



# Merit and Integrity in Ethical Human Research

## SEQ Combined Human Research Ethics Training Day

Program of Events  
Friday 7 October 2016



# WELCOME



This is the fifth South East Queensland combined human research ethics training day. The theme for the day is merit and integrity in ethical human research, a topic that is fundamental to the decisions made by human research ethics committees.

A range of presenters have been invited, all of whom are well-respected in their fields, and together they constitute a programme of international standard. While there is a lot that can be learned from today's presentations, there is also a wealth of knowledge to be found amongst your fellow attendees. One of the great benefits of these seminars is that they provide an opportunity for attendees to engage in conversations with others and to reflect on your own experiences and to learn from others.

Following the format of previous seminars, the day will consist of a mix of formal presentations and informal case study discussions. The purpose of these training days is not simply to passively learn but also to actively engage in respectful debate and discussion, and to learn from the experiences of others and see the same problems from another perspective.

It is in this spirit of cooperation that I have the pleasure to welcome you to the South East Queensland combined human research ethics training day.

*Dr Mark Bahr*  
*Bond University Human Research Ethics Committee*

# MERIT AND INTEGRITY IN ETHICAL HUMAN RESEARCH

9.15am - 9.45am	Registration
9.45am - 10.00am	Welcome
10.00am - 10.45am	Determining Integrity in Social Science Research: Staying Away from the Naughty Corner
10.45am - 11.30am	Research Integrity: the Very Idea
11.30am - 12.00pm	Morning tea
12.00pm - 12.45pm	Institutional Responsibilities
12.45pm - 1.30pm	Managing Conflicts of Interest
1.30pm - 2.15pm	Lunch
2.15pm - 3.00pm	Repatriating Remains: A Coronial Research Proposal
3.00pm - 3.45pm	Evidence in the Ethics Application Process
3.45pm	Close, followed by informal afternoon tea

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10.00am-10.45am

## Determining Integrity in Social Science Research: Staying Away from the Naughty Corner

Researchers owe a professional obligation to their colleagues to handle themselves honestly and with integrity. They need to maintain intellectual honesty in proposing, performing and reporting research, accuracy in representing contributions to research proposals and reports, fairness in peer review, and collegiality in scientific interactions, including communications and sharing of resources.

Some codes and guidelines including the Australian Code describe their remit in positive tones and emphasize integrity and the concepts of honesty, carefulness, independence and fair recognition. However, the dominant position in many other jurisdictions including the United States dwells on misconduct - what people shouldn't do, and what should happen to them if they do.

Professor Mark Israel

*Australasian Human Research Ethics Consultancy Services*

*Adjunct Professor, Flinders University and University of Western Australia*



Mark has a degree in law and postgraduate qualifications in sociology, criminology and education from Oxford, Cambridge and Flinders Universities respectively. He has over 70 publications in the areas of higher education and research policy, research ethics and integrity, exile and migration, criminology and socio-legal studies. His books and monographs include *South African Political Exile in the United Kingdom* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), and *Research*

*Ethics for Social Scientists: Between Ethical Conduct and Regulatory Compliance* (Sage, 2006 with Iain Hay), and *Research Ethics and Integrity for Social Scientists: Beyond Regulatory Compliance* (Sage 2015).

Mark has won teaching and research prizes in Australia, the United Kingdom and

the United States, including: the Prime Minister's Award for Australian University Teacher of the Year in 2004; the Radzinowicz Memorial Prize from the British Journal of Criminology in 2005; and the Critical Criminologist of the Year Award from the Critical Criminology Division of the American Society of Criminology in 2006.

He is a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy in the United Kingdom, was a Fellow and a Discipline Scholar of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, and has been an External Examiner at the University of Hong Kong and an External Moderator at the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand.

Mark has received national competitive grants from the Australian Research Council, the Criminology Research Council and the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. He was appointed professor at Flinders University (2004-09) and University of Western Australia (2010-16).

Mark is or has been a member of the subcommittees responsible for research ethics of both the British Society of Criminology and the Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology; the NHMRC's Harmonisation of Multi-Centre Ethical Review Education (HoMER) sub-group and the Editorial Boards of the Journal of Academic Ethics in Canada, Research Ethics in the United Kingdom, the Journal of Empirical Research on Human-Research Ethics in the United States, and the International Journal for Educational Integrity in Australia.

