Ethics Clearance Policy

Table of Contents

A. Overview

i. The Lead Institute of Higher Education ('the Institute' or 'LIHE') Ethics Clearance Policy ('the Policy') outlines the mechanisms underpinning the ethical conduct of all forms of research at LIHE and the processes for objective and rigorous ethical review of research. This Policy is based on the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2018 and Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018.

ii. Definitions

For definitions, please refer to the 'Dictionary of Terms'.

B. Scope

This Policy applies to all research projects undertaken at or in the name of LIHE.

C. Policy Principles

This Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

i. All members of LIHE are expected to act in an ethical manner and be aware of how to identify ethical implications when engaged in any kind of research or studies;

ii. Studies and research are designed, reviewed, and conducted to ensure integrity, quality, and transparency. Any investigation or research conducted by members of LIHE involving human participants or involving data relating directly related to identifiable human subjects, will always require formal ethical review and approval. Ethics review and approval is required where there is:

    a. a risk or harm to the researchers or the participants;

    b. political or social sensitivity;

    c. impact on culture and cultural heritage.

iii. Participants must be fully informed about the research or study they are invited to participate in and their consent to take part must be made voluntarily, freely and without any coercion;

iv. Participants must be allowed to withdraw from research without giving any reason; they must also be informed of identification/de-identification and how the results of the research will be stored, disseminated, and disposed of, to satisfy the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998;

v. Risks are managed so that harm and/or damage arising from the research is avoided wherever possible and measures taken to ensure that the benefits of research/study outweigh any potential harm or damage;

vi. The independence of the research/study must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicitly declared.

D. Responsibilities

i. LIHE will form an Ethics Committee for reviewing research and ensuring compliance with regulatory and legislative requirements and LIHE policies. All research projects conducted on behalf of LIHE require approval from the Ethics Committee before the research can commence. The Committee will include following members:

    a. Dean (Chair);

    b. Nominated member of the Academic Board;

  c. Course Director.

ii. LIHE will ensure that:

  a. all members of the LIHE community are informed of their obligations to conduct ethical research;

  b. all research is conducted ethically and complies with all current ethical codes and legislation;

  c. all approved research is designed to minimise the risk of research posed to participants, researchers, LIHE and the broader community; and

  d. all researchers can conduct appropriately approved research investigations.

iii. The Ethics Committee will:

  a. review ethical aspects of all proposals by LIHE staff and students involving research with human participants;

  b. monitor the documentation of all approved research proposals as part of the *Records Management Policy*;

  c. identify if the proposed research imposes a high risk from an ethical standpoint, including any reputational risk to LIHE because of the political sensitivity of the research. If the risk of the activity is too great, or outside its ability to monitor and control, the research proposal shall be rejected;

  d. monitor approved research progress annually and upon completion;

  e. communicate with researchers and be readily accessible to researchers;

  f. meet face to face with researchers regarding issues to avoid misunderstanding;

  g. make decisions on ethical acceptability of proposals and communicate those to researchers.

iv. All researchers must:

  a. refer to all relevant LIHE resources in preparing their research application, make applications for ethics approval and supply all relevant information required;

  b. not conduct research without the required research ethics approval;

  c. not intentionally or recklessly provide incorrect or misleading information in an application for research ethics approval;

  d. disclose conflicts of interest to Ethics Committee and, where appropriate, to potential participants;

  e. conduct research in accordance with the research protocol and conditions as approved by the Ethics Committee;

  f. obtain additional ethical approval(s) from the Ethics Committee when required and maintain evidence of such approval;

  g. comply with all of the conditions of approval as stated in correspondence from the Ethics Committee;

  h. ensure they have adequate research ethics experience, qualifications, and competency;

  i. undertake education and training in ethical research, as appropriate or as required by LIHE.

E. Ethics Clearance Procedure

    i.   All staff and associate researchers are required to complete an Ethics Clearance Form before commencement of any research.

    ii.   The application requires the researcher to complete a checklist designed to highlight any potential ethical issues with the research.

    iii.   The Ethics Committee will review applications and contact the researcher with the outcome normally within ten (10) working days. The following outcomes are possible:

        a.   the application is approved without any changes required;

        b.   the application is approved subject to revisions being made to the satisfaction of the Committee;

        c.   the Committee seeks additional information/documentation before making a decision;

        d.   the application is not approved.

