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ETHICAL RESEARCH IN THE HUMANITIES

A guide for researchers at the University of Queensland

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In June 1999 rules came into force at Australian universities, requiring that all new research projects should conform to the ethical principles laid down in a National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans, which was issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and endorsed by the AVCC, the ARC, the AAH and the ASSA.

Unlike previous guidelines, these rules cover all forms of research involving (living) humans as research subjects or having an impact on humans. The 54-page statement sets out detailed procedures and requirements in some areas, while leaving other matters to regulation by individual universities and other research organizations and still other areas largely unaddressed. In response, the University of Queensland has produced *Guidelines for Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans* (late 2000)² in order to provide a local regulatory framework in areas not covered in detail by the National Statement.

The National Statement requires that all research proposals be reviewed by an accredited ethics committee and that projects not receiving ethical clearance do not proceed. The Behavioural and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee (BSSERC) of the University of Queensland has responsibility for assessing projects in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Because the process of obtaining ethical clearance may be unfamiliar to many researchers in the Humanities, and because much of the existing literature on ethical practice focuses on issues in medical and psychological research, this guide has been developed, especially for those undertaking qualitative research involving humans. Researchers interested in more detailed discussion of ethical issues as they relate to these fields may find it useful to consult the Research Council of Norway's *Guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences, law and the humanities*³, whose analysis has helped to inform this guide.

¹ I am grateful to the members of the Behavioural and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee who individually and as a committee offered advice and suggestions for refining and improving this document, and to Professors Graeme Turner and Roly Sussex for comments on an earlier draft. Although I am confident that this document broadly reflects the intentions of the committee, it is not an official statement of policy or advice and thus does not bind the committee in any way. Rather it is an informal guide to researchers in the Arts Faculty who need to obtain ethical clearance for their projects. It is subject to revision as the work of the committee proceeds and as government and university policies change.

² Available online at <http://www.uq.edu.au/research/services/human/>.

³ Available at <http://www.etikkom.no/NESH/eretn.htm>.

Ethics in research and the role of BSSERC

The University assumes that its researchers intend to conduct their investigations ethically. The role of BSSERC therefore is twofold. First, it offers expertise on ethics and experience in judging ethical issues which are available to researchers as they formulate their programmes. Second, it provides a means of certifying the ethical probity of a research project. In giving ethical clearance to a proposed project the committee, and by extension the University as a whole, takes responsibility for that clearance. As long as the researcher has informed the committee fully of the nature of the research, the committee will stand by its decision and stand by the researcher in any dealings with the public on ethical issues.

BSSERC consists of approximately twelve members and includes members of the general community, academic members with specific experience in research in the fields covered by the committee, and members with religious and legal expertise. The committee's mandate is to use the National Statement and the UQ Guidelines as a basis for deciding what procedures a project must follow in order to obtain ethical clearance. Because, however, neither the Statement nor the Guidelines are comprehensive and because both fundamental philosophical understandings and community views of ethical issues may change, the committee has extensive power to go further than and to limit the application of the existing rules. Although the committee takes account of its previous decisions, it is not bound to follow precedent. The committee's decisions, in short, represent its best judgement at the time.

Ethical clearance is not a legal procedure, and researchers must be aware of the laws on privacy, defamation, intellectual property and moral rights, all of which may affect how a project can be pursued. The University's ethics committees may draw the researcher's attention to what appear to be legal issues associated with a project, but they do not provide legal advice.

Who should apply for ethical clearance? The National Statement prescribes that ethical clearance must be obtained for all research 'involving' humans. This prescription would seem to cover by definition all research in the humanities and social sciences. The University has ruled, however, that ethical clearance does not need to be sought for research which uses only material in the public domain (books, archives etc.) or which observes the behaviour of people in public (e.g. in a city street or an internet chatroom) without any direct contact with or identification of the people observed.

The BSSERC is also available to review projects which do not formally require ethical review but which, in the opinion of the researcher, raise ethical issues on which advice might be useful. Projects which use material in the public domain but which have important social or political implications, for instance projects whose results might reinforce prejudices about a particular social group, might fall into this category.

