Research Ethics and Integrity Policy and Procedure

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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish the standards for ethical and responsible research conduct at the Australian School of Business Pty Ltd, trading as Australis Business School (Australis), in alignment with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)*. It ensures that all research conducted at Australis upholds the highest ethical standards, promoting integrity and safeguarding the dignity, safety, and rights of research participants.

This policy supports the following national guidelines:

- The *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2025)*.
- *Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities: Guidelines for Researchers and Stakeholders (2018)*.

By promoting responsible and ethical research practices, this policy reinforces Australis' commitment to research excellence, integrity, and accountability.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all individuals involved in research at Australis, including staff, HDR supervisors, research students, visiting academics, and external collaborators. It must be read in conjunction with other relevant Australis policies, such as the *Research Training Induction Policy*.

3. DEFINITIONS

See the Australis *Glossary of Terms* for definitions.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Australis is committed to upholding the highest standards of research integrity, fostering ethical conduct and best practices across all research activities. In line with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)*, researchers at Australis are required to act honestly, responsibly, and ethically to maintain the trust of the academic community and the public.

4.1. Commitment to Research Excellence

Australis promotes research that advances knowledge and adheres to rigorous ethical standards. Researchers are expected to:

a. Uphold the principles of honesty, rigour, transparency, fairness, respect, accountability, and promotion, as outlined in the Section 4 of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)*.
b. Recognise, respect, and value the rights of diverse groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, individuals with disabilities, those of different faiths, cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, and gender identities, in all aspects of research, including the planning, design, conduct, and dissemination of research outcomes.
c. Adhere to Australis policies that support responsible research conduct and ensure the highest standards of integrity.

4.2. Policy Principles

Research at Australis is governed by the following principles:

a. **Integrity:** Research must be conducted with honesty and transparency, ensuring that outputs are reliable and ethically sound, in accordance with Section 4 of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)* and the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2025)*.
b. **Ethical Oversight:** Human research under Australis institutional responsibility follows the classification, exemption and ethics-review pathways in the approved *HREC Terms of Reference* and *HREC Standard Operating Procedures*. Every such project also requires separate recorded Australis institutional authorisation before commencement. No animal research will be conducted at Australis and there are no plans to do so.
c. **Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples:** Researchers must respect the rights and cultural sensitivities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, following the *Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities guidelines (2018)*.
d. **Collaboration and Transparency:** All collaborative research must be based on clear agreements regarding roles, responsibilities, and intellectual property, with transparency in data management, authorship, and reporting.
e. **Research Misconduct and Accountability:** Allegations of research misconduct will be addressed according to Australis policies, ensuring procedural fairness and the integrity of the research process.

5. POLICY DETAILS

5.1. Australis Responsibilities

Australis is committed to:

a. Provide governance and oversight to promote responsible research practices, as outlined in the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)*.
b. Ensure ongoing training and support for researchers and HDR supervisors on ethical conduct and research integrity and best practices in research, as outlined in the *Research Training and Induction Policy*.
c. Establish and maintain secure systems for the storage, management, and sharing of research data, ensuring compliance with privacy and data protection laws, and national guidelines on intellectual property (IP) management.
d. Provide guidance so that human research, including pilot studies where applicable, follows the authorised classification, exemption or ethics-review pathway and receives separate Australis institutional authorisation before commencement.
e. Provide mechanisms to prevent, identify, and investigate breaches of research integrity, ensuring procedural fairness during investigations and taking timely corrective actions where necessary.

5.2. Human Research and Ethics Committee (HREC)

Human research ethics review at Australis is conducted through the pathways authorised by the *HREC Terms of Reference* and ***HREC*** *Standard Operating Procedures*. The HREC reviews projects referred to it within its authorised scope and makes decisions on ethical acceptability, conditions, amendments and monitoring matters within its authority. Its consideration includes research merit and integrity, participant welfare, consent, privacy, the equitable treatment of participants and communities, and proportionate management of ethical risks. Research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or communities must receive appropriate cultural and ethical consideration in accordance with the National Statement and relevant guidance.

Eligibility for exemption and lower-risk non-HREC review is determined through the separately authorised institutional pathways. Every human-research project under Australis institutional responsibility also requires a separate recorded institutional authorisation before commencement.

The HREC reports to the Academic Board on its ethics-review activity and material ethical or participant-protection issues and maintains the required ethics-review records in accordance with the *HREC Standard Operating Procedures*. Australis retains institutional responsibility for research integrity and misconduct processes, academic and HDR policies, research training, intellectual property, contractual and collaborative arrangements, and other legal and operational approvals through their respective authorised governance and policy arrangements. The HREC does not undertake institutional research-misconduct investigations.

