset*** *as a complete participation requirement, this is considered* ***one participant group****, as the recruitment and data collection activities are unified.*

Example 2:

If you invite two similar groups, such as students from Course A and students from Course B, to complete the same survey, and the recruitment method and ethical considerations are identical, this is treated as ***one participant group****.*

However, *if you invite two distinctly different groups, for example, online/campus students in Course A and incarcerated students in Course A, to complete the same survey, the recruitment methods and ethical considerations are going differ significantly. This scenario, therefore, constitutes* ***two separate participant groups****.*

Completing the RDMP from within the ethics application

- **Operational Items page** – You can **access and complete the RDMP** from within the ethics application itself by selecting '**Complete RDMP here**' under the '*Managing Data'* subheading. Accessing it this way ensures the RDMP will be linked correctly.
    - Once an RDMP has been completed the required fields for ethics review will automatically populate into the ethics application. This replaces the open text response field that exists when no RDMP has been completed.

UniSQ

Note: *If the completed RDMP fields do not populate into the ethics form, this means it is not correctly link to the ethics application. Please contact the Ethics Office or log a RISE Service Hub Request.*

Important ethical considerations

Refer to the National Statement – In particular:

- Section 2 – *Themes in research ethics: risk and benefit, and consent*;
- Chapter 3.1 – *The elements of research;* and
- Section 4 - *Ethical considerations specific to participants in research*.

Participants

- When conducting human research, it's essential to **view individuals from or about whom data is being collected as '*participants*'**, not subjects. This perspective emphasises respect, dignity, and ethical responsibility. In the context of the *National Statement*, the term 'participants' includes:
  - individuals directly involved in research activities
  - those indirectly involved; and
  - people who may be unaware that their data or biological materials are being used.
- Put yourself in the participant's position and ask:
  - What concerns might I have before agreeing to take part?
  - What information or reassurances would I expect from the research team?
  - How would I want my privacy and personal data to be protected, and confidentiality maintained?

Benefits:

- **All research must have a benefit** that either directly or indirectly benefits individuals, groups, or a community as a whole. As per Chapter 2.1 of the *National Statement*, "research is ethically acceptable only when its potential benefits justify any risks involved in the research."
- Be specific about what benefit will result from this research both within the application and in the PIS for participants information. Consider the following question:
  - What fields of knowledge will it contribute to, and what will it actually contribute to those fields? *E.g. will it advance methods, contribute to understanding on a particular area, etc.*
  - Are there a direct or indirect benefits to the participants themselves or the community?

Risks

- **All research has an element of risk, inconvenience or burden** that must be considered. It is essential to identify and address actual, potential, and perceived risks within your application, even if these risks will be mitigated through your defined processes. Mitigating a risk does not mean it can be left unidentified. You must first acknowledge the risk and then explain the specific strategies you will use to minimise or manage it.
    - In most cases, **at least one of the risk categories and/or inconvenience or burden must be identified** as outlined in Chapter 2.1 of the *National Statement*. It may be your project only involves inconvenience or burden due to a minor time commitment.

      For example, when you ask participants to complete a survey, you are asking them to give up some of their time to take part in your research. Regardless of how minor this may seem, it should be acknowledged within the application and the steps on how you will make participation less of an inconvenience or burden provided.

    - When identifying a risk category in the ethics application, **clearly describe the nature of the risk and outline strategies you will employ to mitigate and manage that risk**.

      For example, if you identify a potential social risk, don't just state "there will be no coercion." Instead, clearly explain what the social risk is and why it may exist or be perceived, and outline the steps you will take to prevent coercion. I.e., explain how "there will be no coercion".

*Note: "where a person's reactions might **exceed discomfort and become distress**, this should be viewed as a potential for harm". (National Statement 2025). Where there is a risk of harm, the application must be reviewed by the full HREC at a scheduled meeting. Refer to figure 1 below:*

Figure 1: Risk profiles of research

Lower risk		**Higher risk** (Individual, group, community, societal or global)	
Minimal	**Low**	**Greater than low**	**High**
No risk of harm or discomfort; potential for minor burden or inconvenience*	No risk of harm; risk of discomfort (+/- foreseeable burden)	Risk of harm (+/- foreseeable burden)	Risk of significant harm (+/- foreseeable burden)

(The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2025)

UniSQ

Further assistance

If you have any questions or need support with your ethics application, you're encouraged to:

- Visit the Human Ethics website
- Attend a weekly drop-in session – Held every Wednesday between 2:00pm and 3:00pm AEST
- Contact the Ethics Office – Email your queries to human.ethics@unisq.edu.au

University of Southern Queensland

unisq.edu.au

info@unisq.edu.au