F. Ethical Research Conduct

The main principles of ethical research conduct are:

    i.   Honesty

        a.   Staff and students are required to be honest in respect of their own actions in research and in their responses to the actions of other researchers. This applies to the whole research cycle, including experimental design, generating and analysing data, publishing results, and acknowledging the direct and indirect contributions of colleagues, collaborators, students, and others.

        b.   All staff and students must refrain from plagiarism, piracy, or the fabrication of results. Committing any of these actions is regarded as a academic misconduct and a serious disciplinary offence.

    ii.   Documenting of results and storage of primary data

        a.   In order to respond to the needs of funding bodies, LIHE requires researchers to keep clear and accurate records of the research methods used and of the results obtained, including interim results.

        b.   This is necessary not only as a means of demonstrating proper research practice, but also in case questions are subsequently asked about either the conduct of the research or the results obtained.

    iii.   Questioning one's own findings

        a.   Researcher should always be prepared to question the outcome of their research.

        b.   While fully supporting academic freedom and acknowledging the pressures of time and resources under which researchers often work, LIHE expects research results to be validated before being made public.

        c.   Staff should not make claims for their research that cannot be substantiated on the basis of the evidence.

    iv.   Acknowledgement of collaborators and other participants

        a.   Authorship is an important aspect of good research practice and LIHE expects anyone

listed as an author of a research output to accept personal responsibility for ensuring that they are familiar with the contents of the final output.

b. The contributions of formal collaborators and all others who directly assist or indirectly support the research must be properly acknowledged. This applies to any circumstances in which statements about the research are made, including provision of information about the nature and process of the research and in publishing the outcome.

c. Failure to acknowledge the contributions of others is regarded as unprofessional conduct or academic misconduct.

G. Confidentiality and Duty of Care

i. Staff and students have a duty of care to all those involved in the research, whether as subjects/participants or as part of the research team. They need to ensure that those involved are fully aware of all the risks and dangers in advance of that involvement and ensure that appropriate informed consent is obtained properly, explicitly and transparently.

ii. Staff and students handling personal information in research must keep it secure and must not pass it on, except following prescribed procedures. Staff are required to respect the intellectual property of others and to observe commercial and official secrecy.

H. Appeals

Applicants may appeal against a decision by writing to the Dean if they believe that the decision has not considered all the facts or there was a procedural or administrative error, within 10 working days from the date decision was sent. For details, refer to the *Human Resource Management Policy* for staff and the *Student Grievance Management Policy and Procedure* for students.

Appendix 1: Ethics Clearance Form

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">**Ethics Clearance Form**</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Ethics Clearance - All LIHE researchers (staff or students) who intend on conducting research at or in the name of LIHE need to apply for ethics approval before starting their data collection and research activities. For further details, please refer to the *Ethics Clearance Policy*.</td></tr>
</table>

Section 1 – Personal Details	
Full Name	
(Please tick) Staff ☐	Student ☐
Student ID Number (if applicable)	
Current Course(s) Enrolled (if applicable)	
Phone Number	
Email Address	

Section II – Research Project Details	
Project Title	
Project Description *(maximum of 250 words)*	
Expected Duration of the Project	Expected commencement date: Estimated research project completion date:
Research Team Name & Details	
Funding	Is this research project the subject of a grant application? Yes ☐ No☐ If Yes, provide details of the funding agency and amount

Conflict of Interest	Is there any affiliation or financial interest for researchers in this research project or its outcomes or any circumstances which might represent a perceived, potential or actual conflict of interest? Yes ☐ No☐ If YES, provide details below

Section III: Research Project Aims and Outcomes

Provide a description of the Aims and Justification for the Research Project: *(maximum of 500 words)*
- What is the Aim, Objective, Research Question/s or Hypothesis of the research project?
- What is already known about this topic and what research has already been conducted on this topic or field of research?
- Why is it important to conduct this research project?

How will the research project outcomes be disseminated at the end of the project? (*e.g., thesis, journal article, book, web page, conference paper, the media etc.)*

Declaration

All researchers listed in Section II must sign this declaration:

- The information provided in this application is truthful and to the best of my/our knowledge, accurate.
- The research project will be conducted in accordance with the Ethics Committee approved application, National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2018, Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018 and LIHE *Ethics Clearance Policy*.

Name of the Researcher	Signature of the Researcher	Date

Declaration by the Ethics Committee:
• The Ethics Committee has reviewed this project and considers the methodological/technical and ethical aspects of the proposal to be appropriate/inappropriate to the tasks proposed.
• The Ethics Committee considers that the researcher has/does not have the necessary qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in the attached application and will be/will not be able to deal with any emergencies and contingencies that may arise.

Comments/Conditions by the Ethics Committee

Name of the Ethics Committee Chair	
Signature	
Date	

Note: If the Ethics Committee Chair is also a named researcher on this project, the declaration must be signed by another authorised member of the Ethics Committee

Version	Approved by	Approval Date
2	Academic Board	9 January 2023

Next Review	Custodian	Effective Date
Refer to the *Policy Documents Review Schedule*	Dean	9 January 2023

Related Documents	Dictionary of Terms Academic Integrity Policy Student Code of Conduct Staff Code of Conduct Scholarly Activity Policy Records Management Policy Human Resource Management Policy Student Grievance Management Policy and Procedure
References and Legislations	National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2018 Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018 Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998