Research conducted by members of the university's academic staff in the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences is reviewed by BSSERC; research at Ph.D., Master's, Honours and undergraduate levels is reviewed by the relevant School Human Ethics Research Committee (SHREC), which is normally a sub-committee of the School Research Committee.

Application Procedures

Application for ethical clearance should be made on the Application Form for Ethical Clearance, which can be downloaded from <http://www.uq.edu.au/research/orps/?id=5064> . For the moment, the form must be submitted in hard copy (12 copies), but it is likely that electronic submission will be possible in due course.

Each member of the committee will receive a copy of the application form and will be asked to indicate whether or not he/she recommends the project for clearance. A lack of response from a committee member is taken as signifying conditional approval. Committee member unwilling to approve a project then provide (often brief) reasons in writing for their recommendation and may offer suggestions for improvements. After perusal by the chair of the committee, these comments are forwarded to the researcher for response. The researcher may accept the suggestions and modify the project or may argue that the project already meets appropriate ethical standards. The researcher should realize that the recommendations he/she receives are likely to be those of individual committee members who have identified ethical shortcomings with one or other aspect of the project. These comments do not constitute rejection by the committee, but rather mark a stage of negotiation prior to the formal decision of the committee. If the researcher satisfies each of the objecting committee members at this stage, then the project will normally receive approval. Only especially difficult cases, or cases which raise new issues of principle, are discussed at a full meeting of the committee.

What constitutes a research project? Many research projects in the Humanities are actually lifetime programmes for the researcher, ongoing work which crystallizes in publications of various kinds at irregular intervals. In some cases – projects funded by ARC grants etc. – the boundaries of a project will be fairly clear. In other cases – a researcher who maintains a watching brief on unfolding political developments in a particular country, for instance – the borders of the research project may be fuzzy. In applying for ethical clearance, researchers in the Humanities are encouraged to formulate their projects broadly rather than narrowly, so that a single ethical clearance can be granted for a large part of the researcher’s activities.

Nonetheless if a researcher has previously obtained ethical clearance for a narrowly defined project and then proceeds to a further, similar project which raises no new ethical issues, it is likely that expedited clearance can be given to the new project.

What is the difference between full and expedited review of applications? In the full review process, the application is read by all members of the committee. In the expedited review process, the application is read only by the chair of the committee. If the chair is satisfied that the application raises no issues needing discussion, he or she may executively grant ethical clearance to the project.

Applications are eligible for expedited review

- if they clearly raise no ethical issues or
- (mainly in the case of multi-centre research) if procedures have already been given clearance by a properly constituted Ethics committee working under NHMRC guidelines

In general, this means that expedited review is possible if

- consent issues are uncomplicated (consent is required from organizations, not individuals, and has already been obtained; data is collected from individuals using anonymous questionnaires which allow no possibility of linking data to

an individual; there is no invasion of privacy and no sensitive issues are involved)

- there is no possibility of harm arising from either the procedures or the publication of the results

Full review is necessary if there is any element of deception involved in the project, if any of the participants belong to a vulnerable group (including children, the ill and Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders), if there is any risk of physical or psychological harm to participants from the procedures or any risk arising from the intended or inadvertent publication of results (e.g. making the participant vulnerable to loss of standing, criminal or civil liability, embarrassment, financial loss etc.).

None of these elements or risks will necessarily prevent a project from receiving ethical clearance; the committee simply requires that the ethical issues which they raise be adequately addressed in project design and management.

Waiting for clearance? The BSSERC recognizes that the time needed to complete ethical clearance procedures is a tax on the energy and resources of researchers and may delay the carrying out of the project. The committee makes every effort to undertake its review of proposals as quickly as possible and is always willing to consider suggestions for clarifying or streamlining procedures in a way that will still lead to ethical outcomes. Researchers are encouraged to structure their projects so that aspects of the research which do not require ethical clearance (literature reviews, archival research) are undertaken while the committee is considering the researcher's application. Researchers should note that the ARC will generally not release funds for any part of a project which requires ethical clearance until that ethical clearance has been obtained.

