



# Guide for responsible AI use in developing human research ethics applications at UQ

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| Related rules, policies & forms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">UQ Human Research Ethics Procedure</a></li><li>• <a href="#">NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Responsible use of AI for research - AI Researcher Hub - Library Guides at University of Queensland Library</a></li><li>• <a href="#">UQ Responsible Research Management Framework Policy</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research</a></li><li>• UQ Human Research Ethics <a href="#">Checklists and templates</a></li></ul> |

## Purpose

Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) can play a significant role in improving the quality, clarity, and compliance of ethics applications for human research. However, AI should assist, not replace human judgment. Ethics applications require nuanced understanding of context, cultural considerations, and participant welfare.

This document provides practical guidance for UQ researchers on the responsible and effective use of Gen AI when preparing applications for human research ethics approval. It aims to encourage practices that support ethical reflection and improve clarity, while avoiding reliance on AI to complete applications without critical engagement.

This guide should be read in conjunction with [Responsible Use of Generative AI in Research](#), which provides guidance on risks such as data security and intellectual property when using different Gen AI tools.

## Principles for Responsible Use of AI

- **Do Not Delegate Ethical Judgment to AI:** Ethical review requires human deliberation. Researchers remain accountable for the accuracy, integrity, and ethical soundness of their application.
- **Use AI to Support Ethical Reflection:** AI can assist in identifying potential ethical issues and prompting consideration of risks, benefits, and participant protections. Treat outputs as suggestions, not definitive answers.
- **Use AI to Enhance Clarity and Accessibility:** AI can help, with human oversight, ensure participant-facing documents are written in plain language and are consistent with UQ templates and accessible to the target audience.
- **Maintain Accuracy and Compliance:** Validate all AI-generated content against UQ Human Ethics guidelines and the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Statement).
- **Protect Confidentiality and Privacy:** Do not input identifiable or sensitive data or confidential project details into public AI platforms. Understand the risks associated with UQ-supported platforms before inputting sensitive information.
- **Transparency:** Document and acknowledge AI use to develop ethics applications and associated materials.
- **Accountability:** Researchers remain responsible for compliance with UQ policies and the National Statement.



## Practical examples of responsible AI use

This section provides practical, real-world examples of how UQ researchers can responsibly use AI tools in the ethics application development and writing process. Researchers are reminded of the Human Research Ethics templates and checklists available to them on the [Research Ethics and Integrity](#) website that can also assist in creating quality human research ethics applications.

### 1. DRAFTING AND STRUCTURING APPLICATIONS

- **Brainstorming Stage:** AI can generate lists of potential ethical considerations relevant to your methodology.
- **Drafting Stage:** Use AI to check clarity and readability in Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms.
- **Template Guidance:** AI can provide structured templates aligned with institutional and national ethics guidelines.
- **Section Suggestions:** Where standard UQ templates are not being used, AI can suggest appropriate headings and content for sections like risk assessment, participant consent, and data management. Don't forget to complete the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form Checklist when not using the UQ templates.
- **Drafting Recruitment Messages:** AI can help draft recruitment emails or advertisements that are clear, respectful, and avoid coercive language. Appropriate disclosure regarding the use of AI needs to be made.

### 2. LANGUAGE AND CLARITY ENHANCEMENT

- **Plain Language Conversion:** AI can rewrite technical jargon into lay terms for participant information sheets and consent forms.
- **Readability Checks:** AI can assess readability scores and suggest improvements for accessibility to ensure documents are understandable for people with low literacy or non-native English speakers.
- **Testing Cultural Sensitivity:** Prompt AI to review participant-facing documents for language that may be culturally insensitive or exclusionary. It can also suggest alternatives. However, given the known biases in many platforms, human oversight and awareness of best practice is essential.
- **Ensuring Language Consistency:** AI can check that terminology in your ethics application matches participant-facing documents.
- **Summarising Complex Procedures:** Use AI to create a plain-language summary of complex data handling procedures for inclusion in participant documents.
- **Proofreading for Tone:** Ask AI to review participant-facing documents for tone, ensuring they are informative and respectful rather than overly technical or directive.