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10.45am-11.30am

## Research Integrity: the Very Idea

Getting clear on the nature of research integrity - on the very idea of it and its relationship to academic practice - is crucial if we are to think well about developing academic environments that protect and nurture the integrity of researchers. Integrity is a virtue and this is the most important thing to keep in mind when thinking about research integrity and the sorts of social and regulatory environments that nurture it.

Research integrity is a kind of intellectual integrity: it is the intellectual integrity of a particular academic practice. To understand the virtue, we need to understand the practice. The aim of this talk is to explore the concept of intellectual integrity while paying attention to the variety of academic practices in which it is displayed (or not displayed). The key assertion will be that there is no one simple thing called intellectual integrity, common to all research. There is no prospect of a simple, all-encompassing account of research integrity.

There are four concepts that intersect here and that are in need of clarification: the concept of virtue; the concept of integrity as a virtue; the concept of intellectual integrity; and the concept of academic practice.

Academic practices should be understood in terms of the internal goods constitutive of them and the role-specific virtues of academic practice are ethical traits necessary for attaining these goods. Intellectual integrity is a trait necessary for obtaining the internal goods of the practice of research.

Using this conceptual framework, we will discuss the problem of understanding and thus effectively nurturing the integrity of research practice.



Associate Professor Damian Cox  
Bond University, Faculty of Society and Design

Damian Cox is Associate Professor of philosophy at Bond University. He teaches ethics, political philosophy and philosophy and film; and has taught business ethics, critical thinking, philosophy of science, and cognitive science. He has co-authored three books: *Integrity and the Fragile Self*; *A Politics Most Unusual: violence, sovereignty and democracy in the war on terror*; and *Thinking Through Film*. He has published over forty journal articles on a wide variety of topics, including in philosophical logic and epistemology, ethics, moral psychology, and philosophy of film. His work on integrity includes co-authorship of entries on integrity in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* and the *Acumen Handbook of Virtue Ethics*.

11.30am-12.00pm

Morning tea

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12.00pm-12.45pm

## Institutional Responsibilities

In *The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (The National Statement)* human research is defined as research which is conducted “with or about people, or their data or tissue” (2007, p.8).

*The National Statement* makes it clear that institutions which conduct human research are responsible for establishing procedures for the ethics review of research which is conducted under their auspices. In most cases, this will mean establishing a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The role of the HREC is to judge whether a human research project “meets the requirements of [the] *National Statement* and is ethically acceptable” (*ibid*).

*The National Statement* sets out the core values and principles which provide a framework to conduct research and to also review it.

Research merit and integrity - the idea that research must have merit, and that the researchers who undertake human research conduct that research with integrity - is probably the most misunderstood principle, or certainly the one which causes the most conflict between researcher and HREC. In this talk the following will be discussed:

- The role of the HREC both pre- and post- approval in relation to the principle of research merit and integrity;
- The role of the institution in relation to the principle of research merit and integrity;
- Researcher's views about HRECs decisions in relation to the principle of research merit and integrity.





Dr Karolyn (Kandy) White  
Director, Research Ethics and Integrity  
Macquarie University

Karolyn has taught ethics, including clinical ethics and research ethics, to postgraduate and undergraduate students, HREC members and to health care professionals in Australia and overseas for over twenty years.

Her PhD research "Ethics at the margins: an empirical study of the experience of doctors and nurses working in women's prisons in NSW, Australia", explored how context impacted on health care professionals' ethical obligations to patients. In 2012, Karolyn, with Lisa Wynn and Colin Thomson, was awarded an ARC Discovery grant to evaluate and compare disciplinary experiences of ethics review.

Currently, she is employed as the Director, Research Ethics and Integrity, at Macquarie University. Karolyn's role involves oversight of all research ethics at the University and she chairs the Human Research Ethics Committee. Her role also includes furthering the research ethics and integrity culture at Macquarie, teaching staff and students about ethics and integrity underpinning research, and research ethics procedures and policies. Karolyn also Chairs the AEN advisory group and is co-coordinator of the Research Ethics and Integrity Special Interest Group of Australian Research Management Society (ARMS).

