



4.0 CAN I UNDERTAKE
HUMAN RESEARCH
WITHOUT ETHICS
APPROVAL?

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If you decide your project does not require ethics approval there are still some fundamental considerations and questions that you should ask before you start your research.⁸

Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity and quality.

**Is the research study worth doing?
Can you ensure the integrity and quality of the research?**

Research staff and participants must be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved.

Can you ensure that any potential participants will be fully informed of the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research? If not, are you sure that you could convince an ethics committee that your project is justifiable?

The confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and the anonymity of respondents must be respected.

Is it possible to maintain participant confidentiality and anonymity within the study?

Research participants must participate in a voluntary way, free from any coercion.

Can you guarantee that your participants' involvement in the research is truly voluntary?

Harm to research participants must be avoided.

Can the research guarantee the absence of harm to the research participants? Remember that in social science research, 'harm' is taken to mean more than just physical harm, and can refer to emotional harm and risk of upset, as well as reputational damage.

The independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit.

Will the research design enable the researchers to remain independent throughout the process? Are there any conflicts of interest?

Writing a project proposal (also called a research protocol) can help you to flesh out your ideas and consider if you are applying ethical principles in research.