The application form for ethical clearance can be downloaded from <http://www.uq.edu.au/research/orps/?id=5064>. On that form, researchers will be asked to answer a number of questions, some of them straightforward, some giving no immediate indication of the nature of the answers required. This guide is intended to assist researchers in the Humanities and Social Sciences in completing the form and in anticipating the issues which the BSSERC will wish to see addressed. It is a 'third-generation' document which relies on and explicates the National Statement and the University *Guidelines*, both of which contain more detailed information on some topics. A completed application form with its attachments is generally referred to as a 'protocol'. The numbers in this guide refer to the question numbers on the application form for ethical clearance as it was in early December 2002; the form is in development and some of these numbers may change.

1. **Who are the participants or informants?** The term 'participants' refers mainly to informants (people who are interviewed) and respondents (people who fill in surveys or questionnaires) as part of a research project, but it may also include subjects (people whose behaviour is observed) and correspondents (people who write letters or similar to the researcher). The committee wishes to know in brief what kind of people will be included in the project.
2. a. **Does the research involve the participation of any "vulnerable groups"?** In most cases, it is the potential participants alone who should be asked for their informed consent to taking part in a research project. In the case, however, of potential participants belonging to socially vulnerable groups, informed consent should also be sought from the legitimate guardians of those

persons. This requirement always applies to research involving children and the intellectually disabled, and it may apply to research involving the ill, the aged, and persons in institutions if it cannot be clearly established that the potential informants are able to make an autonomous decision. The NHMRC defines as 'vulnerable' children, the intellectually disabled, people in dependent medical relationships and Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

2b. Specify how this proposal accommodates and addresses the needs and interests of and indigenous Australians who may be involved (e.g., as part of a sample, or as volunteers, whether or not specifically targeted). Researchers should call the UQ ATSI Unit for assistance or clarification if needed.

Researchers should especially consider two issues. First, Australian indigenous cultures differ in important ways from non-indigenous cultures and researchers must ensure that their research practices respect the ethical norms current in indigenous societies. There is also a requirement to obtain the approval of community leaders for research involving Aborigines or Torres Strait islanders. Further details on the procedures to be followed in the case of research involving Aborigines or Torres Strait islanders is available in the University Guidelines. In some other cases, where a distinct (generally small) community has clearly recognized and legitimate traditional leaders, it is appropriate (and generally wise) to seek the approval of those leaders before commencing research on that community.

3. **Participant recruitment details.** How are individual respondents or subjects chosen out of all those qualified to participate? How is contact made with people who are to be interviewed? Especially where the researcher will identify participants by proceeding along a network of contacts, it is not necessary to be specific on these issues, but simply to give the committee a clear idea of the ways in which participants will be identified and contacted. The most important considerations are that recruitment procedures do not infringe the privacy of individuals and do not create a sense of coercion or obligation amongst participants.
4. **Everyday language summary of the project.** The committee includes non-academic members and members from other academic disciplines to whom the overall nature of the project must be made clear. Being able to explain a research project in everyday language is part of general academic accountability.
5. **Give details of the research plan.** This section asks the researcher to give the committee enough information to understand what procedures will be followed in the course of the research. The committee is mainly interested in procedures involving human beings, but these should be set in the context of other research activities, such as archival research or literature review. Particularly relevant is the way in which the researcher will treat the participants in the course of the research and what is expected of participants in terms of time, self-revelation and obedience to the researcher. The committee recognizes that in many humanities projects the exact programme for research cannot be set out in detail at the time when it is necessary to apply for ethical clearance. Nonetheless, the application form should provide the

committee with enough information to reach an independent judgment of the ethical issues attached to the programme.

The researcher has an ethical obligation to undertake research that is worthwhile, that is, research which will produce a result which has some intellectual, practical or educational use, but except in rare instances the committee does not evaluate the methodology of projects.

6. Give details of the ethical considerations attached to the proposed project.

The committee starts from the proposition that all researchers will act ethically. This question provides an opportunity to seek advice on ethical issues which are not addressed in other parts of the questionnaire. Issues raised here might include: the handling of information about recently deceased persons, issues of cultural property, issue of intellectual property within the research team, etc. Research into illegal or immoral activities often raises ethical issues which are not covered elsewhere in the form. It may be sufficient simply to draw the committee's attention to other sections of the application, e.g. 'See Questions 8, 10 and 13' or to state 'No further issues'.