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12.45pm-1.30pm

## Managing Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of interest - or what we refer to as these - are recurrent matters of everyday life because of the multiple relationships in which most people find themselves.

To be in a position of conflict is not a moral failure - it is simply an inevitable result of living a connected life. Referring to them as competing interests may be preferable.

There are three primary contexts in which conflicts of interest appear in human research ethics:

- Researchers and their research
- Reviewers and researchers
- Institutions and reviewers

The ethical significance of a person's competing interest arises from the effect, or perceived effect, it can have on the fulfilment of a responsibility that person has and, in turn, the effect on the process in which fulfilment of that responsibility is necessary.

So, for example, if I am a researcher and undertake a research project that brings me significant remuneration, my interest in being wealthier may impair the fulfilment of my responsibilities as a researcher and, in turn, damage the reputation of the institution responsible for the research.

Likewise, if I participate in the ethical review of my partner's research, my interest in promoting my partner's career may actually or appear to affect how I fulfil my responsibility as an ethics reviewer - I may be softer in my partner's interest. Although this would be a personal failing, the more important effect is that it impairs the credibility of the review process and, in turn, the reputation of the institution that established and is responsible for that process.

Lastly, if an institution stands to receive remuneration or other reward for supporting or facilitating a research project and appoints its research promoter as a member of an ethics review committee, their participation in the review may impair the reputation of the review process and that of the institution itself. In ethics review, it is important to:

- recognise that a competing interest exists or can be seen to exist,
- disclose the interest appropriately,
- determine the scope and potential effect it may have,
- assess how best to manage the interest.
- implement that management, and
- record the implementation.



### Professor Colin Thomson

Academic Leader for Health Law and Ethics  
Graduate School of Medicine and Health, University of  
Wollongong

Colin Thomson BA, LLB, LLM (Hons) has a fractional appointment as Professor of Law at the University of Wollongong where he is the Academic Leader for Health Law and Ethics in the Graduate School of Medicine and Health. He was Chair of the Australian Health Ethics Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) from 2006-2009 and a member of that committee from 1998-2002.

Between 2002 and 2006, he was the Consultant on Health Ethics for the NHMRC. During this period, Colin provided consulting services to the NHMRC, the NSW Health Department and the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS).

In 1983, he introduced the second Australian university course on law and medicine, at the Australian National University, and has since taught health law and ethics to graduate students at the University of Wollongong and conducted numerous on-site teaching sessions in health law and ethics for health professionals in ACT and NSW hospitals. He has been a member of human research ethics committees since 1984, both in universities and the public health sector and currently chairs two committees.

He has published and spoken widely, nationally and internationally, on issues in health law and ethics. He has been Executive Officer and Chair of the Board of the Australian and New Zealand Institute of Health, Law and Ethics and Vice-President of the Australasian Bioethics Association - now combined as the Australasian Association of Bioethics and Health Law and is Secretary for the Journal of Bioethical Inquiry Pty Ltd.

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1.30pm-2.15pm

Lunch

2.15pm-3.00pm

## Repatriating Remains: A Coronial Research Proposal

An experienced anthropologist Professor Bond of South Coast University is proposing to collaborate with molecular biologists to extract and sequence DNA from human skeletal remains of uncertain antiquity. These remains are currently housed in a Queensland government facility.

The provenance of these remains is not completely clear but appears to be from a location in Western Queensland associated with a particular contemporary indigenous group.

The research team at South Coast University propose to compare the DNA extracted from the skeletal remains with a range of DNA samples collected from modern indigenous groups living in or near the location of supposed geographic origin of skeletal remains.

The aim is to allow the skeletal remains to be repatriated to the appropriate contemporary indigenous group.

Participants: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Research team:

- Extensive experience in the analysis of ancient DNA from skeletal remains
- Involved in a number of projects that study genetic diversity in contemporary and ancient indigenous groups throughout Australia
- Members of the research team have long standing relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders and communities
- One of the members identifies as aboriginal and advises the research team on aboriginal knowledge systems and ethical issues

Consultation:

- Due to the unknown nature of the samples the research team have advised that it is impossible to consult with the appropriate indigenous community and one community or council cannot always speak for another.