5.3. HDR Supervisors

With regard to research ethics, HDR Supervisors at Australis are responsible for:

a. Ensuring that HDR candidates are aware of their responsibilities and adhere to the required ethical standards throughout their research projects.
b. Assisting students to prepare the required provisional risk and pathway assessment, seek any applicable exemption or ethics-review decision through the approved *HREC Standard Operating Procedure*s.
c. Ensuring relevant supporting records are maintained in accordance with the *Records and Information Management Policy*.
d. Regularly monitoring students' research progress to ensure compliance with national standards for ethical research.

5.4. HDR Student Responsibilities

HDR students at Australis must:

a. Comply with the relevant Australis research policies and the approved *HREC Standard Operating Procedures*, including undertaking a provisional risk and pathway assessment with the supervisor, obtaining the applicable institutional exemption and/or ethics-review outcome before commencing human research.
b. Uphold the principles of honesty, integrity, and transparency in conducting research, data management, and reporting.
c. Disclose any conflicts of interest during their research and report potential breaches of research integrity.

6. PROCEDURES

The following procedures outline the processes that guide ethical research conduct and ensure the integrity of all research activities at Australis.

6.1. Research Ethics Approval Process

a. **Application for Human Ethics Approval:** Researchers and HDR candidates must prepare complete and accurate information about their project, including methods, proposed participants, consent arrangements where applicable, data management and a provisional risk/pathway assessment. Where the project is human research under Australis institutional responsibility, the submission is routed through the classification, exemption, lower-risk review or full HREC process specified in the approved *HREC Standard Operating Procedures*. Where ethics approval is required, it must be obtained before research commences. Exemption decisions must be formally granted and recorded; a researcher or supervisor cannot self-exempt. Separate recorded institutional authorisation is required before any human research project commences under Australis responsibility.
b. **Risk Assessment:** Research proposals will be classified based on the level of risk to participants using the scale below (in alignment with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2025)* Chapter 2).

Figure 1: Risk profiles of research

Lower risk		Higher risk (Individual, group, community, societal or global)	
Minimal	**Low**	**Greater than low**	**High**
No risk of harm or discomfort; potential for minor burden or inconvenience*	No risk of harm; risk of discomfort (+/- foreseeable burden)	Risk of harm (+/- foreseeable burden)	Risk of significant harm (+/- foreseeable burden)

Review Process: The National Statement identifies minimal, low, greater-than-low and high risk profiles, which guide proportionate review. The researcher's initial classification is provisional. Exemption from ethics review is determined only where the National Statement criteria are met. Research that is no more than low risk may be reviewed through Australis's authorised non-HREC pathway by two competent, designated reviewers; matters requiring full HREC review or escalation are referred to the HREC. Applications, changes, review outcomes and conditions are handled and communicated in accordance with the approved *HREC Standard Operating Procedures*. Research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or communities must also meet applicable cultural and ethical review requirements.

6.2. Management of Research Data and Intellectual Property

All researchers must maintain accurate and comprehensive records of their research, ensuring that data is stored securely and compliant with privacy and ethical standards. Research data must be retained for the period applicable to the type of research and any relevant legal, ethical, contractual and institutional requirements, in accordance with Australis's Records and Information Management Policy. Refer to the *Records and Information Management Policy* for further details.

Researchers must adhere to Australis' intellectual property policies, ensuring proper attribution and management of data and research materials, including collaborative projects.

6.3. Management of Research Misconduct and Breaches

a. Reporting Breaches

i. All individuals involved in research, including staff, HDR supervisors, and students, must report any suspected breaches of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)*.

ii. Potential breaches include plagiarism, data fabrication or falsification, failure to obtain ethics approval or knowingly go beyond what was approved, and improper data management.

iii. Reports of misconduct should be made to the HREC.

b. **Preliminary Assessment:** Upon receiving a report of a potential breach, the HREC will conduct a preliminary assessment to determine if the report has merit. This assessment will involve:
    i. A review of the evidence provided.
    ii. An initial inquiry to confirm whether a full investigation is warranted.
    iii. Ensuring that the respondent is given notice of the allegation and an opportunity to provide an initial response.
    iv. The HREC may decide to:
        - Dismiss the matter if the allegation is found to be without merit.
        - Refer the matter for further investigation if a breach is suspected.
c. **Formal Investigation:** If the preliminary assessment suggests a breach, the HREC will initiate a formal investigation, conducted by an independent panel. The investigation process will include:
    i. An independent panel will be appointed to ensure impartiality. Panel members must have relevant expertise with respect to the research domain, be free from conflicts of interest. Panel members should not hold direct supervisory roles over the parties involved. This aligns with the principles outlined in the *Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure* to maintain procedural fairness.
    ii. The panel will review all relevant documentation, interview involved parties and may request written statements. Both complainant and respondent may present evidence and have a support person present during interviews.
    iii. All proceedings will be conducted with strict confidentiality. The respondent will be informed of the allegations and provided an opportunity to respond.
    iv. The panel will compile findings and recommendations, reporting to the HREC for final review. The HREC will communicate the final decision and any corrective actions in writing to all parties.
d. **Outcomes and Sanctions:** Following an investigation, the panel will provide recommendations to the HREC. Potential outcomes include:
    i. Retraction or correction of published research if integrity has been compromised.
    ii. Corrective actions, such as training or mentoring, for minor breaches.
    iii. Disciplinary actions, including suspension or dismissal, for serious breaches or repeated violations.
    iv. All outcomes will prioritise the preservation of research integrity and ensure compliance with ethical standards. Sanctions may also be reported to external bodies, including research funding agencies, ethics committees, or publishers.
e. **Appeals and Reviews:** Respondents may appeal the decision of the investigation panel on the grounds of procedural unfairness. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the HREC within ten (10) working days of the decision notification.

