

**Australian College of Theology
ETHICS PROTOCOL**

Students who are intending to undertake human subject research (e.g., interviews, questionnaires, studies of human behaviour, focus groups, etc.) are required to complete the following ethics protocol (or application for ethics approval) to be considered by the Ethics Committee before approval of the research proposal is granted by the Graduate Research Awards Board of the ACT.

The ethics protocol is in three sections:

- Section 1 is a coversheet, which records your contact details, the details of your supervisor and the title of your project.
- Section 2 is a checklist of yes/no responses, which identify key issues.
- Section 3 is the proforma, which provides the Ethics Committee with more detail about your project and particularly your interaction with research subjects.

Please complete and submit all three sections to the Dean.

Ethics approval and approval of your topic and supervisor will not be finalised until copies of all necessary materials have been received by the Ethics Committee.

Approval may be granted for initial stages of your study, with additional information (such as research tools) to follow for approval by the Ethics Committee once they are developed.

The ACT does not accept liability for any material included in the research that has not gained the approval by the Ethics Committee.

Every candidate has the right of appeal and/or complaint. These should be addressed in the first instance to the Chair of the Ethics Committee, care of the ACT. If you are unhappy with the process of the Ethics Committee in handling your complaint then it will be forwarded to the Board of Delegates, which has the final say in all matters relating to the ACT.

Section 1

Researcher's name (please underline your family name):

Researcher's College:

Postal address for correspondence:

Telephone number/s: _____

Email: _____

Title of research project:

Plain English title (if different from above):

For inclusion on material provided to research subjects

Proposed commencement date: _____

I certify that the protocol is complete and the research will be conducted in accordance with the protocol and in an ethical manner.

Researcher's signature: _____

I certify that I have read the protocol and consider it to be complete.

Supervisor's signature: _____

Supervisor's name: _____

Supervisor's qualifications and relevant research experience (supervisor to attach CV):

Supervisor's contact details:

Section 2: Checklist

Please circle your response to each of the following questions:

Does the research involve participation of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Maori people who have been selected as research subjects because they are indigenous Australians/New Zealanders? YES / NO

Does the research involve any artifacts that are of cultural, spiritual or religious significance to Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander or Maori people? YES / NO

Does the research involve a dependent relationship between the researcher and any of the research subjects? YES / NO

Could the research place research subjects in a vulnerable situation? YES / NO

Is there any reasonable likelihood that the research will result in the reporting of suspected child abuse? YES / NO

Is there any potential risk to the researcher's safety, beyond that normally encountered in everyday life, as a result of their involvement in the research? YES / NO

Do you plan to vary the usual written consent processes? YES / NO

Does the study have potential legal implications for the researcher, the researcher's college or the ACT? YES / NO

Is data collection to take place outside Australia/New Zealand? YES / NO

What research methodologies will you use (tick those applicable):

- Anonymous or Internet questionnaires
 - Questionnaires requesting intimate personal, identifying, or sensitive information
 - Face to face interviews which do not request personal or sensitive information
 - Face to face interviews which request personal or sensitive information
 - Observation of subject's usual activities
 - Focus groups
 - Observation of an activity set up for the purposes of the study
 - Action Research
 - Other (please specify)
-

Please tick the group/s from which your sample of subjects will be drawn for this study

- General public
 - Children or young people under the age of 18
 - Pastors or church workers
 - Patients of a hospital or clinic where you need approval to do the research
 - People with whom you have an ongoing relationship (eg colleagues, family or friends)
 - Members of a church
 - Other (please specify)
-

Is approval to access personnel, clients or records required from any organisation?

YES / NO

If YES, has approval been received from these organisations?

YES / NO

If NO to the question immediately above, please state why approval has not been obtained:

List the organisations or churches where the research will be undertaken.

Are the following appendices attached?

- Appendix 1 **Bibliography** YES / NO
- Appendix 2 **Research tools** YES / NO/ Not required for this study
- Appendix 3 **Recruitment material** YES / NO/ Not required for this study
- Appendix 4 **Information sheet** YES / NO
- Appendix 5 **Consent form** YES / NO
- Appendix 6 **Correspondence** YES /NO / Not required for this study

If you have answered NO to 1, 4 or 5 above please state why:

Language of the consent form, information sheet and any other material provided to research participants if other than English.

How do you intend to report your research?

Will research subjects have the opportunity to receive a copy of your final report if they wish? YES / NO

Will research subjects receive any payment or inducement in relation to their participation? YES / NO

Section 3: Ethics protocol proforma

Please keep your responses as brief as possible while providing enough information for the members of the Ethics Committee to gain a good understanding of what your research will involve. The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans provide advice about what the Committee requires (your postgraduate coordinator should have a copy of this or you can check out the NHMRC website at www.nhmrc.gov.au under “publications”). It is highly recommended that you access this document before you draw up your proposal. Remember that members of the Committee might not have the same background in your area of study that you have. Your responses should be written in plain English for a non-expert audience.

