

Ethics Statement and Human Research Ethics Policy

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Scope

Nan Tien Institute of Higher Education is dedicated to maintaining a learning and teaching environment committed to equitable opportunities, free intellectual enquiry and a culture of scholarship which is aligned to the goals of higher education in Australia. Members of the Institute community are committed to ethical values and behaviour:

- a) Acting responsibly, honestly and with integrity;
- b) Pursuing scholarship courageously and creatively;
- c) Making decisions in a just way;
- d) Working with others in a nurturing and cooperative manner;
- e) Generating a community of trust, respecting the dignity of others and fostering equality of opportunity; and
- f) Avoiding actions that may be harmful to others.

Nan Tien Institute is committed to helping our researchers understand and meet the ethical obligations associated with human research.

Definitions

Policy Principles

HUMAN RESEARCH AND ETHICS

1. All human research carried out by staff members and students at the Nan Tien Institute must be submitted for consideration of the ethics associated with it. The Institute's *Code of Conduct* sets out the general standards and ethical conduct expected of those who work and study at the institute. All human research conducted at NTI is assessed by an ethical review panel for its ethical acceptability and for its compliance with the regulatory requirements of:
 - a) ***The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*** (2018) guides institutions and researchers in responsible research practice and promotes integrity in research.
 - b) ***The NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*** 2025 sets out the national standards of ethical conduct for research involving humans and should be used by researchers when developing their projects.

2. The essential values that guide ethical research are the values of respect for human beings. Research merit and integrity, justice and beneficence guide the design and conduct of human research and help shape a relationship of trust, mutual responsibility and ethical equality between researchers and research participants.
3. The basis for approving a research project is the set of guidelines in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2025). Researchers should design their projects in accordance with these guidelines. The purpose of this Statement is to promote quality, ethical research that accords participants the respect and protection that is due to them and is of benefit to the wider community. The Statement clarifies the responsibilities of researchers in the ethical design, conduct and dissemination of results of human research.
4. 'Human research' has a broad definition and includes research conducted with or about people, their data or tissue. Ethics approval is required for certain research activities involving humans. Research projects requiring ethics approval include, but are not restricted to:
 - a) taking part in surveys, interviews or focus groups
 - b) undergoing psychological, physiological or medical testing or treatment
 - c) being observed by researchers
 - d) researchers having access to their personal documents or other materials
 - e) the collection and use of their biological material (e.g., human tissue, bone, body fluids)
 - f) access to their individual information in identifiable or potentially re-identifiable form as included in an unpublished source or database that is used for human research.
5. The term 'participants' is therefore used very broad to include those who may not even know they are participating in research; for example, where the need for their consent for the use of their data has been waived by an ethics review body.
6. The National Statement recognises that research may carry different levels of risk and defines 'low risk research' as research in which the only foreseeable risk is one of discomfort. We expect that most research at NTI will be deemed low risk. For research involving "no more than low risk" as described by the National Statement, NTI will perform ethical review of that research in accordance with clause 5.1.19 and 5.1.20 of the National Statement.
7. Researchers may not commence their research until they have written approval from a designated authority.
 - a) For projects deemed low risk via an initial risk assessment, the designated authority is the NTI Academic Dean.
 - b) For projects deemed higher than low risk, a HREC of the collaborating institution must review the proposed research
8. NTI's Academic Dean holds the relevant experience and knowledge to approve negligible- and low-risk projects.
9. Prior to seeking approval of the proposed research via the NTI Low Risk Research Ethics Application form, students should work with their supervisors to develop their ethics application, giving due consideration to the ethical risks involved and proposing approaches to minimising or mitigating any risks.
10. Ethics approval may not be required where:
 - a) the project has an educational or practical experience focus;
 - b) the information has been published or has entered the public domain with the consent of the person(s) with whom the information is associated;
 - c) the project is a literature review that supports the development or design of research.
11. If staff are unsure as to whether their research is exempt from ethics approval, they should check with the Academic Dean. Students should consult their supervisor or subject coordinator.
12. The issues considered in examining an application for ethics approval include:
 - a) the aim of the research and methodology;
 - b) the experience and training of the researchers;

- c) the participants and their vulnerability;
 - d) risk to the participant versus benefit of the research, risk management and unexpected outcomes;
 - e) recruitment of participants including dependent relationships;
 - f) informed consent, cultural sensitivities, confidentiality, the right to withdraw;
 - g) publication of the research, funding, conflicts of interest and payment to participants; and
 - h) privacy, security and duration of data storage.
13. The Nan Tien Institute will carry out ethical review of research involving human subjects of the kind described above. NTI will ensure that all human research complies with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (the National Statement) and is ethically acceptable.

Legislation and Regulation

USEFUL WEBSITES

The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2018>

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2025

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2025>

Ethical guidelines for research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/research-policy/ethics/ethical-guidelines-research-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples>

Reference Documents

- Initial Low Risk Assessment
- NTI Low Risk Research Ethics Application