7. MONITORING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

7.1. Regular Review of Policies

a. Australis is committed to maintaining the highest standards of research ethics and integrity by ensuring that all research policies, including this *Research Ethics and Integrity Policy and Procedure*, are regularly reviewed and updated.
b. This policy and its associated procedures are monitored annually. As part of the annual review, updates will be reported by the HDRC and, in turn, presented to the Academic Board (AB) to maintain transparency and ensure ongoing compliance with TEQSA's guidance on research integrity and responsible conduct.

7.2. Continuous Improvement and Feedback Mechanisms

a. Australis fosters a culture of continuous improvement in research ethics and integrity through feedback and evaluation.
b. Feedback will be sought from researchers, HDR students, supervisors, and examiners regarding the effectiveness of the policy and its implementation.
c. Periodic surveys will be conducted annually among HDR candidates, supervisors, and personnel involved in human-research ethics review to gather insights on research training, ethical approval processes, and the management of misconduct, supporting Australis' commitment to quality improvement.
d. Regular audits of research practices, including data management, IP, and compliance with ethical standards, will be undertaken every three years to ensure adherence to the policy.

7.3. Reporting and Accountability

The HREC reports to the Academic Board on HREC ethics-review activity and material ethics or participant-protection matters under its Terms of Reference. Research-integrity allegations, investigation outcomes and any disciplinary action are reported through the separately authorised institutional research-integrity and governance arrangements.

7.4. Professional Development

a. Australis will ensure that all researchers, HDR students, and supervisors are provided with ongoing training and professional development opportunities.
b. Annual workshops will include:
    i. **Induction Workshops:** Mandatory for all new researchers, HDR students, and supervisors to cover foundational knowledge on research ethics and integrity.

ii. **Refresher Workshops:** Designed for continuing researchers, covering updates to the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*.and other relevant topics.

c. Additional training sessions will be held on an 'as-needed' basis to address significant changes or updates in policy or standards.
d. HDR supervisors must complete training focused on research supervision, ethics, and the management of IP and research data.

7.5. Policy Review Cycle

This policy will undergo a formal review at least every five years, or sooner if required, to incorporate changes in national guidelines, institutional practices, and feedback from stakeholders.

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS, EXTERNAL REFERENCES AND VERSION CONTROL

8.1. Related/Referenced documents

- *Conflict of Interest Policy*
- *Governance Charter and Delegations Framework*
- *Graduation and Awards Policy and Procedure*
- *HDR Assessment and Examination Policy and Procedure*
- *HDR Candidate Progress Procedure*
- *HDR Examination Guidelines*
- *HREC Terms of Reference*
- *HREC Standard Operating Procedures*
- *HDR Supervision Policy and Procedure*
- *Records and Information Management Policy*
- *Research Training and Induction Policy*
- *Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure*

8.2. Related legislation and external references

- *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)*
- *Australian Privacy Act*
- *Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)*
- *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000*
- *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*
- *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018*
- *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (Revised 2023)*
- *TEQSA Guidance Note: Research and Research Training (Version 2.0, September 2022)*
- *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Act 2011*
- *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018 (and supporting guide, Management of Data and Information in Research)*

8.3. Version Control

Version	Date	Reviewed/approved by	Key notes/changes

1.0	11/07/25	Higher Degree Research Committee (HDRC) Working group	Updated based on Australis response to TEQSA Assessment report
1.1	22/07/25	Higher Degree Research Committee (HDRC)	Updated based on the HDRC feedback at the 22/07/25 meeting.
1.2	23/07/25	Board of Directors (BoD)	Reviewed and approved at the 23/07/25 meeting.
1.3	31/07/25	Academic Board (AB)	Reviewed and approved at the AB 31/07/25 meeting.
1.4	05/08/25	BoD	Reviewed and approved at the BoD 05/08/25 meeting.
2.0	05/11/26	AB BoD	References updated and editorial improvements made.

8.4. Document Review

To be reviewed at least annually from the date of final approval