The suggested length of responses is a guide only. Simple, uncontentious research might be adequately explained more briefly. Research projects with a number of component parts or which involve possible risks to the research participants will require more detailed explanation.

Some questions might not be relevant to your study, for any that are not simply write N/A.

1 RESEARCH AIMS

- 1.1 **State the aims of your research.** (50-100 words)
- 1.2 **Explain the need for, and value of, your research.** (100-300 words)
Place the aims in the context of existing research or practice. Give a succinct description in plain language of the background and potential significance of the research project. Include a list of not more than 20 key references at **appendix 1**.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 **List your research questions or hypotheses.** (50-100 words)
Your protocol should clearly identify the questions which you want your research to answer. Depending on your methodology, these questions may be refined as your study progresses.
- 2.2 **Outline your research design and methodology.** (250-300 words)
The D.Min. Committee must be convinced that your research methods can be expected to produce valid results.
Include a copy of your research tools as **appendix 2**.
- 2.3 **Indicate whether your research is the first stage of a larger project.** (50-100 words)
If it is, briefly explain your intentions for the development of your study to facilitate further ethics approval if you do extend your research project.

3 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

- 3.1 **Who will be approached or recruited to be research subjects? How many subjects will be involved in your study (give upper and lower limits of sample size)?** (50-100 words)
- 3.2 **List the selection and, if appropriate to your study, the exclusion criteria for subjects.** (50-100 words)
- 3.3 **How will you recruit volunteers for your research?** (200-300 words)
If you will use advertisements, flyers or other recruitment material please provide a copy of these materials in **appendix 3**.

- 3.4 **How much time are you asking of each participant and when will the time be required?** (50-100 words)
- 3.5 **How will you provide detailed information about your study to potential participants?** (50-100 words)
Include as **appendix 4** the information sheet/s that you will use.
- Please ensure that any documents you will provide to research participants have been carefully proof read prior to submission to the D.Min. Committee.*
- 3.6 **Describe how you will obtain consent to participate from those volunteering as subjects for your research.** (100-200 words)
Include as **appendix 5** the consent form or forms that you will use.
Please note that consent is not required for anonymous questionnaires. Return of the completed questionnaire indicates consent.
- 3.7 **If your research subjects will be drawn from any dependent group (people who have an unequal power relationship with you or with an organisation which is cooperating in the research) please detail how will you ensure that participants do not feel under any obligation to assist you with your research as subjects.** (100-200 words)
- 3.8 **Describe how you will preserve subjects' confidentiality as you collect and analyse the data and when you report the results.** (50-100 words)
- 3.9 **How will you address any potential risks (physical, emotional, social or legal) to individual subjects' well being (beyond those normally encountered in everyday life) as a result of their involvement in the research? Detail the steps that will be taken to address these risks including any support facilities such as counselling, debriefings or referrals.** (100-200 words)
- 3.10 **If there are any potential safety implications for yourself as the researcher (beyond those normally encountered in everyday life) please indicate how these will be addressed.** (50-100 words)
- 3.11 **If research subjects will receive any payment, reimbursement or other benefit from participation in the research, please detail this and provide a justification for the level of compensation.** (50-100 words)
- 4 RECORDING, REPORTING, STORAGE AND ACCESS TO THE RESEARCH DATA AND RESULTS**
- 4.1 **Describe briefly how the research data will be recorded, for example, audiotape, videotape, or written notes.** (50-100 words)
Please note that explicit consent must be obtained from participants if material is to be audio or videotaped or photographed. Provision for this should be included in the consent form.
- 4.2 **Describe what you will do with the recorded data once it has been analysed. In order for the ACT to comply with Australian Freedom of Information legislation your research data must be stored securely for seven years in a safe environment. Describe how and where the data will be stored. Describe how the data will be destroyed at the end of the seven years.** (50-100 words)

- 4.3 **Specify who apart from yourself (and your supervisors if applicable) will have access to the research data and results, and any conditions to be placed on that access.** *(25-50 words)*
- 4.4 **How will information about results of the project be communicated to participants?** *(50-100 words)*
- 4.5 **Describe the procedures you will use to protect participants from any distress, embarrassment or other harm that might be caused when the data is reported.** *(50-100 words)*
- 4.6 **Are there any other ethical issues raised by the proposed project? What is your response to them?**

5 OWNERSHIP OF THE RESEARCH

- 5.1 **Detail who will own the data and the results of your research.** *(25-50 words)*
Student researchers normally own the data that they collect.

6 APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 **Reference list**
- Appendix 2 **Research tools**
- Appendix 3 **Recruitment material**
- Appendix 4 **Information sheet**
- Appendix 5 **Consent form**
- Appendix 6 **Correspondence**

