
Human Research with Children and Young People

Aspects of consent involving children and young people

In Australia, research with children and young people under 18 usually requires consent from a parent or guardian *as well as* consent from the child or young person.

A young person should be provided with the opportunity to consent (in addition to the consent of their parent or guardian) if they are mature enough to do so. If a young person does not yet have this capacity they should still have the project described to them and you may provide them with written information about the project.

While in general you should get consent from the parent/guardian of a young person under 18 years of age, in the case of a mature minor, for example a mature 17 year old, you will need to provide the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee with justification in line with sections 4.2.8 and 4.2.9 of the [National Statement](#).

Informed consent in human research

The [National statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) states that the consent of participants must be both voluntary and informed.

This means that they

1. agree to take part in your project voluntarily
2. understand what is involved in your project

There are particular issues to be considered around informed consent in relation to children and young people. These are addressed in Chapter 4.2 of the [National Statement](#).

For consent to be informed, participants need to understand your project. This means that you need to provide them information in plain language.

You need to record their consent. Normally this consent will be provided in written or verbal form or implied, for example playing the game on the iPad, completing the survey, drawing a picture.

Working with Children Check (WWCC)

If you will be conducting research with children or young people who are under 18 years of age you will need to have a current [Working with Children Check \(WWCC\)](#) for each researcher in the research team who will have any contact with a child or young person. Advice is available from the [Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety](#).

The Working with Children Check is a screening process for assessing or re-assessing people who work with or care for children in Victoria.

Research recruiting students via their School

For research that recruits students via their schools, if this is a Victorian Government or Catholic school you can apply for ethics approval through VUHREC and then to the [Department of Education and Training](#) or the [Director of the Catholic Education](#). Prior 'in principle' approval is required from the organisations above before principles can be approached to involve any staff or students. In the case of independent schools researchers can seek approval in the first instance from the head of school.

Victoria University Information to Participants and Consent Form templates

Depending on the nature of your research project, you may be required to provide an 'Information to Participants Involved in Research' form and/or a 'Consent Form for Participants Involved in Research' with your ethics application. The Office for Research has developed templates of these forms. You are required to use the VU templates and in the case of research with children and young people to consult these forms when developing your forms as they are designed to capture all the information that needs to be provided to potential or actual participants:

- [Information to participants involved in research form \[Template\]](#)
- [Consent form for participants involved in research \[Template\]](#)

You may develop a form which is simpler than the examples above, customised for children to gain an understanding about the project. For younger children you may design a simple [Child Information Sheet](#) similar to the one developed by the Royal Children's Hospital which includes pictures and large text.

Resources

Link to VU brochure on “Recruitment Strategies in Human Research”

Link to VU brochure on “Information to Participants and Consent processes in Human Research Ethics”

Link to VU Research Ethics Q and A Webpage

Victoria University's [guide to research ethics in the time of COVID-19](#)

Links to [Human Research Ethics Resources](#)

For further information about doing research with children and young people, see Chapter 4.2 of the [National Statement](#).

[Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne – Ethics and Consent](#)

The Australian Paediatric Research Ethics and Governance Network (AGPREG) has produced a guide on [consent in paediatric research](#)

You may need to apply for or apply to renew your [Working with Children Check \(WWCC\)](#)

Contact us for information

If you would like further information about the conduct of research or the human research ethics approval and review process, please contact:

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Victoria University [Human Research Ethics website](#)

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