



Australian Government

Department of Defence

Department of Veterans' Affairs

DRAFTING AN ETHICS APPLICATION

Researchers can increase the likelihood of timely ethical review by avoiding some common errors in the preparation of their submission. Differences in policies and pro formas across institutions can make it hard to navigate for researchers. This Fact Sheet outlines some things that you can do to ensure that your application is in the best possible shape for ethical review.

Provide sufficient detail

Ensure that you provide sufficient detail within your application to ensure that the reviewers can understand what you intend to do. If you are not sure what you intend to do, you are probably still in the initial phase of your study's development and should give some further thought to your research design prior to submission.

It may be beneficial to seek expert advice on your draft application. This is especially relevant for early career researchers.

Allow enough time

You should allow enough time for ethical review in your project timeline. The Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee (DDVA HREC) may request additional information or seek to clarify some points within your submission so this should be accounted for in your project timeline.

Be prepared

You should familiarise yourself with the relevant national guidelines, legislative instruments and institutional policies that apply to your research proposal. If your research involves multiple institutions, it is important that you read all relevant policies so that you do not overlook any institutional requirement.

Use relevant terminology

Check your terminology and where necessary provide a clear definition. Terms can mean different things across institutions, disciplines and fields of research. Inaccuracies or differences in terminology can cause confusion for those outside the field or organisation, and will often cause delays when they need to be clarified.

Avoid the use of scientific/technical terms and jargon (where possible). If it is necessary to use scientific terms, make sure that you define them so that it is clear to all reviewers. Remember that ethical review bodies include people from a range of backgrounds.

Be consistent

Check that the information that you provide is consistent throughout your application. This is one of the most common oversights in applications. Re-read your application and supporting documentation to ensure that they are consistent.

Check and proof-read your application

Prior to submitting your application you should:

- Ensure that you have addressed all of the questions in the application. If a question is not applicable to your study, tick the appropriate box or state 'Not applicable'. Not putting a response in can be seen as an oversight.
- Check that documentation that is provided to potential participants has a layout that looks professional and is easy to read.
- Proof read your documents to ensure that there are no typographical or grammatical errors that need to be fixed. A spelling and grammar check can pick up some mistakes but will not identify all.

Maintain version control

Update your **version control** details. You may need to make multiple changes to the documentation prior to submitting and/or obtaining ethical approval. Good version control will ensure that you submit the correct version and makes it easier for all involved.

Ready to submit?

Check that you have all relevant supporting documentation ready to submit with your application and ensure that you have all of the necessary signatures. Unsigned or applications that do not have all of the relevant documentation attached are considered invalid and will be returned to the applicant.

Ensure that you are aware of the submission closing dates. If there is a possibility that you may miss the submission closing date and you would like your application to be considered at the next meeting, it is important that you contact the Secretariat to request an extension. However, there is no guarantee that late applications will be accepted.