7. Informed consent. A central principle of ethical research is that participants must understand what they are letting themselves in for when they agree to take part in a research project. They must understand any risks that are linked to participation and they must understand, at an appropriate level, what the project is intended to achieve. The researcher may legitimately assume that respondents understand the general nature of research, that is that data is gathered from various sources and is used in the context of theory to generate published conclusions. Informed consent requires the participants be told of the problem which the project is investigating and the committee regards the provision of a Participant Information Sheet to all participants as standard practice. An information sheet should be concise enough to be read on the spot and at short notice and it should be expressed in clear, straightforward language. It should not normally be more than two pages and one page is often sufficient. The sheet should at least identify the researcher, provide contact details, briefly outline the nature of the research and include a paragraph stating that the project has received ethical clearance. It is University policy that this paragraph should read:

This study has been cleared by one of the human ethics committees of the University of Queensland in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's guidelines. You are, of course, free to discuss your participation in this study with project staff (contactable on and by e-mail at). If you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study, you may contact the Ethics Officer on (07) 3365 3924.

The Participant Information Sheet should also explain that participation in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw at any time. It should also any special procedures to be followed to protect privacy on informants and the confidentiality of data. It should explain what will become of the data after the project is completed (whether it will be preserved or destroyed).

Under some circumstances, a Participant Information Sheet may omit some of these items or may even not be provided at all, but the committee is likely to grant exemption only in limited circumstances. Circumstances which might permit the researcher to abbreviate or dispense with the information sheet include:

- The possibility that participants might feel themselves endangered by having in their possession an information sheet on a sensitive research topic
- The risk that revealing particular information might distort the interview process, for instance by suggesting a standpoint on a sensitive issue so that respondents who do not share that viewpoint may be less willing to participate
- The fact that respondents are public figures accustomed to being questioned
- A need to tailor the information provided to each informant because the questions to be asked of them are different from those asked of other informants, so that a standard information sheet is impractical.

All research requires the informed consent of participants, but different forms of consent are appropriate for different styles of research. When data from individuals is to be aggregated and used statistically, the most appropriate way of obtaining informed consent is to provide potential informants with an information sheet on the project and to have them sign a consent form, which certifies that they have agreed to participate. Written information and consent is desirable in this case because the statistical use of data in a way that is detached from their social being raises important issues of human dignity. Formal, written consent establishes that those who take part are willing participants, rather than unwitting objects. It establishes a clear choice between participation and non-participation.

An unstructured interview, by contrast, especially with a public figure, requires only verbal consent. This is because consent is implicit in the respondent's continued participation in the interview and because there is no clear distinction between participation and non-participation. A respondent may be willing to answer some questions in full, other questions in part and still other questions not at all. An interview may still proceed effectively after a respondent has declined to answer a question.

On the other hand, written consent is generally required if an interview is to be recorded and the recording is to be preserved. Written consent is also generally necessary if the researcher wishes to quote any statement by any informant.

In assessing the way in which consent should be obtained, the researcher should consider especially

- the extent to which the participant is a source of information (implying that the informant knows more about that particular topic than does the researcher) rather than data (implying that the researcher determines the form of information provided by the participant)
- the extent to which the researcher instructs the participant in the course of research as opposed to simply asking questions and following the flow of the conversation

- the need to quote the words of informants (which are covered by copyright) as opposed to simply using the information they provide (which is generally not covered by copyright)
- whether a recording of the interview is to be deposited for future research

Informed consent is not required of subjects if their participation is limited to their being observed in a public place. Nor is it required for casual conversations, though in some research projects the distinction between a casual conversation and a formal interview will be blurred.

The researcher must also obtain informed consent from organizations with authority over persons or materials needed for the research. These organizations are referred to in the University's *Guidelines* as 'gatekeepers'. If a project involves interviewing students at a school, for instance, the school principal and Education Queensland would be gatekeepers whose permission must be obtained. This requirement does not apply to any library, archive or other collection which is routinely open to scholars, though researcher must of course follow any procedures prescribed by that organization. Although it is preferable to obtain the written consent of gatekeepers, the researcher may work on the basis of verbal consent in the light of the considerations which apply to obtaining informed consent from individuals.

