

FACT SHEET

New policies, procedures and systems

Online Scope Checker

In the coming weeks there will be an online facility that can be used to determine whether or not an activity requires ethical clearance from the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). If required this tool can also produce a certificate confirming that the project does not require clearance.

Expedited Ethical Review

A new "smart" online ethical clearance form will be available from early 2004. This short form will be used to determine what level of ethical review is required, and to apply for Expedited Ethical Review Level 1 (E1) and Expedited Ethical Review Level 2 (E2).

Research Ethics Advisors

Each school and centre will be invited to appoint a member of academic staff to serve as a Research Ethics Advisor (REA). REAs will be a source of advice to researchers in their area and will facilitate a greater level of communication between the HREC and the rest of the University community. Around 9 REAs will be appointed to serve on the HREC and will participate in the processing of E2 applications.

Research Ethics Manual

Work has already commenced on the Griffith University Research Ethics Manual. This is a booklet-based Manual, that will be web based. It will serve as a reference and source of guidance for the design and conduct of ethical research, will be an articulation of "corporate knowledge" to inform the decision making of the HREC (and make this more transparent and predictable to researchers), and serve as an articulation of compliance with various external requirements.

Access to information

Researchers will be able to look up the status of their applications online, check whether they have any matters outstanding requiring their attention, and when they next have reports due.

Streamlining

The maximum duration of ethical clearances will be increased to 5 years, with no limit on the number of renewals. The mechanism for seeking variations to ethical clearances will be improved and streamlined. It is intended to provide a mechanism for researchers to use a single ethical clearance to cover multiple related activities, or subsequent phases of work, rather than submitting multiple ethical clearance applications.

Unit clearances

A program, course or unit convenor will be able to seek an umbrella ethical clearance to cover cohorts of students undertaking short duration projects. There will be a mechanism to retain a research training aspect to this process and some oversight, but only one application will be considered by the HREC, rather than one for each student.

Online resources

The new research ethics web site will include a large number of online resources and tools. There will be a simple "introduction to research ethics" tutorial that can be used to provide new research students and staff with an introduction to the basics of research ethics at Griffith University.

Improved communication

It is planned, in consultation with the REAs, to conduct more presentations, training workshops and seminars on research ethics. Where a problem emerges for an area of the University, solution will be workshopped, rather than mandated. From 2004 a different head of element will be invited to attend each meeting of the HREC to further improve communication to and from the HREC.

Levels of Ethical Review at Griffith University (as of February 2004)

Level of Review	Applies to	Paperwork	Considered by	Processing time
E1	Research without any significant ethical issues or risks.	Expedited Ethical Review Checklist (24 y/n questions and 6 short answer questions).	Chair or Deputy Chair of HREC	5 – 10 days
E2	Research where the ethical issues or risks are easily managed OR research already approved by another HREC OR a renewal application OR research where the main procedure is listed in the Register of Approved Procedures.	As above, with some additional questions and attachments.	Panel of HREC (Chair or Deputy Chair, External member, and relevant REA)	2 – 3 weeks
Full	Only research that does not qualify for E1 or E2.	Full ethical clearance application form	Meeting of HREC	Monthly meeting cycle + 2 – 3 weeks

Further information

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In the coming weeks the details of the new Research Ethics Web site will be distributed around the University. This will be accessible via the Office for Research web site (<http://www.gu.edu.au/or/>).