

5.1.16 Conduct of Research

Operating Policy and Procedures

1. Policy

All research undertaken by students or staff of the Navitas College of Public Safety (NCPS) that involves human participants must be designed and conducted in accordance with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*. Such research must be ethically reviewed and monitored by NCPS's Ethics Committee.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to prescribe the standards of performance and ethical conduct expected of persons engaged in research, the collection, storage, use and retention of research data and the supervision of the research students.

3. Responsibility

The Dean/Head of College through delegation to the Manager of Study Programs is responsible for compliance with this procedure.

4. Guidelines

The *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007, updated 2009* (www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e72) "... is Australia's primary source of guidance for the conduct of all research that involves human participants. Its purpose is to promote ethically sound human research; to set national standards of ethical conduct for all research involving humans; and to guide institutions, researchers and Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) in the ethical review and conduct of such research."

The *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2007* (www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/r39.pdf) "sets down the broad principles of responsible, accountable research practice, and identifies the responsibilities of institutions and researchers in areas such as data and record management, publication of findings, authorship, conflict of interest, supervision of students and research trainees, and the handling of allegations of research misconduct."

This policy is applicable to NCPS staff undertaking research and to NCPS students undertaking the NCPS's Research subject.

5. Definitions

Accountability – the measure by which researchers, review bodies and institutions can demonstrate their responsibilities have been, or are being, fulfilled. Accountability measures include reporting to the Ethics Committee.

Beneficence – doing good to others, avoiding doing harm.

Benefit – that which positively affects the interests or welfare of an individual or group.

Confidentiality – the obligation of people not to use private information – whether private because of its content or the context of its communication – for any purpose other than for which it was given to them.

Conflict of Interest – where a person's individual interests or responsibilities have the potential to influence the carrying out of his or her institutional role or professional obligations.

Consent – a person's or group's agreement, based on adequate knowledge and understanding of relevant material, to participate in research.

Data – pieces of information.

Ethical/Unethical – right or morally acceptable.

Ethical Review Body – body set up to carry out ethical review of human research.

Harm – that which adversely affects the interests or welfare of an individual or a group. Harm includes physical, anxiety, pain, psychological disturbance, devaluation of personal worth and social disadvantage.

Human Research is conducted with or about people, or their data or tissue. Human participation in research is therefore to be understood broadly, to include the involvement of human beings through (but not limited to) taking part in surveys, interviews or focus groups.

Justice – regard for human sameness shared by all human beings, expressed in a concern for fairness or equity.

Low Risk – research in which the only foreseeable risk is one of discomfort.

Negligible Risk – research in which there is not foreseeable risk of harm or discomfort, and any foreseeable risk is of inconvenience only.

Participant – anyone who is the subject of research.

Privacy – a domain within which individuals and groups are entitled to be free from the scrutiny of others.

Qualitative – research involving such methods as case studies, personal experience, life stories, interviews, observations and cultural texts.

Research Misconduct – includes fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or deception in proposing, carrying out or reporting the results of research and failure to declare or manage a serious conflict of interest.

Respect for Human Beings – recognition that each human being has value in himself or herself.

Risk – the function of the magnitude of harm and probability that it will occur.

Subject Chair Research – the professional educator in NCPS responsible for teaching, coordinating and running the subject titled Research.

Voluntary Participation – participation that is free from coercion and pressure.

6. Responsibilities of Research Students

- 6.1 Researchers must be aware of, and adhere to, the ethical principles of justice and veracity, and of respect for people and their privacy, and of avoidance of harm to them. Research must comply with established guidelines such as the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* and the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007*.

NCPS staff undertaking research must acquaint themselves with these two documents by accessing the URLs given for them on p. 1. The Subject Chair Research will provide NCPS students undertaking the NCPS's Research subject with relevant information in relation to these two documents at the start of the teaching of this subject.

- 6.2 Researchers have the responsibility to ensure the safety of all those involved with specific research and should only participate in work that conforms to ethical standards and which they are competent to perform. Researchers should be committed to high standards of professional conduct.
- 6.3 A research proposal should be comprehensive and clear and written in lay language.