By cooperation is normally meant either access to the records of the organization or use of the organization's structure and facilities to contact participants. Researchers should note that privacy laws may restrict the freedom on organizations to divulge information about members or employees, so that cooperation will often take the form of passing on to members and employees information about the research project. The existence of an organization with an interest in the topic of the research project does not itself oblige the researcher to seek permission or approval from that organization. Organizations, whether governmental, commercial or private, are subject to the same principles of public accountability as private individuals.

- 8. Confidentiality and privacy.** Researchers have both a legal and an ethical obligation to preserve the privacy of participants in their research projects. In survey-based research, this means that the methods of collecting and storing data should as far as possible make it impossible to link information to a specific respondent. If a link needs to be retained for the sake of follow-up studies, that link should be normally be coded to avoid the risk of identified data falling inadvertently into the wrong hands.

In the case of historical research, by contrast, the researcher's need to account for his/her sources and the informant's right to be identified as a historical agent and as the source of information and ideas generally means that the names of informants should be mentioned as appropriate in the text (as historical agents) and in footnotes (as informants). It is preferable to mention this intention in the participant information sheet. In any case where there is a possibility that the informant might be harmed or embarrassed by being identified, however, the researcher must seek permission from the informant to mention him/her as a source of information. Such permission may be given verbally, but if the information to be cited is especially controversial it is

advisable for the researcher to obtain written permission before identifying any person, directly or indirectly, as the source of a piece of information.

Directly quoting the words of an informant raises distinct ethical and legal issues. An informant has copyright over any record of his or her words and separate, written permission is needed before publishing any verbatim transcript of the interview. Copyright laws which permit fair dealing with the copyright material of others permit limited quoting of the words of informants, but it is good ethical practice to obtain separate consent to quote any words verbatim. This consent may be written or verbal, depending on the form of consent governing the interview as a whole but, as when citing an informant as a source, if the quote is in any way controversial it is advisable for the researcher to obtain written permission before using it.

Both law and the University's *Guidelines* require that data from living humans be used only for the purpose for which it is collected. In most research contexts, this purpose may be defined to include any academic research flowing from the original project, even if that research was not envisaged at the time the data was collected and even if it is carried out by another researcher. On the hand, any transfer of data outside the academic world – for instance to government agencies or private firms – is forbidden without the permission of participants. Information sheets should normally make clear that data will be retained indefinitely for academic research purposes only. Whereas it is generally considered good practice to destroy purely administrative data five years after last use, the destruction of research data should be foreshadowed only after consideration of the following issues:

- Is there is a significant risk that failure to guarantee the destruction of data will inhibit participants from contributing to the project?
- Can it can be demonstrated that the data will have no possible value to future researchers, either for new projects and for verifying the validity of the original project?
- Is the time and effort contributed by the participants to the project so meagre as to negate preservation of their contribution as a part of human heritage?
- Are there significant practical difficulties or costs involved in providing storage for and maintaining security of the data?
- Is the potential for harm to the participants if data were released unintentionally increased or diminished by the passage of time?

The obligation to preserve research materials is especially important in the case of records from unstructured interviews, particularly those to do with historical events or anthropological research. As a record of unique historical events, they are a part of the human cultural heritage and should not be wantonly destroyed. In many cases, moreover, they are a unique record of part of the life of an individual in society, and the researcher has a special obligation both to the individual and to society in general to see that the voice of that individual is not lost. Best practice, therefore, indicates that such interview records should be preserved indefinitely and should eventually be deposited in an appropriate library or archive to be accessible to future researchers. This intention should be foreshadowed in the Participant

Information Sheet. An embargo should be placed on such material so that it cannot be accessed before the death of the informant or before the death of anyone who might be adversely affected by publication of the interview contents (most often family members or former colleagues). As a rule of thumb, setting the date of public access at the death of the informant plus 10 years is sufficient to protect colleagues and members of the same generation, while the death of the informant plus 30 years protects the next generation (if relevant).