### 3. COMPLIANCE AND RISK IDENTIFICATION

- **Exploring Ethical Risks and Mitigations:** Prompt AI to suggest potential privacy risks in an online survey study and mitigation strategies. Review and adapt these to your context.
- **Scenario Testing for Participant Concerns:** Prompt AI to generate likely participant questions about data use or privacy, helping you anticipate and address concerns.
- **Checklist Automation:** AI can cross-check applications against ethics requirements (privacy, confidentiality, cultural sensitivity).
- **Risk Flagging:** Researchers should complete their own ethical risk assessment and consent reasoning first, and then use AI to refine or clarify wording once those judgements have been made.
- **Refining Risk Communication:** AI can suggest alternative ways to explain potential risks (e.g., discomfort during interviews) in a way that is clear but not alarming.



- **Generating Participant FAQs:** AI can draft a list of frequently asked or hypothetical questions participants might have about the study, then review and adapt these for inclusion in your Participant Information Sheet.
- **Scenario-Based Risk Identification:** AI can generate hypothetical scenarios where participant privacy could be compromised, and these can be used to strengthen your data protection plan.

#### 4. CONSENT AND PRIVACY SUPPORT

- **Consent Form Drafting:** Provide AI with the consent conditions and study details to help generate participant consent forms tailored to the study design and aligning with UQ requirements. It is acceptable to upload UQ Participant Information Statement and Consent Form templates into co-pilot in the UQ environment and have it populate the relevant sections based on your instructions about the project.
- **Data Protection Guidance:** AI can recommend best practices for compliance with GDPR or local regulations with respect to data storage, anonymization, and compliance. These need to align with UQ Research Data Management Policy.
- **Comparing Against Ethical Standards:** Prompt AI to check whether your application addresses key elements from the National Statement (e.g., consent, privacy, risk-benefit balance) and flag any gaps.

#### 5. EFFICIENCY AND CONSISTENCY

- **Checking Completeness of Participant Information and Consent Forms:** Together with the [UQ checklist](#), use AI to confirm that withdrawal rights, data storage/transfer, and confidentiality and privacy issues are clearly explained.
- **Version Control:** AI tools can track changes and ensure consistency across multiple documents.
- **Pre-submission Review:** Ask AI to simulate an ethics committee review, flagging common issues before submission.
- **Final Review:** Use AI for proofreading and identifying ambiguous or overly technical language.

#### 6. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

- **Scenario-Based Learning:** AI can create interactive examples of good versus poor ethics applications for researcher training.
- **Policy Updates:** AI can alert researchers to changes in ethics guidelines and automatically adapt templates.

## UQ recommended AI Tools:

UQ does not currently endorse [external AI platforms](#) for drafting ethics applications. M365 Copilot is UQ's recommended generative AI tool, which exists within the boundary of UQ's M365 environment. Therefore:

- Data is encrypted at rest and in transit.
- Data is not used to train AI models.
- Data resides in Australia.

M365 Copilot chat has been assessed as suitable for UQ information classified as SENSITIVE (this includes unpublished research data that doesn't have additional sensitivities e.g. health data) and below.

Prompts and responses are retained in the staff member's Exchange mailbox (inaccessible via Outlook). Files uploaded as part of prompts are stored in the staff member's OneDrive. This data will be retained in line with UQ's M365 retention approaches. Be aware that this may breach research agreements (e.g. if data can only be stored in UQ RDM).

For more information see: with [Responsible Use of Generative AI in Research](#),

## References and further information:

- The [UQ Human Research Ethics Procedure](#)
- The [NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#)
- Checklists and Templates for writing a UQ human research ethics application (including current templates for Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms) can be found [here](#)
- For broader guidance on risks such as data security and intellectual property when using Gen AI, refer to: [Responsible Use of Generative AI in Research](#)
- UQ [AI Learning Module](#): A learning module that provides an introduction to Artificial Intelligence (AI), including an overview of key tools and how to use them, and ensure you are aware of how to use these technologies ethically and responsibly is available [here](#).
- The [UQ Responsible Research Management Framework Policy](#)
- The [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)
- <https://guides.library.uq.edu.au/tools-and-techniques/ai-researcher-hub/disclosing>

## Disclosure:

- M365 Microsoft Co-pilot was used to help structure and generate initial drafts of the content of this document. The content was then reviewed, edited, and validated to ensure its accuracy, clarity, and alignment with the intended purpose.

## Support Contacts:

| Name                       | Phone Numbers                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Email                                                                              |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Human Research Ethics Team | phone contact details at: <a href="https://research-support.uq.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity-compliance/contacts">https://research-support.uq.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity-compliance/contacts</a> . | <a href="mailto:humanethics@research.uq.edu.au">humanethics@research.uq.edu.au</a> |