Questions:

- What ethical issues does this proposal raise?
- What guidelines may be relevant?
- Who should be consulted?
- Should it be regarded as a laudable project which is worthwhile for both scientific knowledge and the potential return of remains to their respective custodians?
- What are the potential harms if any?
- What additional information, if any, might the ethics committee need to ask for?

Note:

- For the purposes of this discussion, coronial issues have been omitted. The focus should be on the social, cultural and ethical issues of this proposal.



[Professor Michael Meadows](#)

Lay member, Forensic and Scientific Services Human research Ethics Committee

Adjunct Professor of Journalism, Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research

Michael worked as a researcher in Indigenous media and communications for around three decades before retiring from full-time academic duties at Griffith University's Nathan Campus in 2014.

During his academic research career, he worked with a wide range of Indigenous communities in exploring local communication needs and how community aspirations might find their way into the federal government's media policy process.

He has published extensively in the area of Indigenous media and communications and is recognised internationally as an expert in this field. He has been a lay member of the Forensic and Scientific Services Human Research Ethics Committee since 2014.

3.00pm-3.45pm

## Evidence in the Ethics Application Process

Articulating the Australian Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) process in the planning, review and implementation of research is founded on a set of principles espoused in the NHMRC's National Statement for the Ethical Conduct of Human Research (National Statement). The principles of the National Statement tend to be considered as a package of four principles - Research Merit & Integrity, Justice, Beneficence, and Respect. They are accompanied by discussion regarding Risk.

This presentation explores the notion that in fact there are six principles at play here - Merit, Integrity, Justice, Beneficence, Respect, and Risk - and that in a practical sense, such a structure greatly helps researchers articulate their project against the *National Statement* principles. I will explore this slight change of emphasis in terms of the practical activity required of a Chair of a University HREC who is required to promote the concepts and practices of human research ethics.

My second exploration is founded on what that promotion looks like. Conventional HREC 'training' often focuses on process and bureaucracy; more scholarly 'training' will focus on the principles, although this is often from the perspective of what these principles mean, how they are defined, and how, more recently, HREC members may be able to test a proposal against the principles. The often-missing ingredient is a deceptively simple component: the evidence. What evidence does a committee require to be able to evaluate whether a proposed research project or set of methods addresses one, or more, of the National Statement principles?

This is an important question, because researchers are writing their applications to primarily persuade a committee that it should authorise research to be conducted with HREC approval. While there will be an interest in the research per se, the primary question a members need to be able to ask - and answer - is whether this proposal meets the National Statement principles. This is a seemingly easy question that at times can be hard to answer clearly. In my experience, I have found that by offering insights to researchers - potential HREC applicants - about the evidence that a HREC uses to answer that question, these researchers are better prepared to submit a HREC application to the committee, and, generally, submit better and clearer applications.

Researchers also find that they are in a stronger position to make principles-based decisions in their planning process. By promoting a focus on the evidence a researcher needs to provide the HREC, I also find there is less discussion and anxiety about, for example, the role of a HREC assessing methods (“You are not a methods committee”). There are, undoubtedly, further advantages.

This session will outline my approach to supporting researchers, and perhaps discussion might help refine the narrative that I and others can use around the role of evidence in principle-based project proposals and HREC applications, and principle-based HREC decision-making.



Professor Bill Boyd

Professor of Geography, Southern Cross University

Bill has been the Chair of his University's Human Research Ethics Committee since 2008 (and was the Chair of the SCU Animal Care & Ethics Committee until recently). He is a multi- and trans-disciplinary scholar - a geographer, archaeologist, landscape scientist and educationalist, with scholarly interests in long-term environmental change, human-landscape interactions, environmental and cultural heritage management, and higher education. He draws on both the geosciences and the humanities to inform his teaching and research.

Bill brings a geographer's eye to his teaching in the fields of environmental management, social engagement with environment and cultural heritage, and in Quaternary geology and geoarchaeology. His current research focuses on the scholarship of teaching & learning, especially from the perspective of trans-disciplinary cross-school team-based research, and student learning processes.

Bill has published extensively in the scholarly literature in all his subject areas: [https://works.bepress.com/bill\\_boyd/](https://works.bepress.com/bill_boyd/). Bill has worked at SCU since 1988, having held senior positions on his School, Faculty and University Academic Boards and other governance committees. He is the Student Ombud and serves on the University's Reconciliation Action Plan Committee.



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