9. Data security and storage. The researcher has an obligation not only to preserve confidentiality and privacy in the research process but also to ensure that records are preserved in a way which prevents unauthorized persons from accessing them. In general this means that they should not be kept in public spaces or in shared offices (unless all those who have access to the office have ethical clearance for the project). Data kept on computers should be password-protected. If the data are especially sensitive or if there is reason to believe that unauthorized individuals would seek them out, then additional security measures should be put in place.

12. Feedback to participants. Both courtesy and a general obligation to make the results of publicly funded research available to the public dictate that the results of research projects should be communicated to participants. Such communication can most easily be done in the case of survey-based research; in such cases it is possible to send an outline of the research results to all participants. Interview-based research presents greater difficulties in this respect, because the contribution of individual respondents may vary enormously and because the results of humanities research are sometimes difficult to summarize in a way which relates clearly to each individual's distinct contribution. Depending on the degree and nature of helpfulness of the informant, the researcher should consider making an appropriate acknowledgement of the assistance of the informant by one or more of the following:

- thanking the informant in the acknowledgements of the final published work
- writing, telephoning or e-mailing the informant to thank him/her for assistance
- sending or delivering a small gift
- providing a copy of the record of the interview
- providing a copy of the final work

In many areas of humanities and social science research, the most appropriate form of feedback for most participants is the commercial publication of the results in a book.

13. Special procedures. Some of these procedures are irrelevant to research in the humanities and social sciences and can be marked 'N/A'. Some, however, require specific attention.

d. Psychological distress. Although Proust has shown that psychological distress can be triggered by trivial experiences, this issue should normally be addressed only when there is a significant likelihood that the research will remind informants or respondents of

seriously traumatic events in their own past (childhood abuse, sexual violence, displacement from home, separation from family, torture etc.). The researcher has a powerful obligation not to cause serious harm or distress to participants, yet investigation of these phenomena and their consequences is of great social importance, for both prevention and treatment. There can be no straightforward prescription for the handling of these issues. A researcher whose project involves such issues must exercise special vigilance and must end a participant's role in the project if it seems to be causing undue distress. The researcher should also consider procedures for making counselling available to participants, bearing in mind that some participants may regard counselling as intrusive or condescending. Researchers whose project involves unstructured interviews should bear in mind the likely therapeutic value of conversation and should be willing to stay longer with informants who are willing to talk of difficult things and to return to them often, if necessary.

The most stringent precautions against psychological distress must be taken in the case of participants who were victims in one way or another. Researchers should also exercise caution and sensitivity in confronting people with their own past actions. As a matter of principle, people cannot be protected from the consequences of reflecting on their actions, and indeed encouraging people to do so is thoroughly consistent with the principle of human dignity. Nonetheless, the researcher should never inflict embarrassment on an informant simply for the sake of making a point.

e. Deception. Honesty is a fundamental reflection of both research integrity and respect for human dignity. Unless compelling reasons can be provided, a researcher should never conceal from participants his/her identity as a researcher and should not provide incorrect or misleading information about the project. A researcher who proposes to use such techniques should demonstrate clearly that the importance of the research outweighs the considerations of integrity and dignity and that the results could not be obtained by any more acceptable means. The obligation to avoid deception does not require a researcher to broadcast to the community in general either his/her identity as a researcher or the nature of the project; nor does it prevent the normal interviewer's technique of dissembling one's political opinions and concealing the extent of one's knowledge of the matters being discussed.

14. Assessment of risk. This question relates primarily to invasive procedures which carry the risk of physical harm to participants. In most cases, researchers in the humanities and the social sciences can safely tick the box 'No foreseeable added risk above the risks of everyday living', provided that possible psychological harm has been discussed under 13d). Other considerations which may sometimes warrant discussion here are the possibility that the research will expose participants to legal action or some form of retaliation by third parties.

