Faculty of Arts & Design Research Ethics

Ethical Approval Overview and Process for Research

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Introduction:

Art and design research often takes the form of practice-led practice-based or inquiry, encompassing a diverse range of creative endeavours. Within an institutional setting, artists and designers should recognize their creative practice as a form of research, necessitating adherence to ethical guidelines. This includes identifying their artistic creations and any derived information as "data" that requires secure storage and ethical handling to safeguard research participants. Responsible data management and sharing practices not only protect participants but also offer valuable benefits to the researcher and the broader research community.

To ensure ethical research practices within the Faculty of Arts & Design, all personnel, including taught undergraduate and postgraduate students, research students, and staff, are required to undergo an ethical risk assessment before commencing any research activity. This initial assessment helps determine if a formal application for ethical approval is necessary. Research deemed low-risk may proceed without a formal application. However, research with potential risks requires a formal application and review process for ethical approval. This document serves as a comprehensive guide, outlining the procedures for both the initial risk assessment and the formal application process, ensuring all research conducted within the Faculty adheres to the highest ethical standards.

Within the Faculty of Arts & Design, research often involves working directly with people or their information. This encompasses a wide range of activities, including participation in surveys, interviews, or focus groups; undergoing various forms of testing; being filmed or photographed by researchers; or providing access to personal data. Research may also involve physical participation, such as modelling or casting, or access to a participant's information from published or unpublished sources. It's important to recognize that even seemingly simple interactions, like interviews or surveys, can constitute human research and require ethical consideration.

All the guides, processes, forms, and supporting documents related to the ethical research approval process can be easily accessed online. Visit the Faculty of Arts & Design website and. This section provides a central location for all the resources you need to ensure your research adheres to the Faculty’s ethical standards. A link to the website can be found in the ‘Supporting Document Templates’section of this guide.

Research Activities Requiring Ethical Review

Several types of research projects within the Faculty of Art & Design typically necessitate formal ethical review and approval. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Interactions with Participants:** Interviews, surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, audio or video recordings, photography involving human subjects, and performances that directly involve others.
- **Data Collection and Use:** Utilizing archived data where individuals are identifiable or accessing an individual's personal documents or information.
- **Research Subject Matter:** Research that explores illegal activities.

Ethical Approval Process for Research

- **Develop Your Research:** Begin by formulating your research question and methodology. Prioritize minimizing risk to participants while ensuring the research offers clear benefits. Consider alternative methods that might not involve human subjects.
- **Assess Risk and Merit:** Evaluate the potential risks (likelihood and severity) to participants involved in your research. Assess the appropriateness of your chosen methodology in achieving your research goals and ensure it aligns with ethical principles.

- **Discuss with Faculty Ethics Representative:** Consult with the Faculty Ethics Representative (Head of Department) at any point during the process, especially if you anticipate significant risks. They can provide guidance and compare your project to similar studies for risk classification.

- **Complete and Submit Application:** Finalize the ethics application form and submit it electronically for review. The Faculty Ethics Representative is available for assistance if needed.

Research involving only literature reviews and systematic analyses of publicly available data is generally considered low-risk and exempt from formal ethical approval. This includes studies that solely rely on:

- Published literature.
- Publicly accessible reports.
- Datasets from reputable sources.

Research Ethics Application Outcomes

- Approved Applications: Applicants will be notified of approval via email.

- Rejected Applications: Applicants will be notified of rejection via email, along with instructions for resubmission, the applicant and their supervisor/tutor must carefully consider feedback provided by the Faculty Ethics Representative (Head of Department), Based on the

feedback, revise address any resubmission provided via	the application to concerns raised, a deadline will be email.

Ethics Form Application Requirements:

To ensure a smooth review process, please submit the following documents along with your completed ADH Research Ethics Application Form:

- Faculty-approved Participant Information Sheet
- Faculty-approved Participant Consent Form
- Faculty-approved Participant Parent/Guardian Consent Form (if applicable).

For detailed information on these required forms, please refer to the "Supporting Document Templates" section of this guide.

Prioritizing Researcher Safety

Researchers are responsible for minimizing personal risks during data collection. Whenever possible, conduct data collection on campus, at a host organization's premises, or in a public space. For situations requiring data collection in private settings, like a participant's home, take precautions such as:

- Carrying a mobile phone
- Informing a colleague of your location beforehand
- Contacting your colleague after finishing data collection to confirm your safety

For more comprehensive safety guidelines, refer to the DMU Lone Worker Policy, accessible through People and Organisational Development (POD)/Human Resources (HR) or your Supervisor/Programme Leader.

Additionally, researchers should avoid disclosing personal contact details, especially email addresses and phone numbers, in recruitment materials.

Protecting Participant Privacy:

Maintaining participant privacy is paramount in research. Researchers strive to ensure both confidentiality and anonymity of participants and their data. However, transparency is crucial in certain situations. For example, participants in focus groups should be informed that absolute confidentiality and anonymity are difficult to guarantee. Unlike individual interviews, focus group discussions involve multiple participants who may not always adhere to a code of conduct regarding confidentiality.

Supporting Document Templates:

To assist students and staff, a number of supporting document templates to cover the majority of commonly encountered legal requirements. A link to the following supporting documents can be found on the faculty of Arts & Design website.

- **Participant Information Sheet:**
  A critical document for informing potential participants about your research. It should be written in clear and concise English, avoiding technical jargon, to ensure participants fully understand what their involvement entails.

- **Participant Consent Form:**
  A mandatory document used alongside the Participant Information Sheet for research projects that require participants' consent to data usage. The form clearly outlines how their data will be used, whether anonymously or otherwise. Applicants are responsible for completing all sections of the template except those designated for participant completion. These sections typically include Signature line for participants and Date of participation.

  - Implied consent can be sufficient for anonymous surveys, like postal, online, or on-the-street versions, as long as no personal data, audio, or images are collected.

- **Participant Parent/Guardian Consent Form**
  If the research involves identifiable children (under 18) or vulnerable adults, obtaining written consent is crucial to ensure their protection. This applies whether you're observing, interacting with, or otherwise working with them in the study. The same requirement holds true for vulnerable adults who may lack the capacity to give informed consent on their own. This document will detail the necessary steps to safeguard these participants and ensure their ethical inclusion in your research.

Copies of the forms must be attached to the end of the A&D Research Ethics Application Form.

Supporting Document Templates:

All templates are available on the faculty website:

- Participant Information Form
- Online Questionnaire Consent
- Research Proposal Form