- 6.4 Researchers should disclose to the Ethics Committee any actual or potential conflicts of interest for both the proposal and whilst undertaking and/or reporting the research. A conflict of interest can occur where a person's individual interest or responsibilities have the potential to influence their professional obligations in research.
- 6.5 Researchers have an obligation to minimise any risk to participants. This involves an assessment of their research aims, their importance and the methods that they propose to adopt. The Ethics Committee will not approve any proposal for which the level of risk is not justified by the benefits.
- 6.6 All research projects require approval of NCPS's Ethics Committee—even those of low or negligible risk level—and must not proceed without this approval.

For those students using surveys not containing questions which may cause offence, where the participant is anonymous and a non-dependent adult, and there is no pressure applied to participate in the questioning, no proposal need be made to the Ethics Committee for the survey. However, NCPS will require the survey to be conducted according to accepted social and professional ethics.

- 6.7 Researchers must gain consent from the participants involved in their project. Consent should be a voluntary choice, and should be based on sufficient information and adequate understanding of both the proposed research and the implications of participation in it. The consent process is not just a formality but should allow for the volunteer to ask questions and to discuss the information with the student researcher. Participants are entitled to withdraw from the research at any stage.
- 6.8 Unless the Dean/Head of College grants his/her specific approval beforehand, NCPS staff (teaching, Library and/or administrative) are not permitted to be interviewed or participate in surveys and/or questionnaires undertaken by NCPS Research students. Without such approval, NCPS staff must not be approached to participate in NCPS's Research subject.
- 6.9 If data of a confidential nature is obtained through the research (e.g. from questionnaires) confidentiality must be observed and researchers must not use such information for their own personal advantage or that of a third party.

7. **Data and Storage Retention**

- 7.1 Data are pieces of information, for example: interviews, questionnaires and case studies. Data management should comply with relevant privacy protocols such as the Privacy Act.
- 7.2 All data obtained by NCPS research students will be collected, aggregated and stored for a single purpose or activity. It is recommended that minimum retention of data be for a period of five years from the date of publication.
- 7.3 Researchers are responsible for ensuring appropriate security of any confidential material, including that held in computer systems (i.e. SPSS databases). Where this information is accessible through networks, particular attention must be observed.
- 7.4 Reference should also be given in relation to Policy 5.4.08 Archives and Records Management.

8. **Monitoring Approved Research**

- 8.1 The research project is approved in the form in which is it submitted to the Ethics Committee, including any approved amendments. It is a strict and standard condition of NCPS that students must seek prior approval for any changes to an approved research project.
- 8.2 The Research Subject Chair is responsible for monitoring and verifying that the conduct of research conforms to the approved proposal.
- 8.3 As all research conducted by NCPS students is low to negligible risk level and completed

within 13-14 weeks, this monitoring can be conducted during class sessions by the supervising Subject Chair with no requirement to submit project review reports to the Ethics Committee.

9. **Complaints about the Conduct of Research**

9.1 Concerns and inquiries about student research projects conducted as part of the requirements for undergraduate degrees should be raised in the first instance with the research supervisor. Contact details for the project supervisor are provided to all participants in supervised research.

9.2 Complaints about the conduct of research must be submitted in writing to the Ethics Committee, who will follow procedures outlined in the applicable policy.

9.3 If discussions with the researcher and/or research supervisor on Research Integrity do not resolve the problem to the complainant's satisfaction, formal complaints and grievance procedures should be followed. Please refer to policy 5.1.14 Complaints and Appeals (Grievances).

10. **Authority**

Authorised by the Dean/Head of College

11. **Approval**

Approved by the Academic Council 22 September 2011

12. **Amendments**

Date	Modified by	Sections amended/added	Approved by Academic Council
19/02/09	Christine Ashton	New Policy	19/02/09
19/05/09	Christine Ashton	Section 6.8 added after consultation with the Ethics Committee	Minor Change
15/09/09	Christine Ashton	New Logo	Minor Change
06/11/09	Christine Ashton	Change of logo and name	Minor Change
22/09/11	Mirian Meade	Change of Titles	Minor Change
10/10/11	Christopher Snedden	Change to Section 6.8 to allow staff participation in the Research subject with the approval of the Dean/Head of College	Minor Change; approved out-of-session, following meeting of 20.10.2011
21/11/11	Christopher Snedden	Added paragraph to 6.1. re staff or students accessing the two documents mentioned in the previous paragraph.	Minor changes in response to feedback from Chair, Academic Council, out-of-session, following meeting of 20.10.2011.