16. Withdrawal from the project. This question relates mainly to clinical trials and psychological procedures, during which a participant may decide to withdraw because

of unexpected discomfort, embarrassment or any other reason. The right to withdraw is absolute and the researcher may not attempt to dissuade a participant from withdrawing on the grounds that an experiment or procedure will be 'spoilt' as a result. Analogous social science projects which involve placing subjects in controlled research situations must similarly make clear that a participant can withdraw at any time for any reason and the projects must be structured to permit withdrawal. Humanities and Social Science researchers engaged in longitudinal studies which presume that the same person will participate again at some later date must also make clear that participants are under no obligation to take part a second time.

There is no need to address the issue of withdrawal if the research does not place participants in a controlled situation and if there is no longitudinal aspect to the research. If an interview is recorded, however, the Participant Information Sheet should make clear to the informant that he/she may have the recording stopped or paused at any time.

There is no ethical requirement for the researcher to permit a participant to withdraw his/her data after data collection has been completed, though this is a courtesy which may be appropriate in many cases. It would not be appropriate after publication, where identifying information has been completely removed from data so that an individual's data can no longer be identified, or in projects where the validity of the information is attested from more than one source. The consent given by participants for the use of data does not expire.

17a-e. Sources of Funding. Participants are entitled to know the source of funding for a project. In conducting research, there is no need to identify the researcher's own university separately as a funder, or to identify funding from any competitive, academically-based research funding organization comparable to the ARC, as long as funding is administered by the university (though these sources should always be acknowledged in published results). Participants, however, are entitled to know if research has been commissioned by any government agency, business, association, organization or private individual. This information should normally be provided in the project information sheet. The researcher should be able to satisfy the committee that such external funding will not in any way compromise the academic integrity of the project.

17d. Payment to participants. Payment to participants for their role in a research project is generally not good practice. In general, the researcher's presentation of the importance and benefits of the project should be sufficient to persuade people to take part. Under University guidelines, the offering of payment to induce participation in a project is considered a form of coercion. The making of any payment to participants also raises significant risks. The researcher should specifically address:

- The risk that the availability of payment will distort the selection of participants or the quality of the information provided
- The risk that the payment will lead to distortion of the existing social structure by unduly rewarding those permitted to participate

For these reasons, anything more than token and/or incidental payments to participants must be carefully justified in the light of these risks. Amongst the acceptable reasons for making such payment, however, may be the fact that payments are customary in the culture of the participants. The researcher should also demonstrate that the procedures to be followed will ensure that the distribution of payments to participants will be equitable.

If a research programme involves making payment for services to persons who are also participants, the researcher must demonstrate that these payments are made at fair market rates.

18. Conflict of interest. Conflict of interest arises when a researcher's external interests (especially financial or employment-related) may be in conflict with his/her obligation of research integrity, that is to treat all material fairly and to use the best procedures. Such conflict may arise from the actual research procedures (for instance, using a research project to make contact with potential future business clients) or from allowing such interests to influence the design or outcome of the research (for instance, focussing on or away from an organization in which the researcher has a financial interest). Conflict of interest may also arise in action research, in which the researcher's social obligations to the group being investigated may come into conflict with his/her obligations as a researcher. Because it is important that the University not only uphold research integrity but also be seen to do so, the appearance of conflict of interest should be strenuously avoided and research projects should be designed accordingly. If conflict of interest cannot be avoided, then this fact must be made explicit in the project information sheet.

Conflict of interest generally does not arise out of a researcher's political engagement with the topic of the research project.

Attachments: See Appendices 1-2 for a sample Participant Information Sheet appropriate to unstructured interview research and for a sample consent for the recording and deposition of an interview.

References should be provided only if there is reason to doubt that the researcher is qualified to carry out the project in an ethical way or if the researcher wishes to reassure the committee on the ethical character of some aspect of the procedures proposed.

Reporting. The University *Guidelines* require the researcher to submit a report each year on the conduct of the project. This report may be brief and should normally not be longer than a page. It should state:

- The identifying details of the project (name, researchers, ethical clearance no.)
- The number of participants and their basic demographic details (age, gender), the role they played in the project and the location(s) at which they were involved.
- The procedures by which participants were given information on the project
- The procedures by which informed consent was obtained
- Comments (if applicable) on any harm caused by the project in the light of the risk levels predicted in the original proposal
- Expected or achieved outcomes
- Provision of feedback to participants

Appendices:

1. Participant information sheet – sample
2. Consent form – sample

Appendix 1: Sample Participant Information Sheet



THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

‘Nation Building and Elite Formation in Madagascar’ Project Information Sheet

Thank you for agreeing to assist me in my history research project entitled **‘Nation Building and Elite Formation in Madagascar’**. The project explores aspects of nation building and reactions to government efforts to construct a national consciousness.

The interview will take the form of a private conversation on a wide range of topics. I would like to hear about your own background and experiences and to talk to you about your views on topics that might include matters as diverse as education and language experiences, government, the economy, social groups, and foreign influences. You are under no obligation, of course, to answer any particular question and you may end the interview at any time.

I intend to write a book and perhaps some journal articles on the basis of my research, which will also take me to libraries and archives. Within the conventions of standard scholarly practice, I intend to give you proper recognition, both for your role in the historical events you describe to me and for the information you provide. Here and there I may wish to quote your words directly. As we carry out the interview, you should feel free to mention that you wish to keep particular items of information confidential or unattributed.

At the end of the project, I plan to deposit a copy of my interview notes in the National Library of Australia, so that information which you tell me and which does not appear in my book will nonetheless be available to future researchers. There will be no access to this material by other researchers, however, for a period of fifteen years.

The aim of the project – and the only benefit I can offer you for your assistance – is to help both the people of Madagascar and others gain a fuller appreciation of the nature of Madagascar society in particular, and nation building in general.

This study has been cleared by one of the human ethics committees of the University of Queensland in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s guidelines. You are of course, free to discuss your participation in this study with project staff (contactable on +61 7 3365 XXXX). If you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study, you may contact the Ethics Officer on +61 7 3365 3924.

Yours sincerely,

XXXX XXXX

Contact details
School of NNNN
University of Queensland
St Lucia, Q. 4072, Australia
Tel. +61 7 3365 XXXX
Fax +61 7 3365 XXXX
E-mail:
XXXX@uq.edu.au

Sample Participant Consent Form



THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

'Origins of the One Nation Party' Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to assist me in my history research project entitled '**Origins of the One Nation Party**' and for your willingness for my interview with you to be recorded. This form will help to make clear the legal status of that recording. You will receive a copy of this form to keep for your records

Under Australian law, we each hold copyright over our recorded words. This means that you have the right to control who has access to the recording and how your words will be used. The University of Queensland takes seriously its responsibilities to those who assist its research programmes and this form will help us to be sure we are using your words fairly and in accordance with your wishes. We also believe that your words are important and we would like them to be available to future researchers, if you agree.

I (*person interviewed*) _____

give permission for my interview(s) with XXXX XXXX to be recorded and for him/her to use the interview material for research purposes. I have noted that I may ask for the recording to be stopped at any time and that I may ask the researcher to treat certain information as confidential or as unattributed.

I **agree/do not agree** (*strike out whichever does not apply*) that XXXX XXXX may quote my words in any publication arising directly or indirectly from this project subject to the following (*circle whichever applies*):

1. No conditions
2. Any direct quotation of my words requires my **verbal permission/written**

permission (*circle whichever applies*).

I **agree/do not agree** (*circle whichever applies*) that a copy of this recording or a transcript or summary may be deposited for future research purposes in the National Library

of Australia (or some other suitable repository) subject to the following (*circle whichever applies*):

1. No conditions

2. There is to be no access to the interview by other researchers until _____

(*insert year*)

3. Anyone wanting to listen to or read the interview during my life time or before _____ (*insert year*) must first obtain my written permission, unless reasonable attempts to contact me are unsuccessful.

I **wish/do not wish** (*delete as applicable*) to receive a copy of the recording and of any transcript that is made.

I assign to (*name of assignee, e.g. interviewer, university, library*)

_____ any copyright owned by me in the interview **on my death/on the following date** (*delete as applicable*) _____

Signature of person interviewed _____ date _____

Address of person interviewed _____

Telephone number of person interviewed _____

Signature of researcher _____ date _____

Contact details

XXXX XXXX

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